



Basil Overton

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**BASIL OVERTON**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The section of the New Testament called *Acts* is a remarkable treatise. It was written by Luke "the beloved physician." (Colossians 4:14.) He wrote it by the direction of the Holy Spirit.

There are many interesting matters related in *Acts* besides the stories of, and reports regarding the conversions of many people to the Lord Jesus Christ. However, the main thrust and purpose of the treatise is to show how people were converted to Jesus.

The lessons in this book first appeared in *The World Evangelist*, of which I am editor. I am pleased to allow J. C. Choate to publish these lessons in book form with the high hope that they will bring the light of truth to multitudes of souls who are in the darkness of sin.

It is also hoped that many Christians will grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as they are pointed to Bible truth by the lessons in this book.

Basil Overton  
Florence, Alabama  
May 30, 1981



## ***BASIL OVERTON***

From Weakley County, Tennessee – Born December 3, 1925.

Has preached 35 years. Half these years in *mission* work.

Married to former Margie Medling.

Has been married 35 years.

Four children – one deceased.

Freed-Hardeman – 3 years – was graduated with highest honors.

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B. A. Degree – Eastern Kentucky State University

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Doctor's Degree – Morehead State University

Vice President, and professor of Bible, Christian Evidences and Church History at International Bible College.

Editor of *The World Evangelist* which he started in 1972 – about 50,000 regular paid circulation.



## ***THE PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT***

I have known Basil Overton for many years. Most of that knowledge has been by reputation, hearing about his work in various places, seeing his articles in different publications, and reading his books. I have had opportunity to meet him on several occasions and have published a number of his books in India and Singapore with his kind permission.

Brother Overton is well trained, has worked for many years as a local preacher and evangelist, and has distinguished himself as an author, editor, and educator. For the past several years he has served as the editor of the widely acclaimed, *The World Evangelist*, and as Vice-President and Professor of International Bible College.

As editor of *The World Evangelist*, Brother Overton does a lot of writing. He has recently completed a series of articles on the Conversions in Acts. It was felt that this series should be given an even wider circulation and therefore I am honored to be the one to print them in book form. We will begin by printing them in America and from here they will be sent all over the world.

In my estimation this book will be well received and will be the means of teaching and converting many souls to Christ. By going to the book of Acts and taking each case of conversion, and by going through each story and emphasizing minutely every detail that led to the conversion of all the souls involved, we can see what each one did to obey God and have his sins forgiven, to be a Christian only, and to become a part of the Lord's church.

Many controversial points are cleared up in these lessons. The author does not seek to pass off on the reader his own ideas and theories, but to encourage one to return to the book of Acts for the truth on conversion, and to ask that every person who is subject to the Lord's will to follow these scriptural examples in obeying God. In so doing, one may be saved even as those first century people were saved, and one may be what they were, no more and no less.

Thank you, Brother Overton, for sharing these materials with us. I am sure that many of our readers will also want to thank you once they read and study these lessons, along with their Bible, and thus come to know God's will and to obey his teaching.

J. C. Choate  
*Winona, Mississippi*  
*July 2, 1981*





## **DEDICATION**

**To the loving memory  
of Robert and Una Medling,  
the parents of my Margie,  
who have both gone to be with Jesus**

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## CONVERSIONS IN ACTS



## *The People on Pentecost*

The Bible should be studied with the fact in mind that various matters are presented in the many parts or divisions of this divine book.

If one looked in a Sears catalog to see about ordering a set of wrenches, he would not look for these in the section on ladies' clothing.

If one looks in the Bible on how to be converted, he should not look in Genesis, or II Kings, or some other part of the blessed book that does not deal with that subject. He should instead look in Acts which contains many cases of conversions.

Acts was written to show how the great commission was obeyed. Jesus told his apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:15, 16).

Isaiah prophesied about seven hundred years before Christ was born that when the church, or the Lord's house would be established the word of the Lord would go forth from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:1-3).

Just before our blessed Master ascended he told his apostles that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:44-46).

### "BEGINNING" ON PENTECOST

Obviously, the "beginning" of the preaching of repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ, or by his authority was on the day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus.

The day of Pentecost was a Jewish festival day and God chose the Pentecost following Christ's resurrection as the time for the preaching Isaiah and Jesus said would begin at Jerusalem.

## CONVERSIONS IN ACTS

On that Pentecost the apostles were baptized in the Holy Ghost and were thus guided into all truth, or began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance (John 16:13, Acts 2:4).

### SERMON RECORDED

The sermon of one of these Spirit guided apostles is recorded in Acts 2; it is a sermon preached by the apostle Peter. He appealed to the minds of the multitude of Jews assembled on Pentecost from many nations by citing Old Testament prophecies concerning what was happening at the time he was preaching (Acts 2:15-21).

### RESULTS OF THE SERMON

Luke wrote Acts (Acts 1:1). He recorded that when the people heard Peter's message on Pentecost they were "pricked in their heart and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:37, 38).

The holy record says that they that gladly received Peter's message were baptized and were thus added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:41, 47).

### SOME IMPORTANT FACTS

From the record of Acts 2 we all need to observe some very important facts. Notice some of them:

1. The Holy Spirit convicted and converted the people who were saved on that Pentecost day by their hearing and believing what the Holy Spirit said through the inspired apostle. This was according to what Jesus said in John 16:7-13. When the people heard the preaching of Peter they were convicted (Acts 2:37).



## THE PEOPLE ON PENTECOST

2. The people converted on Pentecost were already religious. They had assembled from many nations to observe one of their religious days. They were told about God's new covenant, and they accepted it and changed their religion.

3. Peter quoted Joel's Old Testament prophecy that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:21). When the people asked what shall we do, Peter explained how to call on the name of the Lord to be saved when he told them to repent and be baptized *in the name of Christ* for the remission of sins. *Remission of sins* and *saved* are the same. Acts 22:16 shows that calling on the name of the Lord includes being baptized.

4. The answer Peter gave the convicted believers on Pentecost also shows how we reach the saving power of the blood of Jesus. Jesus shed his blood for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28), but by repenting and being baptized believers are promised the remission of sins.

When Jesus died on Calvary he made provision for the remission of sins. He there made remission of sins available. By repenting and being baptized upon the authority of Christ or in the name of Christ, one can obtain what Christ made available for him when he died on that Roman cross.

5. The baptism of Acts 2:38 is not Holy Spirit baptism because Holy Spirit baptism was a promise of the Father for special purposes (Acts 1:5) and the baptism of Acts 2:38 is a command of God. Something cannot be a command of God and at the same time a promise of God. Obviously, the baptism Peter commanded in Acts 2:38 was water baptism because he commanded water baptism in the name of Christ in Acts 10:47, 48.

6. Some argue that *for* in Acts 2:38 means *because of* and that Peter commanded the believers to be baptized *for* or *because of* the remission of sins. The word *for* can mean *because of* but it could not mean that in Acts 2:38 because in that verse whatever baptism is *for*, repentance is *for*. Surely, no one would argue that the people were to repent because their sins had already been forgiven.

## CONVERSIONS IN ACTS

If one omits *and be baptized* when he reads Acts 2:38 it would say "Repent in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins." In such a rendering, what would *for* mean? It surely would mean *in order to*.

*For* in Acts 2:38 is a translation of the Greek preposition *eis* which always points *toward*, never *backward*. Scholars say it means *in order to obtain* in Acts 2:38.

If Peter had just told those on Pentecost to repent and be baptized, and had not told them why, that would still mean repentance and baptism are essential because what right thinking person would want to go before God in judgment not having done what God told him to do, even if God did not tell him for what he was to do it?

God did not command saved people to be baptized in Acts 2:38 or anywhere else. But he told those unsaved to be baptized to be saved. But, even if God told those already his children to be baptized, baptism would still be essential to going to heaven, because John said that a child of God who refuses to keep God's commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him! (I John 2:3, 4). Can a liar go to heaven? (Revelation 21:8).

7. The gift of the Holy Spirit was promised to those who repented and were baptized according to Acts 2:38. This was not a miraculous gift, because some who were baptized in Christ's name, still had not received a miraculous gift or measure of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:16). The Holy Spirit dwells in Christians by faith, just as do God the Father and Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:16, 17; 4:6).

8. In Acts 2 we learn that those who believe in the saving sense are those who hear the gospel of Christ, and believe it, and are convicted by that wonderful gospel (Acts 2:36, 37). Then they repent of their sins and are baptized for the remission of sins and are added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:38-41; 47). They then continue steadfastly in the apostles teaching, in fellowship and in breaking of bread and prayers (Acts 2:42). After all these things were said of the people on Pentecost, then Luke said of them, "And all that believed were together . . ." (Acts 2:44). They believed, but this obviously means they obeyed God.

## **THE PEOPLE ON PENTECOST**

### **CONCLUSION**

Dearly beloved, if you have not been converted as the people on Pentecost were converted, please let us know and we will put you in touch with the people near you who can help you in your becoming a Christian. Or, if there is a church of Christ that lives in, and meets in your community, please contact them and they will help you in whatever way you need assistance.

The Lord Jesus loves you and if you are not a Christian, he wants you to be. Please turn to him soon.

## *Many Believed in Jerusalem*

Luke's sacred history called Acts contains the accounts of many being converted to Christ. This inspired narrative pictures people from many levels of society coming under the power of the gospel and coming into subjection to Christ.

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe it (Romans 1:16). This obviously means that God uses the gospel of Christ to turn people to himself so he can save them from their sins.

In the first in this series of sermons attention was given to the conversion of those on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2.

### PREACHED CHRIST

According to Luke's account, Peter, by the power of God healed a lame man at the gate of the temple which was called Beautiful (Acts 3:1, 2). Following this benevolent act of God's mercy, Peter preached Christ to a crowd in Solomon's porch. He told the people how God had glorified his Son Jesus whom they had delivered up to Pilate. Peter made it clear that they had killed the Prince of life and that God had raised him from the dead (Acts 4:13:15).

Finally, Peter told them, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

In the rest of chapter 3 there is the record of other facts which Peter preached about God and Christ, and how that prophecies in the Old Testament were fulfilled in Christ our Lord.

### RESULTS OF THE PREACHING

Luke recorded that the Sadducees were grieved because Peter preached that Christ was raised from the dead (Acts 4:1, 2). Peter

## MANY BELIEVED IN JERUSALEM!

did not preach and let their doctrine alone! They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:8).

They imprisoned the apostles until the next day and then they brought them into court.

Luke says there were good results of the preaching of Christ too. "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand" (Acts 4:4). This says many who heard the word believed. But Peter had told these people to repent and be converted that their sins might be blotted out (Acts 3:19).

Just a few days before Peter had told people to repent and be baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Blotting out sins and remission of sins are two ways of saying the same thing.

The holy record in Acts therefore teaches us that when people believed, they repented in order to be converted so they could have their sins blotted out. This was the same as repenting and being baptized for the remission of sins. Putting all the facts in Acts together brings us to this conclusion!

Often in the Bible *believed* is used to mean accepting and obeying the gospel.

## COULD BELIEVE AND NOT BE SAVED

One could believe and not be obedient. "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42, 43).

Christ taught that if one would not confess him before men, he would not confess that person before his Father in heaven (Matthew 10:32, 33).

A person who believes in Christ but will not confess him because he loves the praise of men more than God's praise will not be saved.

## CONVERSIONS IN ACTS

The word *believe* in the New Testament is a translation of the Greek word *pisteuo*. A world renowned Greek scholar, Mr. Henry Thayer, wrote a dictionary on Greek words known as a lexicon. Mr. Thayer says that the word *pisteuo* in the New Testament means "a conviction, full of joyful trust, that Jesus is the Messiah, the divinely appointed author of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God, conjoined with obedience to Christ." (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* by Joseph Henry Thayer, D. D., page 511).

## CONCLUSION

To believe in Christ in the saving sense, an alien sinner must put his trust in this wonderful Saviour, turn from, or repent of his sins, confess his faith in him, and be baptized into him for the remission of sins (John 8:24; Acts 2:38; Romans 10:9, 10; Romans 6:3, 4).

Writing concerning Christ Jesus our Lord and blessed Saviour, the holy writer recorded, "Though he were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8, 9).

Friend, if you have not accepted Christ, please accept this loving Saviour who died for you and who longs for you and seeks you. He will do you only good! Turn from the arch-fiend of mankind, Satan, who will only do you harm, and come to Christ, your wonderful Saviour.

If I can be of any help to you, please let me know. I'll be delighted to help you in your being baptized into Christ, or direct someone to you who can assist you. Please let me know if you desire to obey the gospel.

## *A Graveyard Tale and Conversions*

Luke, the beloved physician (Colossians 4:14) wrote Acts. The good doctor recorded a graveyard tale in that treatise, the events of which were followed by multitudes of men and women being converted.

One of the principal definitions of *tale* is: "A story or account of true events." The beloved physician's account of the deaths of Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, constitutes one of the most significant graveyard tales of all history.

### THE GRAVEYARD TALE

"But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou has not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth,

## CONVERSIONS IN ACTS

buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things. And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them" (Acts 5:1-15).

### WHAT WAS THE SIN?

Ananias and Sapphira were not obligated to give all the price of the land they sold. They gave part of the price of the land to the apostles for the Lord's work, and lied by saying that what they gave was all of the price of it.

Sapphira lied as her husband had lied, but when she lied she did not know her husband had died and his body already buried. She died after she lied! Apparently she lied not knowing her husband was dead and buried!

The young men who had buried the body of Ananias also buried her body. This was strange work for young men in the church! The Jerusalem church had strange activities for the young people!

### THAT GRAVEYARD

The holy writer wrote nothing about where the young men buried the bodies of Ananias and Sapphira. He did record that their bodies were buried beside each other.

Nothing is said about any funeral services for the two hypocrites whose bodies the young men buried. There is no indication that flowers were placed on their graves.



## A GRAVEYARD TALE AND CONVERSIONS

If a tombstone was erected at the graves of Ananias and Sapphira, here are some lines that would have been appropriate as an inscription on it.

Here lie the mortal forms  
Of two who lied and died.  
Sin took its awful toll  
Though their Lord was crucified.

## MIRACLES

During the time God's will was being revealed through inspired men by God's power these performed many miracles to confirm that message. When the revelation of God's new covenant was finished, the miracles ceased according to God's plan.

The deaths of Ananias and Sapphira were evidently miraculous. By the same power by which Peter raised some from the dead, Ananias and Sapphira died!

Those who claim to have miraculous healing services are inconsistent because they do not have killing services!

Many other miracles or signs and wonders were wrought by the hands of the apostles. But following the miraculous deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, you note the beloved physician said, "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things" (Acts 5:11).

Some preachers are more emotional than others. Preachers do not all have to be alike in methods to all preach the truth! I realize one could rely too much on emotionalism. We know people must learn and accept God's gospel to be saved. But there should be emotional reasons involved in doing this.

It was a mighty emotional situation for "great fear to come upon all the church and upon as many as heard the graveyard tale" Luke recorded! Some may have said, "You better not get in the

## CONVERSIONS IN ACTS

church of Christ, you might be struck dead!" However, following the awesome events of the deaths and burials of Ananias and Sapphira "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:14).

I wonder what some modern critics would have said? I suppose some of them, had they been there, would have said, "Multitudes being added; ah, its just emotionalism!"

I suspect there would be some emotional surges of people to get into Christ now if we were to have a hypocrite killing service in some church now!

## BELIEVERS ADDED

In a previous lesson in this series this editor stressed the fact that *believing* in the saving sense means not only mental or heart acceptance of the facts of the gospel, but also obedience from the heart to the commands of the gospel. This truth is very obvious in Acts as well as other portions of the New Testament.

In Acts 2:41, the sacred writer says that those who believed the gospel who were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), did gladly receive the word and were baptized, and there were added in that day about three thousand souls. Acts 2:47 says in the King James Version that such people were added to the church.

A saved believer in the days of the writers of the New Testament was a member of the Lord's church.

To be in Christ is to be in his church (Colossians 1:2; 3:15; 1:18). To be added to the Lord (Acts 5:14) is the same as being added to the church of Christ.

Yes indeed, the events of the graveyard tale recorded by Luke influenced multitudes of men and women to be converted!

## *A Great Company of Priests Obeyed the Gospel*

“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great number of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

### INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

The beloved physician, Luke (Colossians 4:14) had just recorded the incident of how the church was benevolent toward needy people (Acts 6:1-6). He then recorded that “the word of God increased.” Obviously, he meant that God’s word increased in the sense that it had greater and wider influence. Many more were converted; “the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly.”

Whenever God and his word triumph over evil, it can be truthfully said that the word of God grows (Acts 12:24; 19:20). In both these passages the word *grew* is from the same Greek word that is translated *increased* in Acts 6:7.

The priests of this text were priests under the law of Moses. Jesus had abolished that law in his death (Ephesians 2:11-16). These priests were convinced concerning the true identity of Jesus and they embraced the new faith.

Consider some important facts about the conversion of these priests.

### ALREADY RELIGIOUS

Acts is God’s account of how people were converted to Christ. This sacred history written by Luke by God’s direction reveals that those who were converted were already religious. The case of the conversion of these priests is no exception. They were indeed already religious.

## CONVERSIONS IN ACTS

Jewish priests led in the work of opposing Christ that led to his crucifixion. Religious people crucified Christ! (Acts 2:23). Perhaps some of these priests who were obedient to the faith were among the number who had promoted the movement that led to the crucifixion of the blessed Saviour.

### THEY OVERCAME PREJUDICE

These priests were willing to free themselves of prejudice and give up what had been the religion of their ancestors for nearly fifteen hundred years and embrace the religion that had been foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament. Their hearts were brought into captivity of the truth concerning Christ. They were convinced he was the Messiah, God's anointed, whom the prophets had said would come.

The example of these priests stands out also, because all that we can know from Acts tells us that these were the first of the priests to accept Christ and submit to his authority. McGarvey comments that the obedience of these priests was "the most signal triumph yet achieved by the gospel, for the priests of the old religion were more interested in maintaining it than were any other class among the Jews."

### A GREAT CROWD OF THEM

"Great company" of the text is a translation of the Greek words which can be literally translated "great crowd." It seems that this great crowd of priests strengthened each other in their bold move to obey Christ. Such a great crowd of the leaders in the Jewish religion being converted must have indeed been a hard blow to the Jewish religion, but a great encouragement to the church of Christ. This was a signal victory for the church.

If the claims of the gospel were, as skeptics say, unfounded and unreliable, why was a great company of the leaders in the Jewish

## **A GREAT COMPANY OF PRIESTS OBEYED THE GOSPEL**

religion convinced right in Jerusalem to accept the new religion? They believed the reports regarding Christ, his miracles, and his resurrection right in the place where according to the reports these things happened!

I challenge all skeptics to produce evidence from any literary source that was written right after Luke wrote Acts which would prove that the great crowd of priests really did not accept Christ. Even if such records were available, the skeptics would still have the burden of proving that such records were reliable and that Luke's account in Acts is unreliable! The word of God is true! A great crowd of priests of the Jewish religion were obedient to Christ!

The demands of the gospel of Christ as preached by the holy apostles made it necessary for religious leaders to rid themselves of prejudice and forsake the old covenant which had been abolished in the death of the Saviour and accept in its stead the new covenant sealed with the blood of Jesus Christ.

So you, my friend, if you are not a Christian, may have to abandon prejudice, and forsake religious views, beliefs and ties and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ and thus become a member of the church you can read about in the Bible.

A person can be religious, and even feel like he is saved when he really is not. Examine your religion in light of the covenant of Christ in the New Testament and discover whether or not you have really obeyed Christ. See if you can find in the Bible anything about the church of which you are a member. Test your faith by God's word. Men have started many churches without God's authority. God started the one of which Christ is the Saviour. Christ built his church (Matthew 13:16-18). You can be a member of it. If you will be obedient to the faith you will thereby become a member of the church for which Christ gave himself (Ephesians 5:25).

### **WHAT DID THEY DO?**

When that great company of priests were "obedient to the faith," what did they do?

## CONVERSIONS IN ACTS

In the Bible the word faith often refers to the belief one had in his heart. In some verses the word faith refers to the system of doctrine or teaching which produced faith or belief in one's heart. The following are some examples of this latter meaning.

1. A Cypriot deputy named Sergius Paulus desired to hear the word of God (Acts 13:7). Elymas sought to keep him from hearing God's word, and Luke says he tried to *turn the deputy away from the faith* (Acts 13:8)!

2. Paul said he had received grace and apostleship "*for obedience to the faith among all nations*" (Romans 1:5). But Paul preached nothing but the gospel (I Corinthians 2:1, 2; 15:1-3; Galatians 1:6-8). The faith is the gospel.

3. Paul declared that the mystery of the gospel was kept secret since the world began until it was revealed through the preaching of the gospel he and other inspired men did. He said it was "*made known to all nations for the obedience of faith*" (Romans 16:25, 26).

4. Paul preached the gospel, but that was *preaching the faith* (Galatians 1:23).

5. People *heard the faith* (Galatians 1:2, 5).

6. *The faith came* after the law of Moses was abolished (Galatians 3:23-25).

7. *There is one faith*, or one gospel just as there is one body or church, and just as there is one Lord, and one baptism, one hope, one Spirit and one God the Father (Ephesians 4:4-6).

8. Those who obey the faith or embrace the gospel can cease to "*continue in the faith*" and be moved away from the hope of the gospel (Colossians 1:23).

9. Jude exhorted Christians to "*contend earnestly for the faith*" (Jude 3).

Therefore, the great crowd of priests that were obedient to the faith were obedient to the gospel just like the others who were converted whose conversions are recorded in Acts.

The whole process of what is involved in obeying the faith is not recorded in each case of conversion recorded in Acts. But

## A GREAT COMPANY OF PRIESTS OBEYED THE GOSPEL

sometimes the process is summarized. Enough is recorded in Acts for us to know what all the people did who were converted. Because this is true, we know what the great crowd of priests did in being obedient to the faith. They heard the gospel that Jesus was their Saviour, and that he gave himself for their sins. Those priests believed the facts of the gospel, and repented of their sins and upon the confession of their faith they were baptized in water into Christ in order to get the forgiveness or remission of their sins (Acts 2: 36-38; 8:35-39).

### CONCLUSION

Dear reader, if you have already become a Christian, please help in the great work of telling others of the urgency of their obeying the faith. If you have not become a Christian, please, in the interest of your everlasting soul, and in view of eternity, submit to Christ soon.

If I can be of any help to you in this most urgent matter, please let me know. Perhaps I can put you in contact with someone who will gladly assist you in your obedience to the faith or, it may be that I can help you myself. Please let me know.

## *Conversion of Samaritans*

When Jesus was on earth his homeland, Palestine, consisted of Galilee in the north, Samaria in the middle, and Judea in the south.

The Samaritans were descendants of the Jews and Assyrians that were mixed after the Assyrian captivity of Israel in 721 B. C. The purer stock of Hebrew people looked upon the Samaritans with disfavor.

According to John 4 our Lord taught a woman of Samaria and convinced her he was the Messiah that she and others expected to come. She was so convinced of this that she went into her city, Sychar, and told the men she had found the Messiah, and they went out of the city to see Jesus (John 4:25-30).

All of these things happened before Jesus was crucified, and before he established his church. He established his church on the day of Pentecost following his resurrection. As the gospel was preached beginning on that Pentecost, and people obeyed it they were added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:47).

Seven men were selected in the church in Jerusalem to do benevolent work (Acts 6:1-6). One of the seven was Philip. He is called Philip the evangelist in Acts 21:8. One of the twelve apostles of Christ was Philip, but the Philip of the seven mentioned in Acts 6 was not the apostle Philip. The Philip of the seven servants selected according to Acts 6 went down to Samaria and preached Christ unto them (Acts 8:5). He was an inspired preacher and was endowed with special and miraculous power to perform miracles. The Samaritans had been deceived by a charlatan named Simon who was merely a magician. He had told the Samaritans he was "some great one," and they thought he was "the great power of God" (Acts 8:9, 10).

When Philip had performed miracles in the presence of the Samaritans, they soon saw that Simon was a fake. "But when they believed Philip preaching the things pertaining to the kingdom of God,



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they were baptized both men and women" (Acts 8:12).

### THINGS PERTAINING TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Philip preached Christ, and this means he preached things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

What did Philip preach when he preached things pertaining to the kingdom of God?

1. Surely, Philip told the Samaritans that the kingdom of God is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, the body of Christ (Matthew 16:18, 19; Colossians 1:13, 18; 3:15). One cannot preach Jesus without preaching about his church.

2. No doubt Philip told the Samaritans that Jesus Christ is king of his kingdom or head of his church (Colossians 1:18). Philip preached the name or authority of Jesus Christ. Christ has all authority (Matthew 28:18). God speaks to us through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1-3). God does this through what Christ and the inspired writers of the New Testament have said. One who ignores the word of Christ and rejects that covenant also rejects Christ (John 12:48). Christ is the king of his kingdom! We must submit to his authority to be saved. Submitting to his authority involves us in obedience to him. He is the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him (Hebrews 5:8, 9).

3. Philip must have told the Samaritans how they could get into the kingdom, for right after Luke, who wrote Acts, says Philip preached things pertaining to the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, he says that those who believed the things he preached were baptized.

Jesus taught that one could not enter his kingdom unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Philip must have preached this truth that pertains to the kingdom of God, because the people who believed his preaching were baptized which means they were born of water and the Spirit. Jesus said that he that believes the gospel and

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is baptized shall be saved (Mark 16:16). No doubt Philip taught the Samaritans this truth.

The Bible says that Christians are people who have been baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3). Paul taught that to be in Christ is the same as being in his one body (Colossians 1:2; 3:15). Paul also taught that one body is the church.

This all means that when one is baptized into Christ he is baptized into the church of Christ which is the church we can read about in the Bible. This church is the Lord's kingdom.

It is no wonder that when Philip preached things pertaining to the kingdom of God, the Lord's church, people who believed what he preached were baptized into that church.

If you are not in the church into which the Samaritans were baptized, you should believe in Christ, accept him as king and Lord, repent of your sins and be baptized into Christ that you may have your sins removed and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

If you need assistance in this most urgent matter contact me and I will help you or refer you to someone who will assist you in your obedience. Do not delay! Your soul is worth more than all the world. God loves you and seeks your soul. I love all people and greatly desire all who are without Christ to accept him by submission to him. Please do not hesitate to contact this editor if you need assistance in rendering obedience to our dear Lord Jesus.

## *The Conversion of Simon*

Conversions In Acts (No. 6) was in the February 1978 issue of *The World Evangelist*. In that lesson this editor presented truths regarding the conversion of the Samaritans as recorded in Acts chapter 8. After stating that men and women of Samaria believed the gospel preached by Philip and they were baptized, then Luke recorded, "Then Simon himself believed also; and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done" (Acts 8:13).

Simon had been practicing magic before the people of Samaria, and they had thought he was "the great power of God" (Acts 8:10). However, when Simon saw the real miracles performed by Philip he realized that what he did with his magic was no match for what Philip was doing by the power of God.

### PETER AND JOHN

The apostles Peter and John went from Jerusalem to Samaria to impart to the new Samaritan congregation of saints a miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit by laying their hands on them, because the Samaritans had only received the non-miraculous indwelling of the Holy Spirit as promised to those who are baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 8:16).

When the apostles Peter and John laid their hands on the Samaritan converts they received the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:17).

### SIMON WAS TEMPTED AND YIELDED

"And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8:18, 19).

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Simon no doubt had received the non-miraculous indwelling of the Holy Spirit according to God's promise to those baptized (Acts 2:38; 5:32), and he surely received the miraculous measure of the Holy Ghost conveyed by the laying on of the hands of Peter and John. So, he did not offer Peter and John money so he could get the Holy Spirit. He was trying to purchase the power or ability to impart the Holy Spirit to others as Peter and John could.

Simon was tempted by the sight of the apostles John and Peter imparting the Holy Ghost to others. He had been using magic and had deceived the people before their conversion and before his conversion. He fell in Satan's trap.

Peter said in response to Simon's offer of money, "Thy money perish with thee; because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money" (Acts 8:20).

### WAS SIMON REALLY CONVERTED?

Some contend that Simon's offer of money to John and Peter was a sure sign he was not really converted even though he was baptized. The people who contend this do not believe (1) that baptism is essential to being saved or becoming a Christian, and (2) they do not believe that one who is a Christian can be lost.

There are at least 2500 passages in the Bible which teach that a child of God can quit being faithful and be lost. The Bible also abundantly teaches that those who continue faithful will be saved in heaven.

The following are compelling reasons for believing Simon had been actually converted when he yielded to a temptation and sinned.

1. Those who contend that baptism is not essential to being saved, say that one is saved when he believes.

Luke says in Acts 8:12 that the Samaritans believed the gospel and were baptized. He then says Simon believed *also*, and was baptized. If the Samaritans believed, Simon believed! He believed *also*! This means he did what the others had done!

## THE CONVERSION OF SIMON

Even if it were true that one is saved by believing without being baptized, we would have to conclude that Simon was saved, because he believed *also*!

The Samaritans, including Simon, believed and were baptized. Jesus said they were saved, because he said "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

2. Peter did not tell Simon he would perish because he had really not been saved from his alien sins, but he said "Thy money perish with thee because thou hast thought the gift of God could be purchased with money" (Acts 8:20).

Simon was guilty of just one sin! He was not guilty of all the sins he had ever committed, because all his alien sins had been forgiven when he was baptized into Christ.

3. On Pentecost Peter told those who had not been saved to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Peter told Simon to repent and pray that if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven him (Acts 8:22). This alone proves that Simon was not an alien sinner; had he been, Peter would have told him what he told those on Pentecost.

Notice also that Peter told Simon to repent of "this *thy wickedness*, and pray God, if perhaps *the thought of thine heart* may be forgiven thee." His wickedness was singular, "*this thy wickedness!*" His sin was one thought; "*the thought of thine heart!*"

Simon was an erring child of God when Peter told him to repent and pray as recorded in Acts 8:22. Simon's heart was not right because of that singular sin of thinking he could purchase the gift of God with money.

## CONCLUSION

You can be converted like Simon by believing the gospel of Christ, by turning from your sins, confessing Christ, and being baptized for the remission of sins. If you have done this and you have erred from Christ in thought and deed, you can be converted by praying to God for forgiveness. If we can be of assistance to you, please let us know.

## *The Conversion of Candace's Treasurer*

The angel of the Lord instructed Philip the evangelist to go to a road that went from Jerusalem to Gaza in the land of Palestine. On that road the evangelist saw a man riding in a chariot who had been to Jerusalem to worship. This man had the charge of all the treasure of Ethiopia's queen, Candace. This treasurer was an eunuch of great authority.

Philip was told by the Spirit to, "Go near and join, thyself to this chariot" (Acts 8:29). He obeyed the Spirit, and as he ran "thither to him" (Acts 8:30) he heard the distinguished official of Candace's court reading from Isaiah in the Old Testament, and asked him if he understood what he was reading. The treasurer replied, "How can I except some man should guide me?" (Acts 8:31). Then the official of Ethiopia besought Philip to sit with him in the chariot.

The eunuch was reading from Isaiah chapter 53, and he asked Philip if Isaiah referred to himself or to some other man in the chapter. "Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35).

### GOOD BUT LOST

Candace's treasurer was a lost man and in need of Christ and salvation in him even though many good things were true of him.

1. This high official of one of the world's great nations was apparently a well educated and skilled man, otherwise he could not have been treasurer of Ethiopia.

2. The eunuch was a very religious man. He had been to Jerusalem to worship. Likely, he worshipped there according to the Old Testament law, the law of the Jews. He may have been a Jew, or he may have been a native Ethiopian who had been proselyted to the Jewish faith.

## THE CONVERSION OF CANDACE'S TREASURER

From Ethiopia to Jerusalem and back to Ethiopia was a journey of many hundreds of miles. So, the eunuch was very devoted in his religion.

Most all those converted to Christ as recorded in Acts were already religious. It is not enough just to be religious. To be saved one's religion must be the kind authorized by him to whom God has given all authority, our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20).

Religious people crucified Christ. They were the religious leaders of that time in the center of Jewish culture and in Jerusalem the citadel of Judaism.

3. Candace's treasurer was a gentleman, and an inquiring man. He was not offended when Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading. He could have been insulted! He could have replied by asking Philip, "Do you think I am dumb? Do you think I am some kind of nut?" Instead, he was gentle and kind and sought to learn.

Jesus said, "Seek and ye shall find" (Matthew 7:7). He also said, "Blessed are they which do hunger after righteousness; for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

If one does not crave to know God's truth he is not apt to learn it. The eunuch wanted to learn. Even though he was educated in many things, he wanted to learn what was God's will for him.

4. The man from Ethiopia was apparently a sincere person. He no doubt felt he was doing the right thing, but he wanted to be sure. As educated as he was, he was ignorant of what he needed to know most of all!

Even though Candace's treasurer had great authority, was well educated, was very religious, was a gentleman and sincere, he was also without Christ and lost!

## ANGEL TOLD THE PREACHER

The angel of God did not go to the eunuch to tell him what he needed to hear, but the angel told a preacher to go to him! At

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that time the New Testament had not been written. It was written finally by the Spirit of God and directed to men and contains the message of salvation. It was confirmed as God's revelation by miracles (Hebrews 2:4).

God does not direct preachers now by sending angels or the Spirit to them as he did in the case of Philip and the eunuch. God now directs his preachers by the New Testament.

In the case of Cornelius (Acts 10) an angel went to the sinner. But he did not tell him he was already saved, instead he told him to send for a preacher who would tell him words whereby he and his household could be saved (Acts 11:12-14).

God has given the work of preaching the word of salvation (James 1:21) to men (II Corinthians 4:7). The gospel is God's power to save those who believe it (Romans 1:16).

### PREACHED UNTO HIM JESUS

Acts 8:35 says Philip preached Jesus unto the eunuch. What did he preach when he preached Jesus?

There are several expressions in Acts 8 which refer to the same thing that Philip did when he preached Jesus. Philip preached Christ to the Samaritans (Acts 8:5). He preached the things concerning the kingdom of Christ and the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12). Peter and John preached the word of the Lord and preached the gospel (Acts 8:25). All of these statements regarding preaching mean the same thing.

In preaching Jesus, Philip had to tell about how Jesus came into the world from heaven being born of the virgin Mary who conceived by the power of God without any man being involved (Matthew 1:20, 21; John 6:38; 16:28). Philip's preaching included his telling Candace's treasurer how Jesus lived a life of privation and was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3). He must have told the finance officer how Jesus lived a perfect life and did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth (I Peter 2:22, 23).



## THE CONVERSION OF CANDACE'S TREASURER

How I wish I could have heard the evangelist Philip tell the Ethiopian officer about how our blessed Lord was crucified between two thieves. The record says (Acts 8:32) that the treasurer was reading where Isaiah wrote the prophecy that the Messiah would be led as an animal to the slaughter.

Philip must have told the eunuch about the awful time when the darkness of midnight came at midday, and the Son of God gave up the ghost on Calvary!

The evangelist must have told the Ethiopian that in order for him to be saved from his sins he would have to repent of those sins (Acts 17:30; 2:38).

### DID HE PREACH BAPTISM?

There are those who insist that Philip did not preach baptism in water because he preached Jesus. But preaching Jesus has to include preaching what Jesus commanded and authorized because after recording that Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch, the sacred historian wrote that the eunuch desired to be baptized in water! (Acts 8:36). Verse 35 says Philip preached Jesus, and the next verse says the man who heard him preach Jesus desired to be baptized in water!

It is obvious that preaching Jesus included how that Jesus was raised from the dead and before he ascended he commanded his apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature and that he that believes that wonderful news and is baptized would be saved! (Mark 16:15, 16). This is the reason the eunuch wanted to be baptized in water; he wanted to be saved. He was baptized in water for the remission of his sins (Acts 2:38; 8:38).

Before being baptized in water the Ethiopian finance officer confessed that he believed with all his heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Acts 8:37). Paul said that preaching the gospel or preaching the faith included preaching that confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus was involved in being saved or becoming a Christian (Romans 10:8, 9).

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### WAS HE IMMersed OR SPRINKLED?

A preacher once told me that even though the inspired record says that both Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water (Acts 8:38) that was not proof that the eunuch was immersed. He said he might have been sprinkled with a little water.

That preacher administered what he called baptism by sprinkling a little water on one's head. I asked him if in order to thus "baptize" one he went with the person down into water and immersed a big part of himself and the person to be baptized, in order to sprinkle a little water on the person. He said "No." I asked him why he did not do it that way. He said he had too much common sense to do that, and that it would not be an exercise of good common sense to go down into the water with a person to sprinkle that person. I then asked him if Philip had good common sense since he did go down into the water with the person he baptized!

Of course Philip immersed the man of Ethiopia because the word baptize means immersion. Paul said in baptism we are buried and raised (Romans 6:3, 4; Colossians 2:12).

### CONCLUSION

Dear reader, if you have not been baptized into Christ as was the treasurer of Candace, you have not reached the precious saving power of the blood of Jesus. If I can be of any help to you in your obedience to our lovely Lord and blessed Saviour, please contact me. Do not delay. Your precious soul is worth more than the whole world.

## *The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus*

There are many interesting themes in that part of the New Testament known as Acts. Any one of these constitutes a topic which is a good basis for a sermon or lesson. Even the journeys of Paul recorded in Acts would be an interesting study. But, there is one primary purpose which the Holy Ghost had in guiding the "beloved physician" Luke (Colossians 3:14) to write Acts. The principal purpose of Acts is to show how people were converted to Christ; how they were saved from their sins!

It was not an accident that the cases of conversion in Acts are the ones Luke recorded. Obviously, the Holy Ghost selected a wide range of cases of conversion to include people of many levels of society. But it is made clear in Acts that all those converted had to believe and obey the same gospel to be saved.

In this sermon your attention is directed to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Saul was a man of great energy, education and strong religious convictions before he was converted to Christ. There are three accounts of his conversion in Acts: Acts 9, Acts 22, and Acts 26. Saul was a member of the Pharisee church before his conversion, and he lived his religion (Acts 26:4, 5). He was zealous toward God and thought he was right when he was very wrong and sinful (Acts 22:1-3; 26:9-11).

This man of Tarsus had a good conscience about what he was doing to destroy the Lord's church, but his conscience was misguided (Acts 23:1; II Timothy 1:3). One's conscience is not a safe guide unless it is properly educated by God's word. Your conscience will mislead you unless it is directed by God's word. The gospel is God's power to save the ones who believe it, not their consciences! You cannot know you are right with God just because you feel you are right with him! Saul thought he was right with God, when he was actually fighting God and God's people.

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In his determined zeal and intentions to destroy the Lord's church which he thought was a diabolical sect that had sprung up, Saul was going to Damascus and Luke relates of this journey: "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus; and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus who thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (Acts 9:1-5).

### SAUL'S MADNESS

Saul's "breathing out threatenings and slaughters against the disciples of the Lord" indicates his harshness and madness. He told king Agrippa that while he thought he was right he was an exceedingly mad man (Acts 26:11). The Lord asked Saul "Why persecutest thou me?" This teaches that even though Saul made havoc of the church (Acts 8:3) he was actually persecuting the Lord Jesus. This magnifies the close relationship of Christ and his church. One cannot persecute or work against the Lord's church without persecuting Jesus!

### "WHO ART THOU LORD?"

When the light from heaven suddenly appeared to Saul he was blinded (Acts 9:8). But before being blinded he saw Jesus on the road to Damascus (I Corinthians 15:8). He did not know at first who it was that spoke to him, and he asked "Who art thou Lord?" The word *Lord* was here used to indicate a superior, but Saul did not know who it was.

## THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS

### "I AM JESUS OF NAZARETH"

The reply that Jesus gave to Saul's question is interesting. He said, "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest" (Acts 22:8). No doubt Saul had been affirming and asserting that Jesus could not be the Messiah because he was of the despised city, Nazareth (John 1:46). He no doubt had shouted out many times the charge that Jesus was a fake! As Saul kept the clothes of them that stoned Stephen to death (Acts 7:58; 22:20), and heard Stephen say as he was dying, "Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God," perhaps he (Saul) made fun of what Stephen said. (Saul consented unto Stephen's death according to Acts 22:20).

Luke says that after Jesus said to Saul "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest," Saul was trembling and astonished. He was suddenly made aware of how wrong he was; he was suddenly made to realize that Jesus was not a fake, and that even though Jesus was of Nazareth he really was the Messiah, the Son of God! What sobering thoughts must have flashed through the mind of the man from Tarsus! He may have thought, "Stephen was right; he did see the Son of man; he did see Jesus as I was consenting unto his death!" The bright light was shocking, but not as shocking to Saul as the words "I *am* Jesus of Nazareth."

The Lord also told Saul, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." This is another instance of the simple manner of the teaching of Jesus. In his teaching ministry he had made reference to such common things as water, fire, wheat, chaff, fish, eggs, serpents, hogs, dogs, sheep, goats, etc. Even after his holy ascension he appeared to Saul and referred to the lowly ox in convicting Saul. Oxen were driven and the driver would prick the oxen with a sharp pointed stick to urge the slow beasts on; the oxen would kick against the pointed stick and be injured even more. Jesus likened what Saul was doing in fighting him and his cause to an ox kicking back against the pricks of the ox driver.

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### WHY DID JESUS APPEAR TO SAUL?

Jesus appeared to Saul to qualify him to be an apostle. To be an apostle one had to be a witness of Christ after his resurrection (Acts 1:22). Also, Jesus appeared to Saul to make him a minister (Acts 26:16-18). Perhaps Saul was greatly surprised that Jesus did not strike him dead because of his great sins. He later acknowledged the great mercy of Jesus (I Timothy 1:12-16).

Some have speculated that God chose Saul so he could have one learned man to be an apostle and thereby have one apostle who could meet the philosophers. But this is not true. God chose weak things to confront the wise (I Corinthians 1:27). He made fishermen able by inspiration to meet the wisest of the world (Luke 21:14, 15).

The Lord's selecting Saul of Tarsus who possessed a great measure of learning and overwhelming him with gospel blessings showed that the new religion of Christ and his church (Christianity) had dimensions sufficient to fill the soul and engage the talents and whole being of one of the greatest men and cause him to exclaim "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

### "WHAT THOU *MUST* DO"

Saul asked Jesus, "What wilt thou have me to do?" Saul did not say to Jesus: "Why Lord you have called on the wrong person; surely you have another in mind. Why, I am already religious; I'm a church member; I'm zealous and have a good conscience. You surely do not think I'm wrong and need salvation." Instead, Saul asked, "What wilt thou have me to do?"

Jesus did not respond to this question by saying, "Why, Saul, there is nothing you need to do; you already believe in me and that is enough! Instead, Jesus told Saul, "Go into the city and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

## THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS

Why did not Jesus tell Saul what he had to do? The answer is: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us" (II Corinthians 4:7). Paul meant that he and others were earthen vessels through whom the gospel ("this treasure") was administered to the lost. It was not God's will that Jesus tell Saul what to do to be saved. It was God's will that an earthen vessel tell Saul what he had to do to be saved!

Saul was blind and was led by the hand into the city of Damascus. He was led to the house of Judas on the street called Straight (Acts 9:11). The Lord directed a disciple in Damascus named Ananias to go to the house of Judas and inquire for Saul of Tarsus.

For three days Saul was without sight, and neither ate nor drank, but he prayed during that time. Yes, he prayed, but his praying did not release him from the responsibility of arising and being baptized to wash his sins away. Obviously, he was penitent; he repented of his sins. He had been rebellious against Jesus, but then he was sorrowful over his fighting Jesus and his church.

Some have said Saul was saved on Damascus Road when the light struck him. If he was, he did not know it, for he asked the Lord what he would have him to do. Jesus did not know it either, because he told him to go into the city and he would be told "what thou must do." Ananias certainly did not know Saul was saved on Damascus Road because he told Saul what to do to get rid of his sins.

### WHAT ANANIAS TOLD SAUL TO DO

Saul is also called Paul (Acts 13:9) in the New Testament. When Paul stood on the stairs of the castle in Jerusalem (Acts 21:34) he spoke to the crowd and related what had happened in his life; he said: "And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, came unto me and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see

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that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:12-16).

There are many interesting things regarding the foregoing account. How beautiful was the kindness of Ananias! He addressed the praying penitent as, "Brother Saul," because even though Saul was still a lost man, he was a brother to Ananias in that he and Ananias were both Jews. Peter addressed the sinners on Pentecost as brethren because they were his fellow Jews (Acts 2:29). The lost who were Jews addressed Peter and the other apostles as brethren (Acts 2:37). After Saul became a Christian and was the apostle Paul, he addressed the lost who were Jews as brethren (Acts 22:1).

Ananias made no reference to Saul's cruelty; he did not speak harshly and violently to the man from Tarsus. Perhaps he did not rebuke Saul because he had repented!

Even though Saul had been so mean that he later said he was "chief of sinners," Ananias did not present some special plan of salvation for him. If some had been present, perhaps they would have said: "Hold on Ananias! Aren't you proceeding too fast? Shouldn't you put Saul on probation a few months before baptizing him? His hands are stained with blood. He is a vile persecutor! You should not rush a man like that into baptism!" But, Ananias stated the urgent need of Saul; he commanded him to obey the Lord so he could get rid of his sins, or wash them away in the blood of Jesus!

### BEING BAPTIZED WAS WHAT SAUL "MUST DO"

Search Luke's accounts in Acts and you will be forced to the conclusion that when Jesus told Saul he would be told in the city "what thou must do," he meant he would have to be baptized to have his sins forgiven by the blood of Christ. Many say, "You surely don't think that water washes sins away." No, we do not think water washes sins away! But the Bible teaches that one who has not



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become a Christian must be baptized in water to have his sins washed in the blood of Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3). Jesus told the apostles to "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).

### "CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD"

What Ananias told Saul to do shows that one truly calls on the name of the Lord when he is baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). This proves that calling on the name of the Lord does not mean to merely say, "Lord, Lord save me," but it means submitting to the authority of Jesus and obeying his will.

Saul of Tarsus was raised from the watery grave where he was buried (Romans 6:4) and demonstrated that he was truly converted. He persecuted the church no more, but worked diligently for the Lord and his church. He completely left the persecutors and stood firmly with the persecuted! He immediately preached Jesus in the very synagogues where he had intended to persecute the servants of Jesus!

Sinner friend, if God saved Saul as sinful as he was, he will save you too, if you will obey the gospel as Saul did. People in the church of Christ will be glad to help you wherever you are if you desire assistance in being baptized as was Saul. Do not delay, be obedient today!

## *A Centurion Of Caesarea*

"There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, 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 10:1, 2).

There were two Caesarcas in Palestine at the time Jesus and his apostles lived on the earth. One was the Caesarea of Philip; or Caesarea Philippi which was located north of the Sea of Galilee and south of Mt. Hermon. The other was the Caesarea of the foregoing text which was located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea on the north end of the Plain of Sharon, about forty-six miles northwest of Jerusalem.

The Caesarea where Cornelius was serving as centurion of the Italian band was founded by Herod the great. The city and its harbor were completed in 13 B. C. The procurators of Judea, after Pontius Pilate, made this Caesarea their seat of government. This city was destroyed in 1226 A. D.

Rome ruled the land of the Jews when Jesus and his apostles lived there. Cornelius was serving as a centurion in the Roman occupational army. He had a Latin name and was undoubtedly an Italian. *Centurion* is from the Latin word that means one hundred. A centurion was an officer in the Roman army over one hundred men.

### MANY GOOD QUALITIES

The beloved physician, Luke (Colossians 4:14), who wrote Acts related many good qualities, traits and practices of Cornelius.

1. Cornelius was a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house. Perhaps, by his association with the Jews this Roman military officer had learned to have great respect for God and to be

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devout or holy in conduct. Also, he had led his family to fear God, and to be respectful of the Almighty One.

2. This Caesarean centurion gave much alms to the people. This means he helped the poor. He was a benevolent person. He was very benevolent because he gave *much* alms to the people.

3. This devout officer also prayed to God always, or continually. This obviously means he prayed regularly. The sacred text does not say for what he prayed, but it does say that Cornelius said an angel told him his prayers and his alms came up for a memorial before God (Acts 10:4). When Cornelius related to Peter the visit of the angel of God, he told Peter "A man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God" (Acts 10:30, 31). Angels appeared as men, and are sometimes called men in the Bible.

4. Cornelius was a just man. This means he was fair and honest (Acts 12:22).

5. This distinguished centurion was of good report among all the nation of the Jews (Acts 10:22). The people whom he was helping to keep in subjection to the rule of Rome spoke well of him. He must have been kind and sympathetic toward them. He surely showed compassion to them. They loved and respected him and spoke kindly of him.

### BUT HE WAS LOST!

Look over the foregoing list of good things about Cornelius and realize that he was also a lost man. An angel appeared to him, not to tell him he was all right and surely would be admitted into God's heaven were he to die, but the angel of God *warned him!* (Acts 10:22). The angel told him to send men to Joppa and call for Simon Peter (Acts 10:5). This angel told Cornelius that Peter would tell him what he ought to do (Acts 10:6). When the inspired apostle Peter related to the other apostles what had happened in the case of Cornelius he told them that the angel had told Cornelius to send for Peter who would tell him words by which he and his family could

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be saved (Acts 11:13, 14).

Cornelius was still lost even though he had prayed to God regularly. The case of Cornelius does not teach that one can be saved and become a Christian by praying regularly. It teaches instead that one does not become a Christian without hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ even though he prays regularly.

### "GOD HEARETH NOT SINNERS"

Because the Bible says God heard the prayers of Cornelius even before he had heard and obeyed the gospel some think there is a contradiction in the Bible because they read in John 9:31 that God heareth not sinners.

In John chapter nine is the story of a man born blind to whom Jesus gave sight by a miraculous act. The critics asked this man who gave him sight, and he told them a man called Jesus did it (John 9:11). Some of the critics who were Pharisees said Jesus was a sinner, and asked how such a sinner could perform such a miracle (John 10:16). These Pharisees told the man who had been blind "Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner" (John 10:24). It was in response to this charge against Jesus that the man who had been blind said, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God and doeth his will, him he heareth" (John 9:31).

The Pharisees knew Jesus was a Jew, and they believed any Jew was a child of God, and indeed any Jew was a child of God under the law of Moses which was the law that was in effect at the time the man born blind received his sight. Therefore, the Pharisees meant that Jesus was a sinner in the sense that he was an erring child of God. The man who was given sight obviously meant that if Jesus were such a sinner God would not have heard him and he could not have performed the miracle of giving sight to a blind man.

The man born blind had *seen* or understood while he was blind the principle stated in Proverbs 28:9 which says, "He that turneth

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away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayers shall be abomination." God does not listen to, or hear those who will not listen to him. This is true of one who is not a child of God and of one who is a child of God.

While Cornelius was an alien sinner he prayed regularly to God, and the Bible says God heard his prayers. Even though the Bible does not say for what he prayed, it may be that he prayed that God would help him know all that was right for him to do. He expressed the desire to hear all that God commanded him (Acts 10:33). Peter preached to him what he craved to hear.

Remember, Cornelius was not saved by prayer without hearing and obeying all that God commanded him in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Neither will he save any other without this.

## NOT LIKE CORNELIUS

Those who teach and preach the gospel encounter people who are good morally; they are honest, upright citizens, and they say they feel they are all right and do not show any interest in the gospel. It is sometimes told that these are like Cornelius about whom we read in Acts chapter ten. However, this is not fair to Cornelius. He was not like these because he wanted to hear God's message for him. He wanted to know the truth of the gospel. He did not say to Peter, when Peter came to him to preach the gospel, "Peter I do not need to listen to you. I am good enough already. I fear God; I help the poor; I am a just man; I pray to God regularly; I do not want to hear you." Instead, Cornelius was anxious to hear all that God wanted him to hear. Let us not misrepresent him by saying someone who has no interest in the gospel is like him!

## BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY GHOST

When Peter explained to the other apostles about his going to Cornelius and other Gentiles to preach the gospel, he told them how

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God had convinced him that the gospel was for Gentiles as well as for Jews. He told them concerning his preaching to Cornelius and his household, "As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 11:15, 16).

Cornelius and his house were baptized with the Holy Ghost before they heard the message of salvation, or the words whereby they could be saved. Obviously, the purpose of their being baptized with the Holy Spirit was not that they might be saved from their sins. Instead it was God's way of showing his approval of them as Gentiles as being subjects of the gospel, or that the gospel and salvation in Christ by the gospel was for Gentiles as well as Jews.

After Cornelius and his household received Holy Ghost baptism they were still lost and still had to hear words whereby they could be saved.

### HOLY GHOST BAPTISM NOT FREQUENT

Even when the apostles lived Holy Ghost baptism was not administered by the Lord very frequently. When Peter observed that the Holy Ghost (or Spirit) fell on Cornelius and his household he remembered what happened to him and the other apostles ten years before on the day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus. He did not say Cornelius and his household received Holy Ghost baptism just like another family had the night before, and just as he had frequently observed it in many places at various times during recent days. He said, instead it reminded him of what happened at the beginning which was Pentecost when he and the other apostles were baptized with the Holy Ghost a decade before!

Those who make the claim that Holy Ghost baptism occurs frequently are making a claim without any Bible evidence to support it! The apostles were baptized with the Holy Ghost so they could be guided into all truth and confirm that truth as being God's word (John 16:12, 13; Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:1-4). Cornelius and his

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household were baptized with the Holy Ghost so the apostles and other Jews could be assured that God wanted the Gentiles to hear the gospel of Christ.

### WHAT PETER PREACHED

The record of what Peter preached to Cornelius and his household is in Acts 10:34-47. He proclaimed the story of the Lord Jesus and how he was crucified and raised from the dead on the third day. He taught them the necessity of faith in Christ and commanded them to be baptized in water in the name of the Lord (Acts 10:48). The same apostle Peter commanded Jews to be baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). It is implied, therefore that Peter, by the Spirit of God, commanded Cornelius and his household to be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission, or blotting out, or forgiveness of their sins.

The sacred text does not say whether or not Cornelius and his household did what Peter commanded them to do. However we can reasonably think they did because the text indicated they were anxious to hear the truth. It is implied too, that they did obey the gospel, because it seems that the Holy Ghost would not have recorded through the inspired Luke the account of a case where people wanted to hear the gospel, who then heard it, and were told what to do to be saved, but did not do it and were not saved.

However, even if Cornelius and his household were not baptized as they were commanded to be, we can still learn from this case what God requires of the lost for them to be saved.

### DO NOT EXPECT AN ANGEL

Alien sinners should not expect an angel to come to them as one went to Cornelius. After the case of Cornelius, God's message of the New Covenant was written in a book called the New Testament. It is through this book that God speaks to us. Sinner friend, be very

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careful to learn from that book how you can become a Christian. Let me know if I can be of assistance to you. Write me at P.O. Box 2279, Florence, Al. 35630, or call me at (205) 766-6610, or 766-9846. I long to help the lost find the way!



## *The Conversion of Pisidians*

Luke recorded that as the prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:3). The brethren fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul (Paul) and sent them away (Acts 13:3). Then the beloved physician recorded, "So they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed into Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus" (Acts 13:4).

The Holy Ghost is the same as the Holy Spirit because both *Ghost* and *Spirit* are translations of the Greek word *pneuma*. The Holy Ghost directed inspired men directly. The same Holy Ghost directs us through the truth he revealed through the inspired men.

You will note that the text cited above says the brethren sent Barnabas and Saul on their mission, but it also says the Holy Ghost told the brethren to send them, so the Holy Ghost sent them!

### PREACHED IN PISIDIA

On the evangelistic journey referred to in Acts 13, Barnabas and Paul went to Antioch in Pisidia. Asia Minor was what is now known as Turkey. All of Asia Minor was about the size of Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee combined. Pisidia was a small country in south-central Asia Minor.

There was a Jewish synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia. Paul and Barnabas went into that gathering place of Jews on the sabbath day. The Jews worshipped in their synagogues on the sabbath day which was the same as our Saturday (Acts 13:14).

Paul and Barnabas sat down in the synagogue of Antioch, "And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, if ye have any word of exhortation for

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the people, say on" (Acts 13:15). Paul stood up and preached. His sermon is a summary of Jewish history similar to what Stephen preached as recorded in Acts 7.

Paul's sermon in the synagogue in Antioch included the story of Jesus, his death, his resurrection and forgiveness of sins through him (Acts 13:16-41).

## GENTILES TOO

There were Gentiles in the synagogue service in Antioch, because when Paul had spoken, the Jews went out of the synagogue and "the Gentiles besought that their words might be preached to them the next Sabbath" (Acts 13:42).

The next Sabbath day almost the whole city came to hear the word of God (Acts 13:44). The Jews were filled with envy when they saw the big crowd hearing Paul and they spoke against what he said, contradicting and blaspheming (Acts 13:45).

## GOD'S FOREORDINATION

Paul and Barnabas boldly told those Jews that they put God's word from themselves and thereby judged themselves unworthy of eternal life (Acts 13:46). This teaches plainly that those Jews could have been saved had they accepted the gospel. The incident certainly does not teach that they were not saved because God had foreordained they could not be saved!

God did foreordain that those who reject Christ and his gospel will not be saved as long as they reject these. In this sense one who is lost for rejecting Christ was foreordained to be lost. *But, the same one could be saved if he accepted Christ!* And if he accepted Christ it could be truthfully said he was saved because God foreordained he would be saved. For, God foreordained that anyone would be saved who accepts Christ. Also, God foreordained that one would be lost who rejects Christ.

## THE CONVERSION OF PISIDIANS

### GENTILES ORDAINED

Because the Jews in Antioch rejected Christ and his word, Paul and Barnabas turned to the Gentiles. "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).

Whatever this passage teaches we can be certain that *it does not teach* that those Pisidian Gentiles were saved because God determined or foreordained them to be saved without their willingness to be saved. For, we have already seen that the Jews who were not saved could have been saved had they not rejected what the Gentiles accepted!

*Ordained* of the text is from the Greek word *tetagmenoi*, and is literally translated *having been disposed*. Even the English text indicates the meaning of this Greek word. Obviously the reason the Gentiles believed was because they were disposed to do so; they were determined to do so! They had the right attitude. One determines his eternal destiny by his attitude!

A form of the word translated ordained in Acts 13:48 is in Acts 15:2 and it is translated *determined*!

Sinner friend, do not be deceived into thinking that you will be saved without your being disposed to be saved, or without your being determined to turn from sin and Satan unto Christ. God wants everyone to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). But, God will save only those who are disposed to be saved or who are determined and willing to be saved!

### BELIEVED

Luke says those who were ordained to, or disposed to eternal life, believed.

In many cases in Acts, Luke explained in detail what is involved in believing to be saved. In Acts 2:44 Luke wrote, "And all

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that believed were together, and had all things common." These had heard the gospel, believed it, repented of their sins, and had been baptized for the remission of their sins. They obviously confessed their faith in Christ as the Son of God before being baptized for such a confession is included in the message of the saving gospel which the apostles preached (Romans 10:8, 9).

Those that believed of Acts 2:44 had been added to the Lord's church by being baptized into it, and they were continuing steadfastly their obedience to God in that church (Acts 2:36-42).

Those Pisidian Gentiles that believed were no doubt the kind of believers Luke described in Acts 2, which means they were baptized into the Lord, or into his body which is the church (Ephesians 1:22, 23). One cannot *believe in Christ* in the saving sense as described and portrayed and plainly depicted in the New Testament without becoming a member of the church he can read about in the New Testament. The word *church* in your New Testament means the saved!

If you have not *believed*, please contact me and I will assist you in your obedience to Christ, or see that someone else does.

## *Conversions in Lyconia and Syria*

Some Jews in Iconium stirred up honorable women and chief men in Antioch of Pisidia after Gentiles accepted the gospel, and raised persecution against the bearers of the good news of salvation in Christ, and expelled these preachers, Paul and Barnabas, out of their coasts (Acts 13:50-52).

Paul and Barnabas went from Antioch of Pisidia to nearby Iconium, a large city of Lycaonia. Its modern name is Konya. It is a trade center in South Central Turkey.

### "SO SPAKE"

There was a Jewish synagogue in Iconium. This was the meeting place of the Jews. Paul and Barnabas went into the synagogue and "so spake that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed" (Acts 14:1).

Evidently there is considerable significance to the expression "so spake." This refers to the manner of their speaking, not their message. They preached the gospel, but they did it in a manner that a great multitude of Jews and Greeks believed.

There was a great cultural, social and religious barrier between Jews and Greeks. Despite this, Paul and Barnabas so spake that a great multitude of both Jews and Greeks believed.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is powerful enough to bring people of the widest differences into the wonderful fellowship in the one body of Christ which is his church.

It is possible to speak the gospel in a manner that it is rejected because of the offensive manner in which it is spoken. There is a story of a young man who left his parents and became destitute far from home. He wrote his parents asking for money so he could get home. His parents could not read. But, when the letter from their

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son arrived, the father asked a high tempered man who had little compassion for others to read the letter. Before he finished reading it, the old father exclaimed, "Stop! Do not read another line. He left home by his own decision. Its his hard luck. He got into this. He will have to get out of his predicament himself!"

Later in the day the old father got anxious about what the rest of the letter said, and he asked a compassionate, tender hearted neighbor to read the letter. This man had read no more than the other man had read when the father turned to his wife with tears in his eyes and trembling voice and said, "Ma, we will sell a cow to get that boy home."

We who tell others the truth of the gospel should always speak the truth, but speak the truth in love; love for the truth, and love for the people to whom we speak it (Ephesians 4:15).

## OPPOSITION

Even when the gospel is spoken or preached in the right manner some may oppose it and those who espouse it. In Iconium "the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and made their minds evil affected against the brethren" (Acts 14:2). The Greek text is literally translated "embittered their minds." There are still people who embitter people against the gospel. What an awful sin!

## LONG TIME

Acts 14:3 says Paul and Barnabas stayed in Iconium a long time speaking boldly in the Lord. Their message of truth was confirmed by signs and wonders which they did. The same Bible that tells us inspired men performed miracles tells us just as plainly that the reason for the miracles was to confirm that their message was from God! The Bible also teaches that the miracles were discontinued when the revelation of God's will was completed. That complete will is in the New Testament.

## CONVERSIONS IN LYCONIA AND SYRIA

The long time preaching of Paul and Barnabas in Iconium caused a division in the city. Some stood by the Jews; others supported and stood by the preachers (Acts 14:4). Realizing the intent of their enemies was to do them bodily harm and perhaps kill them, Paul and Barnabas fled to Lystra and Derbe, "And there they preached the gospel" (Acts 14:6, 7).

Persecution and danger and opposition did not cause Paul and Barnabas to quit preaching the gospel!

### WORD OF HIS GRACE

The Lord gave testimony unto the word of his grace by the signs and wonders which he performed through Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:3).

The word of God's grace is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24). One cannot be saved by God's grace without God's gospel. The gospel must be obeyed, and when one obeys it he is saved by God's grace.

In Antioch of Pisidia Paul and Barnabas persuaded people to continue in the grace of God, and the people did it by going out to hear the word of God (Acts 13:43, 44).

The Bible says Barnabas saw the grace of God in Antioch of Syria when he observed that people heard, believed and obeyed the gospel by turning to the Lord and doing what the Lord required (Acts 11:21-23).

The grace of God that saves teaches us what to do and how to act (Titus 2:11-15). The grace of God is not some mystical force floating around that might strike you. It is God's great and overwhelming favor expressed to us in the gospel where he promises to save those who hear and obey his word. You cannot enjoy God's grace and live in its blessings and benefits without obeying the gospel.

### THE MEANING OF BELIEVED

Luke reported that in Antioch of Syria the gospel was

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preached and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord (Acts 11:20, 21). In Iconium a great multitude believed.

*Believed* in the New Testament when used to refer to being saved or becoming a Christian refers to faith that was accompanied by whatever God requires for one to do to become one of his children.

Those converted in Antioch of Syria believed *and turned to the Lord*. Just believing did not save them. If it did, they were saved before they turned to the Lord!

Turning to the Lord involves turning from sin and being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3, 4).

In view of what is taught all through Acts and throughout the New Testament it is evident that the people in Iconium and in Antioch of Syria who believed repented of their sins and were baptized for the remission of sins.

If you have not become a Christian please contact us and we will be glad to assist you in doing this.



## *The Seller of Purple and Her Household*

Luke reported that churches in Asia Minor were established in the faith and increased in number daily (Acts 16:5). This means people were converted to Christ daily by the preaching of the gospel. When one is converted to Christ, the Lord adds him to his church (Acts 2:47). The church means the saved. One can no more be saved out of the church about which he can read in the New Testament than he can be saved out of the saved!

Through a vision the Lord directed Paul and Silas to go into Macedonia in Europe. They crossed the Aegean Sea and went to a chief city and colony of Macedonia called Philippi (Acts 16:6-13).

### DID PAUL AND SILAS OBSERVE THE SABBATH?

Under the law of Moses the Jewish people were commanded to observe as a special day of worship the seventh day of each week. That day was called the sabbath day. Our seventh day is called Saturday. *Saturday* was not derived from the word sabbath. *Saturday* is from the Anglo-Saxon (Old English) *Saturn's-day*. *Saturn* is from the Latin infinitive *serere* that meant *to sow*. In Roman mythology, Saturn was the god of agriculture.

*Sabbath* is from a Hebrew word that meant rest. The Jewish sabbath was a day of rest and worship.

The law of Moses was abolished when Jesus died on the cross (Ephesians 2:11-16; Colossians 2:14-16). This means that the law concerning the keeping of the sabbath was abolished when Christ died for our sins. He provided through his death a better covenant, the new covenant under which we live. That new covenant was given on the Pentecost day following the resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost was a special annual Jewish holy day. It too was abolished when Jesus died on Calvary.

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The Jews did not realize that Jesus had abolished the law of Moses on Calvary, so they kept on observing the sabbath. Paul and Silas and other gospel preachers went into Jewish services conducted on the sabbath and taught the people about Jesus, and they taught them to worship God contrary to the law of Moses (Acts 18:13).

Paul and Silas did not observe the Jewish sabbath, but they did take advantage of the opportunities afforded by Jewish people meeting on sabbath days to preach the new covenant to them.

### PREACHED TO WOMEN

While in Philippi Paul and Silas went out of the city on the sabbath to a place beside a river where people went to pray. They found a group of women there, and sat down and preached the gospel to them (Acts 16:13). Paul and Silas were evidently very informal in their speaking to the women because they preached to them while sitting.

One of the women who heard Paul and Silas was from the Asia Minor city of Thyatira. Her name was Lydia, and she was a seller of purple. The Greek text indicates she was a dealer in purple dyed garments and fabrics.

One of the seven churches of Asia Minor was in Thyatira (Revelation 1:11). We have no way of knowing whether or not Lydia and her household started the church there. They may have.

Lydia worshipped God before hearing Paul and Silas preach. Perhaps she was worshipping according to the Jewish law.

### THE LORD OPENED LYDIA'S HEART

The beloved physician Luke says that when Lydia heard Paul, the Lord opened her heart so that she attended unto the things spoken by the apostle (Acts 16:14). The Greek word from which *attended* is translated is *prosekein*, an infinitive. The lexicon gives several definitions of this word such as: to apply the mind to a thing;

## THE SELLER OF PURPLE AND HER HOUSEHOLD

to give heed to; to yield credence to; to follow; and to adhere to, or be attached to. The lexicon cites Acts 16:14 in the case of Lydia as an example of the word meaning to follow, adhere to, etc.

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe it (Romans 1:16). The word power of Romans 1:16 is from the Greek word from which the word *dynamite* came.

The word of God is the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:13). In another figure describing the word of God as an incisive surgeon's instrument, the inspired writer in Hebrews 4:11 says the word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, and that it pierces into the innermost being of a person.

It is no wonder that when the people heard the gospel on the day of Pentecost they were cut to the heart! (Acts 2:37).

God opened Lydia's heart, or her mind and soul with his powerful and sharp word. She reacted by following, or giving heed to what God told her in the gospel message. God calls people through the gospel (II Thessalonians 2:14). God called Lydia this way. God is calling you the same way if you have not become a Christian. He is calling you through the gospel message you are receiving by reading this sermon.

### LYDIA AND HER HOUSEHOLD WERE BAPTIZED

In attending to the things spoken by Paul, Lydia and her household were baptized. This makes it obvious that they learned they needed to be baptized by hearing Paul preach. Paul preached the gospel to them. He must have told them about Jesus, his birth, his life, his death for their sins, and his resurrection for their justification (I Corinthians 15:1-3, Romans 4:25).

Of course Lydia and those with her who were baptized believed the story about Jesus. They had to repent of their sins to be baptized properly (Acts 2:38).

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### FAITHFUL TO THE LORD

After Lydia was baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3) she told Paul and Silas "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there" (Acts 16:15). Lydia realized that she could not be faithful to the Lord without being baptized.

There are some who argue that God commands those who have already been saved from their alien sins to be baptized. The Bible does not teach this, but if it were true, baptism would be no less essential to going to heaven, because a child of God cannot refuse to obey God and be saved. John says that the child of God who says he knows God and does not do what God tells him to do is a liar and the truth is not in him (1 John 2:4).

God commands those who believe in Jesus to repent and be baptized so they can reach the saving blood of Jesus and have their sins blotted out and thus become children of God.

If we can be of help to you in your doing what Lydia and her household did, please contact us.

## *The Philippian Jailer and His Household*

After the conversion to Christ of Lydia and her household, Paul and Silas were put in jail in Philippi because Paul commanded a "spirit of divination" to come out of a damsel, and he came out. This maid brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. When her masters saw the hope of their gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas, and took them to the rulers and made charges against them. The magistrates tore off the clothes of the two evangelists and ordered them to be flogged or beaten. They were beaten with many stripes and thrown into the inner prison where their feet were fastened in the stocks (Acts 16:16-24).

### THEY PRAYED AND SANG PRAISES UNTO GOD

In the prison at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God, and their fellow prisoners heard them. What a strange sound the prayers and songs of the two saints must have been to the prisoners who were perhaps heathen criminals.

There are many striking scenes in the Bible involving preachers. For an example, Jonah was in a great fish's belly and then vomited out before he preached to the great city of Nineveh.

Paul and Silas were no doubt in great physical pain in the inner prison at Philippi. They had been scourged with many stripes and probably their backs were badly bruised and bleeding in that dark dungeon! Their feet were secured. Their minds could have been greatly burdened with a sense of the injustice they were suffering. They could have easily said, "Is this what we deserve in return for giving our lives and labors for people?"

Probably many of us in such a situation as Paul and Silas were in would have been wild with rage. But not if we had the right kind of faith. Faith like the faith of Paul and Silas prompted them to sing praises to God and to call on him in prayer!

## CONVERSIONS IN ACTS

In our dark and bitter hours we can produce our richest fruits of faith and piety! How rich indeed were the treasures of trust in God that cheered the hearts of two evangelists of Jesus and expelled the gloom of a dark dungeon at midnight and calmed the spirits of these two bleeding servants of Jesus Christ!

### AN EARTHQUAKE

While the singing and praying was going on suddenly there was a great earthquake that shook the foundations of the prison, and immediately all the doors of the prison were opened and the bands or straps on the prisoners were loosened. When this happened the sleeping prison keeper or jailer was awakened. When he saw that the doors were open, he drew his sword and started to kill himself because he imagined that all the prisoners had escaped.

When Paul saw that the jailer was about to kill himself he shouted to him and told him to do himself no harm, and assured him that all the prisoners were still in the jail. These few words of Paul's snatched a man from the brink of eternity who would have been unprepared to meet his Maker. How powerful words can be!

### THE JAILER ASKED A GREAT QUESTION

The jailer called for a light and rushed into the presence of Paul and Silas. He was trembling! He had been aroused from sleep by the colossal commotion of the quaking ground, the shaking foundations, the falling fetters, and the doors that were opened by the hand of God! When he went to sleep, doubtless he was very little concerned about the salvation of his soul. But after the earthquake, he fell before two of God's evangelists, then arose, and led them out of their opened cell and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:25-31).

### THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION

Paul and Silas responded to the jailer's question by saying,

## THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER AND HIS HOUSEHOLD

**"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).**

In previous lessons in this series it has been emphasized that to believe on the Lord in the sense of being saved includes doing whatever the Lord requires of one to become a Christian or to be saved from his alien sins. Is this what is meant in the answer given to the jailer? Indeed so!

Before the jailer and his household could believe on Jesus Christ they had to hear the word of the Lord, for faith comes by hearing the word of the Lord (Romans 10:17; John 20:30, 31). So, the preachers spoke to the jailer and his household the word of the Lord! (Acts 16:32).

### THE MEANING OF THE ANSWER SEEN BY OBSERVING WHAT TOOK PLACE

After hearing the gospel a lost person must believe it and repent of his sins to be ready to be baptized into Christ. The jailer believed, and his penitence was manifested in what he did for the wounded evangelists. See him washing blood clots from the wounds of Paul and Silas! "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his straight-way. And when he had brought them back into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house" (Acts 16:33, 34).

Jesus said, "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me only, but on him that sent me" (John 12:44). Obviously, he meant that whoever believes on him does not just believe on him but also believes on God. One cannot believe in God in the saving sense without also believing in Christ. Notice that the text says that after the jailer and his household were baptized, they rejoiced believing in God! This means that believing in God included being baptized. But believing in God includes believing in Christ. Therefore, believing in the Lord Jesus includes being baptized.

## CONVERSIONS IN ACTS

Baptism is the act by which one gets into Christ (Galatians 3: 27; Romans 6:3). Salvation is in Christ. That is why Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

A preacher once told me that the jailer was sprinkled right in his house and that one does not have to go to a pool of water to be baptized. Of course *baptism* means immersion. But the text says that after his baptism the jailer brought the preachers "into his house." This means that when he was baptized, the jailer was out of his house!

## CONCLUSION

If you have not believed on the Lord as did the jailer and his household, please contact me and I will do what I can to assist you in seeing you are baptized into Christ. The Lord loves you and died on the cross for you. He longs for you to accept him. Please do. Do not wait. You might wait too long and be lost forever.



## *The Thessalonians*

Following the conversion of the jailer and his household in the city of Philippi, the holy record of the beloved physician Luke says that Paul and Silas went to the home of Lydia and comforted or exhorted them and then departed. They went through Amphipolis and Apollonia and thence to Thessalonica where there was a synagogue of the Jews (Acts 16:40; 17:1).

*Synagogue* is a Greek word in English, or Anglicized form. It means a gathering together. It is a compound word made from the infinitive *agein* which means *to lead*, and *sun* which is the Greek preposition that means *with*, or *together with*.

An assembly was called the synagogue, and the building in which the assembly was held was called the synagogue.

Synagogues were established in many places by the Jews in the Greek and Roman world in the phase of Judaism just prior to the birth of Jesus. Some think synagogues had their beginning during the exile of the Jews in Babylon while they were far removed from Jerusalem. A remnant of the Jews returned to Jerusalem and the return was finished in 536 B. C.

Synagogues were prevalent when Jesus was on earth and he was associated with many of them (Luke 4:28-38).

### A BEGINNING POINT

The divine record says Paul and Silas passed through Amphipolis and Appollonia and came to Thessalonica, "where was a synagogue of the Jews" (Acts 17:1). This indicated that there was not a synagogue in Amphipolis or Appollonia because of the way it is stated that in Thessalonica there was a synagogue.

Evidently, Paul sought for a Jewish synagogue where he could begin his preaching in a place where there was no church of Christ.

## CONVERSIONS IN ACTS

The Jews who met in the synagogues were familiar with the Old Testament. It was Paul's regular practice to reason with his fellow Jews out of the Old Testament scriptures and show them that the prophecies concerning the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Acts 17:1-3). After Paul did this in the synagogue in Thessalonica the holy record says, "And some of them believed and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few" (Acts 17:4).

The word *believed* in the foregoing text is translated from a word that carries the idea of *persuaded*, or *convinced*. Of course this means they believed, but the element of persuasion is emphasized in the original Greek word. Gospel preachers need to present the heavenly message of salvation in a persuasive manner. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men . . ." (II Corinthians 5:11). *Persuade* of this text is a translation of a form of the same Greek word that is translated *believed* in Acts 17:4.

Luke reported that those who believed in Thessalonica "consorted with Paul and Silas" (Acts 17:4). *Consorted* is a translation of a compound Greek verb that means to adjoin one's self to; to associate with; to follow as a disciple. One translation by Dr. Alfred Marshall says for *consorted* in Acts 17:4, "threw in their lot." This obviously means that when they believed they did what God requires of people to become his children. Please consider in what follows what is included in *believing* in the sense that those Thessalonians believed.

### THE MEANING OF BELIEVED

1. *Believing includes repenting and being baptized for the remission of sins.*

In studying the Book of Acts one easily discovers that the word *believed* is often used to refer to obedience to the gospel and this includes repenting of sins and being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. We know this from what is said in Acts chapter two. In that chapter we learn that the Jews on the day of Pentecost

## THE THESSALONIANS

believed the gospel; they were *persuaded* that what they heard Peter preach about Jesus was true, for by that message they were convinced of its truth, and the sacred record says they were cut to the heart (Acts 2:36, 37). This caused them to ask what to do, and the Holy Spirit through the apostle Peter (Acts 2:4) told those believers to "repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

By being baptized, those on Pentecost were added by the Lord to his church (Acts 2:41, 47). They then continued to be faithful to the Lord (Acts 2:42). After their obedience to God in all these things, Luke says of them, "And all that *believed* were together . . ." (Acts 2:42). This proves what *believed* in the saving sense means.

### 2. *Believing means becoming God's elect.*

Writing to those who were converted in Thessalonica, Paul told them they were elect of God (I Thessalonians 1:4). This means they chose to accept God's plan by which they could be saved or become God's children, or Christians. Paul told them God had from the beginning chosen them to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth (II Thessalonians 2:13). Sanctification of the Spirit is by means of the truth which the Spirit revealed through inspired men. The truth sanctifies (John 17:17).

Before the world existed God had a plan by which people could be his chosen people or God's elect. Whoever accepts that plan which is called the truth of the gospel (Ephesians 1:13), he thereby becomes one of God's elect. Those who reject God's plan are not God's elect, but if they would accept it they would become God's elect.

There were some in Antioch of Pisidia who could have become God's elect, and they chose not to accept God's plan. Paul and Barnabas told them they judged themselves unworthy of eternal life (Acts 13:46). They could have been saved; they could have become God's elect, but they chose not to! There is no purpose in arguing

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over this point. It is plainly stated in that passage that people refused to be saved who could have been saved had they chosen to be saved! God chooses people through his plan, and only those become his elect who choose to accept his plan! God calls people by the gospel (II Thessalonians 2:14). God chooses those who accept that call to be his elect.

### 3. *Believing means entering God's kingdom.*

Paul and his associates admonished those in Thessalonica who believed to "walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (I Thessalonians 2:12).

There are many passages in the Bible which show that the Lord's kingdom is his church. Those in Thessalonica who believed were in the Lord's kingdom, and they were in the Lord's church. Paul, Silvanus and Timotheus addressed them as "the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ . . ." (I Thessalonians 1:1). But they were in the Lord's kingdom. This does not mean they were in two institutions, the kingdom and the church. It does mean the kingdom and the church are the same.

Jesus said one cannot enter the kingdom unless he is born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5). Jesus said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Jesus explained in that statement what he meant in John 3:5.

Notice that I Thessalonians 1:1 says "the church of the Thessalonians." This means the church there was the church of the Thessalonians in the sense that it was the church of which they were members. It was not the church of the Thessalonians in the sense that they were the ones who purchased the church. The Lord purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28).

Paul, Silvanus and Timotheus referred to the gospel as "our gospel" (I Thessalonians 1:5; II Thessalonians 2:14). Of course this does not mean the gospel was theirs in the sense that they originated it, for in that sense it is the gospel of God. God revealed the gospel through Jesus, and the gospel is about Jesus, so it is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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Often the New Testament writers referred to "our Lord Jesus," and "our God." Jesus and the Father are ours in the sense that they are divine beings to whom we have to give account, but of course we do not own them.

If Christians speak of "my church," or "our church" this is allowable for the same reason that the church in Thessalonica was the "church of the Thessalonians."

No one seems to think it is wrong to speak of the church to which he belongs as "my home church," or "my home congregation." If it is wrong to speak of "my church" or "our church" it seems that it would also be wrong to say "my home church."

All of this means we should *not* be upset over a Christian saying "my church." Sometimes Christians, even preachers, get upset over very trivial matters and are very inconsistent.

In the New Testament, those who believed in the saving sense of that term meant that they were baptized into Christ, for the remission of sins, and thereby became God's elect, which means they entered the church or kingdom of Christ.

If I can be of assistance to you in making your life right with God, please feel free to let me know.

## *The Bereans*

After converting people in Thessalonica and thus getting the Lord's church started there Paul and Silas went to Berea in Macedonia on the eastern slope of Mt. Olympus. This city was located in a well watered area and from it was a splendid view of the plains near Olympus. Greek mythology taught that the chief god who was called Zeus lived on the top of Mt. Olympus. The modern name of Berea is Verria.

### THE UNBELIEVERS IN THESSALONICA

The unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica moved against the newly established church of Christ in that city. They secured the services of "certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people" (Acts 17:5). This motley mob charged that "these that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus" (Acts 17:6, 7). After considerable commotion the babes in Christ, or the new congregation of the Lord's people in Thessalonica worked fast in the night to send Paul and Silas to Berea (Acts 17:10).

### A SACRED TRUST

Paul and Silas did not shrink back from evangelizing in Berea even though their doing so in Philippi (1 Thessalonians 2:2), and in Thessalonica brought on them much discomfort, shameful treatment and persecution. The reason these men did not quit preaching was because they had been put in trust by God with the gospel of Jesus

## THE BEREANS

Christ and they felt a strong compulsion not to violate that sacred trust (1 Thessalonians 2:4).

Modern gospel preachers have also been entrusted by Almighty God with the tremendous task of proclaiming the gospel. Those of us who have been so trusted by our Master should be diligent in preaching the word.

In Berea, despite all that had been done to them, Paul and Silas went into the synagogue of the Jews (Acts 17:10). They must have preached the gospel in that synagogue even though it is not stated in the sacred record that they did. It is implied that they did, because Luke recorded that the Jews in that synagogue "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks and of men not a few" (Acts 17:11, 12).

Among the converts in Thessalonica were not a few chief women (Acts 17:4), and in Berea honorable women were converted and not a few men (Acts 17:12). *Not a few* is a negative way of saying *many*.

## MORE NOBLE

Those in Berea were more noble than those in Thessalonica because they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily to see if the things they heard were so.

"More noble" of the text is a translation of *eugenesteroi*. As Dr. Olshausen says in his commentary on Acts, this word "does not refer to noble descent, but to the disposition of the inhabitants of Berea, which is particularly described in the following words of the verse, their very zealous study of the Scriptures being praised, for they searched out the oracles of the prophets that were appealed to by the apostle and fulfilled in the life of Jesus."

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### EAGERNESS

“Readiness of mind” is from a word which is also translated *eagerness*. Eagerness to know what was right was what led those Bereans to be convinced of the truth. One determines his eternal destiny by his attitude.

Concerning the more noble Bereans, brother J. W. McGarvey wrote the following.

“Their conduct can not be too highly commended, nor too closely imitated. The great sin of the Jews was a refusal to examine, candidly and patiently, the claims of the gospel. Having fallen into error by their traditions, they resisted, with passion and uproar, every effort that was made to give additional light, or to expose their errors. Their folly has been constantly re-enacted by religious partisans of subsequent ages, so that the progress of truth, since the dark ages of papal superstition, has been hedged up, at every onward movement, by men who conceived that they were doing God service in keeping his truth from the people. If such men live and die in the neglect of any duty, their ignorance of it will be so far from excusing them that it will constitute one of their chief sins, and secure to them more certain and more severe condemnation.

“There is no greater insult to the majesty of heaven than to stop our ears when God speaks, or to close our eyes against the light which he causes to shine around us. The cause of Christ, as it stands professed in the world, will never cease to be disgraced by such exhibitions of sin and folly, until all who pretend to be disciples adopt the course pursued by these Jews of Berea and search the Scriptures, upon the presentation of everything claiming to be God’s truth, and ‘see whether these things are so.’ Unless the word of God can mislead us, to follow implicitly where it leads can never be unacceptable to its Author.

“If the claims of Jesus are false, an honest and thorough investigation of them is the best way to prove them so. If they are



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true, such an investigation will be certain to convince us and to bless us." (From brother McGarvey's first commentary on Acts, page 216).

### DID NOT REBUKE

There is no indication that Paul or Silas rebuked the Bereans for checking up on what they were preaching. Dr. Luke who wrote Acts commended them for doing so. Even though they were checking on what inspired men said, they were not condemned for it, but instead commended. Truth suffers nothing from investigation. I always like for people to check on what I preach by the immutable standard known as the Bible!

I have known preachers who were offended by people comparing what they preached with the Bible. Preaching not in harmony with what the Bible says does not convert; instead it can confuse and deceive.

### WHAT SCRIPTURES?

The scriptures which the Bereans searched were obviously the Old Testament scriptures. Much of the New Testament had not been written when they searched the scriptures daily. They found that the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled in Christ and that he was indeed their Saviour.

### THEY BELIEVED

It is implied that Paul and Silas taught the eager and inquiring Bereans about the life, death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. They *believed!* This evidently means they accepted and obeyed the truth. If they did, they like many others about whom we read in Acts, turned from their sins, confessed their faith in Christ and were baptized into Christ in order to have the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:36-41).

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Regularly, on radio and television programs some preachers tell their listeners to believe in Christ and let him into their hearts right while they are listening. These do not tell how people can receive Christ into their hearts as is stated many times in Acts. This is very unfortunate.

Please study all the cases of conversion in Acts and see the obvious truth on how to become a Christian. If you are not a Christian contact me; I will assist you in whatever way I can. This is the most urgent matter that confronts you. Accept Christ soon!

## *Dionysius, Damaris, and Others*

Jews of Thessalonica went to Berea and stirred up the people when they heard that the gospel was preached there by Paul and Silas (Acts 17:10-13). Then the brethren in Berea "sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still" (Acts 17:14).

Paul was taken to Athens, Greece and from there he sent his escorts back to Berea to tell Silas and Timotheus to come to him in Athens as quickly as possible (Acts 17:15).

While Paul waited in Athens for Timotheus (Timothy) and Silas to come to him, his spirit was stirred when he saw that the city was full of images of idolatry (Acts 17:16).

Paul disputed with the Jews in the synagogue in Athens, and he disputed with various ones in the market daily. Certain philosophers of the Epicureans and Stoicks encountered him. Some of them asked: "What will this babbler say?" Others said, "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods," and Dr. Luke added, "Because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection (Acts 17:17, 18).

The Stoicks and Epicureans took Paul from the market place to the Areopagus and asked him about the new doctrine he was teaching. They told him that he was bringing certain strange things to their ears. Then Luke observed that all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing but either to tell, or to hear some new thing (Acts 17:19-21).

### OBSERVATIONS

Zeno was the founder of the Stoick school of philosophy. He was born at Citium on the island of Cyprus. He lived between 350 B. C. and 250 B. C.

Zeno's father was a merchant and brought books from Athens

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to him. Zeno later went to Athens and became a teacher. He taught in a porch. The Greek name for porch is *stoa*. Stoick was derived from this word. The teaching of Zeno resulted in the school of philosophers known as the Stoicks.

The Stoicks taught that the correct philosophy of life was total indifference to both life's sorrows and life's pleasures.

The Epicureans espoused the philosophy that the aim and end of life for every man is his own happiness. In this philosophy happiness was defined as pleasure. But pleasure does not always produce happiness.

Epicurius was the founder of the Epicurean school of philosophy. He was born in Samos in 341 B. C. and died in 270 B. C.

Epicurius meant by pleasure the absence of pain. In a letter to Menoeceus he said that he did not mean by *pleasure* the pleasures of the prodigal (waster), or sensual pleasure, as some had charged because of ignorance or prejudice, or willful misrepresentation. He said life could be so lived as to obtain the greatest amount of pleasure during its whole course. (See *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. II, page 965).

Obviously the philosophy of Epicurius was twisted to justify illicit sensual pleasure. The life of Epicurius was marked by simplicity bordering on asceticism. But his system of philosophy was very materialistic. He did not deny the existence of the heathen gods, but he denied they had anything to do with people. He banned religion even though he did not deny the existence of gods. Epicurius denied providence, moral order, immortality, and reward and punishment after death. He said the soul and the body both were made of atoms and both were dissolved after death.

It was inevitable that the gospel would be challenged by Epicurean philosophers, for the gospel is about a deity that became a man who suffered and died to show the utmost in self-sacrifice! This deity, Jesus of Nazareth, was raised from the dead and guides and fashions the lives of people who will be judged by him in the last day according to their deeds. All of this was contrary to the

## DIONYSIUS, DAMARIS, AND OTHERS

Epicurean philosophy which said that deities or the gods were completely separated from sorrow and pain, and had nothing to do with man therefore. So, a deity who became flesh and dwelt among us and who became "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," as Jesus is presented in the gospel Paul preached, was offensive to the intellectual pride of an Epicurean.

### AREOPAGUS OR MARS' HILL

The Greeks and Romans had the same gods, but gave them different names. *Mars* was the name the Romans gave their imaginary god of war. The Greeks called him *Ares*. Mars' Hill was the same as Areopagus. Areopagus means the hill of Ares.

When the Epicurean and Stoick philosophers had brought Paul to Mars' Hill he stood in the midst of it and said, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you" (Acts 17:22, 23). *Too superstitious* of the foregoing text is from a word that is also translated *very religious*. Hesiod the poet said the Greeks had thirty thousand gods. Paul explained how this happened in Romans chapter one.

It has been observed that perhaps the very religious Athenians were afraid they would overlook some god in their devotions, so they put up an altar with the words "To the unknown god" on it. Paul used these words as his text for a great sermon which he preached on Mars' Hill regarding the true and living God who was unknown to those heathen worshippers.

### FACTS PAUL PRESENTED ABOUT THAT UNKNOWN GOD

It is recorded in Acts 17:22-31 that Paul told those on Areopagus the following about the God that was unknown to them.

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1. The true God made the world and everything in it.
2. The God the Athenians did not know is Lord of heaven and earth.
3. The real God does not live in man-made temples. Areopagus was in the shadow of a higher hill known as the Acropolis on which stood the magnificent Parthenon and other beautiful edifices made by men. Paul may have pointed to these heathen temples when he told those on Mars' Hill that God did not dwell in such buildings.
4. That unknown God does not need anything that man can offer, but he gives to all life and breath and all things.
5. The true and living God made of one blood every nation of men to dwell on the earth.
6. In this true and living God we live, and move and have our being, and we are his offspring.
7. This God commands all men everywhere to repent.
8. Paul told those Athenians that the true and living God had appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ whom he raised from the dead. "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed; among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them" (Acts 17:32-34).

Dionysius being an Areopagite may have been an Epicurean or a Stoick. Apparently, an Areopagite was one who spent much time on Areopagus discussing various views with many others.

Dionysius, Damaris, and others believed as a result of hearing Paul preach. He no doubt explained other things to these who clave to him after he left Areopagus.

As has been clarified in previous lessons in this series, *believed* in Acts means accepting the Lord which includes repenting and being baptized into Christ for the remission or forgiveness of sins.

The power of the darkness of heathen philosophy made it hard for the gospel to reach the minds of those who were engrossed in,

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and blinded by it. Evidently, relatively few were converted as a result of Paul's preaching in Athens which was the citadel of heathen mythology, idolatry and philosophy, but this did not stop him. It is right to preach the gospel of the true God and the Lord Jesus Christ and his resurrection and the coming judgment whether people accept it or not.

The evidence is overwhelming that Jesus was raised from the dead. Paul affirmed that the resurrection of our blessed Lord was God's assurance that God has appointed the day of judgment. Just as surely as "the rending tomb proclaims the conquering arm" of God, and Christ was raised from the grave of the Arimathean senator, even so God will judge the world.

Are you ready for God's judgment day? If not, you should act at once and do whatever God requires of you to make things right with him and prepare for the judgment day, because the Lord will come back and bring all into judgment at an unexpected time, as a thief comes in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2).

If I can be of any help to you in preparing for God's judgment please let me know.

## *The Corinthians*

"After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth . . ." (Acts 18:1). "These things" of this text refers to the things recorded in Acts 17 about Paul's experiences at Athens, Greece, including his encounter with the Epicureans and the Stoicks, and the conversion of Dionysius, Damaris and others.

### HE ENTERED CORINTH

Paul's entrance into Corinth of the above text was on his second missionary journey. In Corinth he reasoned in the Jewish synagogue every sabbath and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks (Acts 18:4).

Silas and Timothy had stayed at Berea when Paul left Berea, but Paul had sent them instructions to come to him with all speed. They obeyed him (Acts 17:14, 15). They did not join Paul in Athens, but they found him in Corinth (Acts 18:5). When they joined Paul he was encouraged. He testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. The Jews opposed themselves and blasphemed. Paul "shook his raiment" and told those Jews, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (Acts 18: 5, 6).

After this Paul entered the home of Justus, "one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue" (Acts 18:7).

Before going unto the Gentiles Paul evidently preached to some more Jews, for Dr. Luke recorded: "And Crispus the chief ruler of the synagogue believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8).

### WHAT WAS PREACHED AND THE RESULTS

By Paul's preaching the gospel in the wicked city of Corinth, and by people's responding in obedience to that gospel, a church of



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Christ was started there. Later, Paul wrote two letters to that church.

In the first letter Paul wrote to the Corinthian congregation of God's people he reminded them of what he had done in Corinth, when he wrote: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures . . . ." (I Corinthians 15:1-4).

From the foregoing we learn that Paul evidently preached in that synagogue close to the home of Justus. He proclaimed Jesus and him crucified, buried and raised from the dead. One cannot start a congregation of the Lord's church in any place unless these wonderful cardinal facts of the gospel are heard and believed.

The story is told of a missionary in Turkey where the religion of Mohammed is entrenched. He told a group: "I am traveling, and I reach a place where the road branches in two directions. I look for a guide, and find two men, one dead and one alive. Which of the two should I ask for direction, the dead or the living?" They replied, "Oh, the living!" Then the missionary said, "Why then send me to Mohammed, who is dead, instead of to Christ who is alive?"

Another story illustrates the same power of the wonderful resurrection of our Lord Jesus. A Muslim (a follower of Mohammed) was telling a Christian about the beautiful shrine in Mecca where Mohammed is buried, and he said, "You Christians do not have a place comparable to this shrine." The Christian replied, "No, neither do we have a corpse!"

Dr. Lees reported that in one place in Africa when a heathen was dying witch doctors put in his hand a dead bone as a passport into the world beyond. He then observed that Christians do not grasp a dead bone as they leave this world but they grasp the hand of the living Lord.

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Praise God! Jesus died for our sins and was raised again! Paul preached this to the Corinthians, both Jews and Gentiles. Those who believed it, and repented of their sins and were baptized became children of God! “. . . many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). They heard about Jesus! They heard about his love for them and how he gave himself for their sins! Jesus said, “Go 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 condemned” (Mark 16:15, 16). This states the reason the Corinthians believed and were baptized!

### WAS CRISPUS BAPTIZED?

Some have said that Crispus was not baptized because it says he believed on the Lord. This editor has already stressed in this series that *believed* in Acts often obviously includes repentance and baptism.

We do know that Crispus was baptized, for in Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church he said he baptized Crispus (1 Corinthians 1:14).

### DIVISION AND BELONGING TO CHRIST

The devil divided the brethren in the Corinthian church. Some were saying they were of Paul; some of Cephas; some of Apollos; and some of Christ. Paul rebuked them for their division and told them it was wrong (1 Corinthians 1:10; 3:1-3). He showed them for an example that they had no right to say they belonged to him unless he had been crucified for them and unless they had been baptized in his name. Since it was obvious that neither of these was true, it was just as obvious that they did not belong to Paul!

This also means that Paul was saying to the Corinthian Christians that one cannot belong to Christ unless Christ was crucified for him and unless he was baptized in the name of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:12-15). Yes, the Corinthians were baptized in the name or by

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the authority of the Savior who was crucified for them, in order that they might belong to that Savior the blessed Lord Jesus!

From all this we also learn that to belong to Christ is the same as belonging to the Lord's church. The ones who belonged to Christ in Corinth were the ones who were in the Lord's church there.

In the New Testament it is abundantly clear that no one belonged to Christ except those in the church he purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28).

Dear reader, if you do not yet belong to Christ; if you are not in his church; if you have not believed and been baptized as the Corinthians of Acts 18:8, it is my heart's desire and prayer that soon you will.

If I can be of any help to you in this matter, please let me know.

## *The Case of Apollos*

The apostle Paul tarried in Corinth "a good while" (Acts 18:18) on his second missionary journey, and then went to Syria. Aquila and Priscilla accompanied him as far as Ephesus.

While in Ephesus on his way to Syria, Paul went "into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews" (Acts 18:19). The word *reasoned* of this text is from the Greek word *dielezato* and is literally translated *lectured*.

Paul left Ephesus and went on to Syria. He traveled by ship and landed at Caesarea. He greeted the Christians there and went on to Antioch in Syria. He "spent some time there," and went westward "over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples" (Acts 18:23).

### APOLLOS

An Alexandrian Jew named Apollos went to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures. "This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John" (Acts 18:25).

Apollos preached boldly in the synagogue and among his auditors were Paul's friends, Aquila and Priscilla. They took Apollos aside and explained God's way more accurately to him (Acts 18:26). Apparently, Apollos accepted their instruction. Evidently the matter that concerned Aquila and his wife was the understanding Apollos had of John's baptism; he knew only the baptism of John. Of course this does not mean he did not know anything but John's baptism; it obviously meant that his understanding of baptism did not include the baptism authorized by Christ in his great commission. This baptism was first preached in the name of, or by the authority of Jesus

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on the day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus (Luke 24:46; Acts 2:38).

### A DIFFICULT CASE

The case of Apollos is rather difficult because Dr. Luke did not record in Acts when Apollos learned what he knew about the baptism of John. Apparently, it was about twenty years following the Pentecost of Acts 2 when Aquila and Priscilla explained God's way more accurately to Apollos in Ephesus.

Being a Jew, Apollos may have been baptized with John's baptism before the day of Pentecost of Acts 2. Even though he was born at Alexandria, Egypt, he could have been in Palestine and heard John the Baptizer preach, and did not remain in Palestine long enough to learn of the baptism of the great commission of Jesus.

Another possibility in the case of Apollos is that he could have learned about John's baptism after the day of Pentecost of Acts 2 from someone else who did know about the great commission baptism in the name of Jesus.

John the Baptizer told people who received his baptism to "believe on him that should come after him, that is one Christ Jesus" (Acts 19:4).

John's baptism was preceded by faith in Jesus, and it was for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4). Those who received that baptism before Pentecost were prepared material for the kingdom of God or the church of the Lord which he established on the Pentecost of Acts 2.

It is said of Apollos before Aquila and Priscilla explained God's way more accurately to him that (1) he was eloquent; (2) he was mighty in the scriptures (or powerful in the scriptures as the Greek text says); (3) he was instructed in the way of the Lord; (4) he was fervent or burning in spirit; (5) he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord; and (6) he knew only the baptism of John (Acts 18:24, 25).

After Aquila and Priscilla instructed Apollos in God's way

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more accurately, Dr. Luke says he went into Achaia (or Greece) and that in Achaia "he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ" (Acts 18:28).

### BEFORE OR AFTER PENTECOST?

If Apollos was baptized with John's baptism before the Pentecost of Acts 2, nothing indicates that he had to be baptized again by being baptized with the baptism of the great commission of Jesus. However, if he was baptized after the Pentecost of Acts 2 with John's baptism, therefore after John's baptism was no longer valid, it would have been necessary for him to have been baptized again, by being baptized with the baptism of the great commission, or by the authority of Jesus as in the case of those at Ephesus who were baptized again. Therefore if Apollos was baptized with John's baptism after the Pentecost of Acts 2 it is implied that he was baptized again after he was taught the way of the Lord more perfectly by Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 19:5).

Apparently, the reason the ones of Acts 19:5 were baptized again was because they were baptized with John's baptism after the baptism was no longer valid. John's baptism was no longer valid after the baptism of the great commission of Jesus came into effect which was on the first Pentecost day following the resurrection of Jesus as recorded in Acts 2.

### WERE THEY BAPTIZED AGAIN?

There is no indication that the twelve apostles and others who had been baptized with John's baptism were baptized again on the Pentecost of Acts 2.

The New Testament does not directly say that the twelve apostles whom Jesus selected were baptized with John's baptism, but it implies that they were. "And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God

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against themselves, being not baptized of him" (Luke 7:29, 30). Those who *refused* to be baptized with John's baptism thereby rejected God's counsel! If the twelve whom Jesus selected refused to be baptized with John's baptism, then Jesus selected twelve to be his apostles who had rejected the counsel of God against themselves! It is not conceivable that he did this! This is the evidence that the twelve apostles were baptized with John's baptism.

## JOHN PREPARED MATERIAL

Because John prepared material for God's building (Luke 1: 16, 17) which is his church (Ephesians 2:20-22), we can correctly say that God put that material into the church when Jesus built the church (Matthew 16:18) on the Pentecost of Acts 2. On that Pentecost and ever since that day all others whom God has put into his church were baptized with the baptism of the great commission of Jesus.

Of course, only those who had been baptized with John's baptism that were still faithful like the apostles were put into the church when it was built on the Pentecost of Acts 2.

About one hundred and twenty disciples including the apostles and Mary the mother of Jesus and her other children were evidently faithful just before the Pentecost of Acts 2 (Acts 1:13-15).

It is evident that the mother of our Lord was a member of the church of her Son. She was material prepared for it just like all the other disciples who were faithful when the church was built and God put them into that church.

The last time Mary the mother of Jesus is mentioned in the New Testament is in Acts 1. There is no evidence whatsoever that she was different in any way to the other women in the church. Other members of the church did not pray to her as "the blessed virgin." This heathen practice was begun many years following the writing of the New Testament. It is indicated that Mary was a member of the church of Christ just like all the other members! This writer

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is a member of the same church of which the mother of Jesus was a member! Dear reader, I hope you are too! If you are not you should become a member of it at once by being baptized into it.

There is no indication or necessary inference that Mary the mother of Jesus, or the apostles, or the other disciples of that one hundred and twenty had to be baptized again on Pentecost when the church was established.

On another occasion before that Pentecost day of Acts 2 more than five hundred brethren were assembled and Jesus appeared to them after his resurrection. When Paul wrote I Corinthians the greater part of these brethren were still living (I Corinthians 15:6). If these, or any of them were still faithful when the Lord built his church, there is no indication they were baptized again. They were material prepared for God's building, and God put that material into his building along with those who were baptized on Pentecost.

### ACTS 11:17

When Peter explained to the other apostles how Cornelius and his household had been converted he said, "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:17). This verse has been used as proof that the apostles were baptized on the Pentecost of Acts 2 which was when the apostles received the gift like Cornelius and his household received.

"Believed on the Lord" of this verse refers to what Cornelius and his household did. The context proves this. But even if it refers to the apostles it does not say they believed on the Lord on Pentecost.

The Greek text of Acts 11:17 is literally translated "having believed on the Lord Jesus Christ," and this tells about Cornelius and his household as the "having believed on the Lord Jesus Christ" ones, and that he could not refuse to baptize them in water. Peter felt he would have been withstanding God if he had refused to



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baptize those Gentiles, Cornelius and his household. (See also Acts 10:47).

If the expression "having believed on the Lord Jesus Christ" of Acts 11:17 refers to the apostles it would refer to something they did before they received the "gift" referred to in Acts 11:17 which in their case was baptism of the Holy Ghost according to Acts 1:4, 5; 2:1-4. So this would mean they believed on the Lord before they were baptized with the Holy Ghost.

There is nothing to indicate that the twelve apostles were baptized again in water on the Pentecost of Acts 2 before or after they were baptized with the Holy Ghost. They had been baptized in water with John's baptism and that was for the remission of sins, (Mark 1:4) and they did this believing in the Lord Jesus Christ if they did what John taught (Acts 19:4). In doing all of this they became prepared material for God's building, the kingdom of God which is his church (Luke 1:16, 17).

Evidently, John's baptism was valid until the day of Pentecost of Acts 2. On that day and ever since the baptism of the great commission has been in effect. On that Pentecost and ever since people have had to be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:15, 16).

## *The Ones Who Were Baptized Again*

In the previous chapter, this editor presented in this series a lesson on Apollos. The beloved physician Luke wrote that Apollos went into Achaia (Greece) and to the city of Corinth in that country (Acts 18:27, 19:1).

In Greece, Apollos "helped them much which had believed through grace" (Acts 18:27). Probably, Paul made reference to what Apollos did for the saints in Greece when he wrote that he and Apollos were ministers by whom Christians in Corinth had believed (I Corinthians 3:5). He added, "I have planted; Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (I Corinthians 3:6).

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul went to Ephesus and found certain disciples. He asked them, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? and they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:2-5).

### MEANING OF DISCIPLE

*Disciple* is a translation of the Greek word *mathetes* which means a learner. (The word *mathematics* came from that word). One can be a disciple of Jesus without being a Christian or a saved person. But, one cannot be a Christian without being a learner or disciple of Jesus. The disciples in Ephesus apparently knew about Jesus. Even those baptized by John were told by him that they should believe on Christ Jesus (Acts 19:4).

## THE ONES WHO WERE BAPTIZED AGAIN

### DID THEY KNOW THE HOLY GHOST EXISTED?

The disciples in Ephesus told Paul, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost" (Acts 19:2). It is doubtful that they meant they did not know the Holy Ghost existed. The inimitable J. W. McGarvey suggested that the word *given* can be supplied in the translating of the original text in order to complete the sense for English readers. He stated that this is done in John 7:39 which says, "For the Holy Ghost was not yet given: because that Jesus was not yet glorified." The word *given* in this text in the King James Version, the American Standard Version, and the New American Standard Version, is in italics because it is an interpolation, which means there is no word for *given* in the Greek text. This means *given* is an interpolation; it was supplied by the translators to complete the sense of the original text for English readers.

If *given* had not been supplied in the translating of John 7:39 the impression would be left that "the Holy Ghost was not yet," or did not exist before Jesus was glorified. So, it is not incredible that the word *given* can be supplied in Acts 19:2 so that the disciples were saying they had not heard that the Holy Ghost was *given*. This would not be out of harmony with the sense of the Greek text; it is really in harmony with the context.

### WHY DID PAUL ASK?

When Paul asked the disciples in Ephesus, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? he surely was asking if they had received a miraculous measure or gift of the Holy Spirit, for he would have taken for granted that they had received the ordinary, non-miraculous gift of the Spirit which all Christians receive when they are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38). (This editor will write an *Editorial and Insight* on this gift of the Holy Spirit in a future issue of *The World Evangelist*).

The disciples in Ephesus were baptized in the name of the

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Lord Jesus (Acts 19:5). Then Paul laid his hands on them and the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied (Acts 19:6). This indicates that Paul was asking about their receiving a miraculous gift or measure of the Holy Ghost when he asked them if they had received the Holy Ghost since they believed. Obviously, some received such gifts in the early church and some did not. Paul learned from those disciples at Ephesus that they did not even know the Holy Ghost was thus *given*.

## BAPTIZED IN JESUS' NAME

To be baptized in Jesus' name does not refer to the one doing the baptizing just saying the words "I baptized you in Jesus' name." Obviously to baptize in Jesus' name is not something *said*, but it is something *done*!

Paul told the Philippian Christians that *after Jesus was raised from the dead* God the Father gave him "a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . ." (Philippians 2:9, 10). This does not mean the *name* Jesus was not given to God's Son until after his resurrection, because the *name* Jesus was given to him before he was born of the virgin Mary (Matthew 1:21).

All this means that the name *given* of Philippians 2:9 means *authority*. To be baptized in the name of Jesus is to be baptized in or by his authority! Those who are baptized in the name of Jesus are baptized into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:20).

The disciples at Ephesus had not been baptized recognizing the authority of Jesus Christ, so they were baptized again! They were baptized in the name or authority of Jesus Christ! On the day of Pentecost following Christ's resurrection and ever since then, people have had to be baptized in the name of, or by the authority of Jesus Christ in order to become Christians and to get rid of their alien sins. This is the reason, why it is evident that those disciples

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in Ephesus had been baptized unto John's baptism after that first Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus, and therefore they were baptized after John's baptism was no longer valid or in force.

### "JUST SO ONE KNOWS GOD COMMANDS IT"

John's baptism was valid from the time he began to baptize, probably until the first Pentecost after Christ's resurrection (Acts 2). John told those whom he baptized that "they should believe on him who should come after him, that is, Christ Jesus" (Acts 19:4). Apparently this believing on him did not involve the kind of conception of Christ's authority that was required beginning on that Pentecost of Acts 2.

I have heard some say that baptism (immersion in water) is valid so long as the one being immersed knows God commanded people to be baptized. But, if this is true, why did the ones at Ephesus need to be baptized again? Surely they knew God commanded the baptism of John!

### BELIEVED INCLUDES BAPTISM

Paul asked the Ephesian disciples "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" When they indicated they did not know disciples were supposed to receive the Holy Ghost, Paul then asked, "Unto what then were ye baptized?" This shows that *believed* as Paul used the word included *baptism*. He was saying, "You evidently have not *believed* properly!" In this series this editor has pointed out several times that in Acts it is obvious that to believe in the saving sense includes being baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

### BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE

"John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4).

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The word *baptism* means *an overwhelming or a covering up*. Some have used Mark 1:4 to try to prove that the "baptism of repentance" in that text which was for the remission of sins was merely an "overwhelming of repentance" that John preached.

It seems that the Holy Spirit in directing the writers of the Bible anticipated every error that could be taught. The baptism of repentance which John *preached* (Mark 1:4) was the baptism of John which John *administered*, for Paul said "John *baptized* with the baptism of repentance!" (Acts 19:4). So John's "baptism of repentance" was baptism (immersion) in water in the river Jordan of those Jews who were baptized who confessed their sins (Mark 1:5).

John's baptism was a baptism of repentance because it was preceded by repentance on the part of those whom he baptized, and it was unto (or into) repentance in that those whom John baptized were baptized into a life of repentance; meaning, even after their being baptized they were to repent whenever they did wrong (Matthew 3:11).

## CONCLUSION

In the next chapter in this series on Conversions in Acts, I will write concerning the miraculous gifts, speaking in tongues, prophesying, etc. which are mentioned in Acts in connection with some of the cases of conversion related in Acts.

## *Miracles and Conversions*

Jesus performed miracles and the New Testament tells us he worked with his apostles and others and performed miracles through them. When they followed the instructions of their Lord and Master which he gave them in what we call the great commission, "They went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen." (Mark 16:20).

*The Acts Of The Apostles* is a treatise in the New Testament in which Dr. Luke recorded by divine guidance some of the Acts of some of the apostles of Jesus. "The beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14) recorded how the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus and that they began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4).

As Mark said, the word, or the saving message which the apostles preached was confirmed by signs or miracles.

### WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

The word *miracle* is used too freely. Many use it to refer to things which do not qualify as miracles according to the Biblical standard, or the Biblical concept of miracles. In the Bible a miracle was a phenomenon that was not according to the ordinary processes or functions observed in nature.

Jesus turned water to wine miraculously (John 2). This means water became wine immediately or instantly. The Lord turns water to wine every year in grape vines, but not miraculously. According to John 2 water was poured into containers and it became wine instantly.

Clouds pour water into a container called the ground. The water seeps into the ground around grape vines. It mixes with the dirt, bugs, worms, and barn yard waste. While some water goes down the outside of the vines, some is also going up on the inside of the

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same vines. The vines eventually produce leaves and in the leaves sunshine, oxygen, and water combine in a process called photosynthesis which produces sustenance for the vine.

After several weeks blossoms appear on the vines, and then little grapes. The grapes grow and ripen. One can take a cluster of the ripe grapes and squeeze them over a cup and catch a cup of wine. Who made the wine? The Lord did! He changes water to wine in the vine! But he does not do it miraculously! However what he does in the vine is just as hard to explain as what he did in changing the water to wine instantly as in John 2. What he does in the vine takes longer than what he did at the wedding feast in Cana as stated in John 2. What he does in the vine is not a miracle, but what he did at Cana was a miracle!

All sick people who get well get well by the power of God as he works through the processes we call nature. Such is divine healing, but it is not miraculous healing. Miraculous healing was divine healing too, but there is divine healing that is not miraculous.

The miracles recorded in Acts were performed as confirmation of the word of salvation God revealed and made known through the inspired men. These miracles were sometimes performed in connection with conversions, but they were only incidental to such conversions. Even when there were miracles in connection with conversions, lost people still had to hear and obey the gospel. The miracles merely confirmed that the gospel message through which people could be saved was indeed God's message. The purpose of the miracles was to confirm the word. The word was confirmed by them (Hebrews 2:1-4).

The apostle John did not think there would always be miracles. He wrote a record of miracles Jesus performed and said that the record was designed to cause people to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 20:30, 31). There would have been no reason to make a record of the miracles of Jesus, if Jesus was going to keep on performing such miracles through men as long as time would last!



## MIRACLES AND CONVERSIONS

### MIRACULOUS, SPIRITUAL GIFTS CEASED

When Paul wrote the I Corinthian Letter the church in Corinth was plagued with much strife and division. They were even fussing over their spiritual gifts like speaking in tongues. Paul taught them a more excellent way which is the way of love (I Corinthians 12:31; 13:1-13).

Paul explained that soon the spiritual gifts of special knowledge, prophecy, and speaking in tongues would cease when "that which is perfect is come" (I Corinthians 13:8-10).

Paul said that spiritual gifts were "that which is in part." With the spiritual gifts of knowledge, prophecy, and tongues, God revealed gradually his will as given in the New Testament.

"That which is perfect" is of the same kind as "that which is in part." "That which is in part" obviously referred to the gradual giving of the will of God in the new covenant. Therefore, "That which is perfect" refers to the completed revelation of God's will. Paul explained the difference in having "that which is in part" (the gradual giving of God's will) and "that which is perfect" (the completed revelation of God's will). He illustrated this difference by saying, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (I Corinthians 13:12). "Through a glass darkly" is more literally translated "in a mirror obscurely."

While God's revelation was being gradually made one could not see himself clearly. But when that revelation was completed one could look into that "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25), the complete revelation of God's will, or "that which is perfect" and see himself clearly. One can thus know as he is known.

As surely as God's will was completely revealed as contained in the New Testament, so spiritual gifts like speaking in tongues ceased. History of the era immediately following the apostolic era confirms this.

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### MIRACLES IN ACTS

Some miracles recorded in Acts are as follows.

1. Jesus was taken up into heaven (1:9-11).
2. The Holy Ghost (or Holy Spirit) came upon the apostles. They were baptized with the Holy Ghost (2:1-4).
3. The apostles and others spoke in tongues or languages which they had not studied (2:4; 10:46; 19:6).
4. Many wonders and signs were done by the apostles (2:43; 5:12).
5. Peter and John healed a man who had been lame from his mother's womb, and he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping and praising God (3:1-8).
6. A man and his wife were miraculously killed because of their lying and hypocrisy (5:1-10).
7. Sick folks, and those vexed with unclean spirits were healed (5:16; 8:7).
8. Prison doors were opened; chains fell off hands of prisoners; and bands were loosed; foundations of prison were shaken (5:19; 12:6, 7; 16:26).
9. Stephen did great wonders and miracles among the people (6:8).
10. Stephen looked into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus (7:55).
11. Palsied and lame were healed (8:7).
12. A man who had been in bed eight years was healed instantly (9:33-34).
13. Dead were raised (9:36-41).
14. The Lord appeared to Saul of Tarsus. (He still had to hear and obey the gospel to be saved) (9).
15. Angel spoke to a man (10:7).
16. A man saw a vision from God (10:9-16).

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17. A man was struck blind (13:10, 11).
18. Special miracles of healing were wrought by God by the hands of Paul by means of handkerchiefs and aprons (19:11).
19. A deadly serpent bit Paul and he felt no harm (28:3-6).

## THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

To properly appraise the miracles in Acts in relation to modern so-called miracles we need to also think about the miracles Jesus performed as recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Some of them are:

1. Healed the maimed (Matthew 15:30). This healing involved replacing missing body parts! (I challenge modern so-called miracle performers to make one hair appear instantly on a bald head!)
2. Enabled the blind to see (Matthew 20).
3. Stopped storms (Matthew 8).
4. Withered up trees (Matthew 21:19).
5. Made bread and fish (Matthew 14).
6. Walked on the water (Matthew 14).
7. Cleansed lepers (Matthew 8; Luke 17).
8. Raised the dead (John 11; Luke 7, 8).
9. He was transfigured and brought back Moses and Elijah who were transfigured with him (Matthew 17).
10. Changed water to wine (John 2).
11. Caught a draught of fishes (Luke 5).
12. Healed the palsied and many other ill (Luke 5).
13. Killed hogs (Luke 8:32, 33).

## MISUSE OF HEBREWS 13:8

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein" (Hebrews 13:8, 9).

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In the foregoing, the holy writer presented Christ as the example of not departing from truth and right. In verse 13 the idea is not that Jesus is the same in the sense that he is doing the same things "today" as he did "yesterday" of the passage refers to when Jesus was on earth, and that "today" of the text refers to the present. They say the passage teaches that because Jesus performed miracles when he was on earth, and through those he gave power to perform miracles as we read about in the New Testament, therefore he is doing the same kind of miracle working now. They say if he is not now performing such miracles he could not be the same. This is an obvious misuse of the text. Such an interpretation proves too much for the modern so-called miracle workers.

To be consistent, those who interpret Hebrews 13:8 as stated above, would have to contend Jesus is "today" performing all the kinds of miracles he performed as recorded in the New Testament.

Have you heard of any recent transfiguration services? Have you attended a tree withering service lately? Have you heard of a modern so-called miracle worker conducting a service where people were killed miraculously as in Acts 5? Has anyone attended a killing service lately? Has anyone conducted a blinding service recently? Why not have a walking on the water service? Why not conduct a storm stopping service? Why not have a dead raising service? What about having a hog killing service?

If Hebrews 13:8 means Jesus is doing the same things as when he was on earth, in order to be "the same," it follows that in order for him to be the same he will have to perform in heaven all the miracles he worked and enabled others to perform as recorded in the New Testament.

Such an interpretation of Hebrews 13:8 would mean that in heaven, Jesus will have to walk on water, stop storms, raise the dead, kill hogs, etc. because the verse says "and forever." Imagine Jesus having a hog killing service in heaven! Imagine Jesus having a healing service in heaven! Imagine our Lord stopping a storm in heaven! Think of it! If the interpretation some give to Hebrews 13:8 is correct, our Lord Jesus will have to do the same miracles there

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“forever” as he performed on earth! Of course such an interpretation is absurd!

### CONCLUSION

Sinner friend, do not think that in order for you to be converted some miracle must occur as did in some cases of conversion recorded in Acts. You can be certain you are converted if you will believe the wonderful gospel story about Jesus Christ your wonderful Saviour which the people about whom you read in Acts believed, and then obey that gospel as they did, by repenting of your sins, confessing Christ as the Son of God, and being then baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:36-41).

If I can be of assistance to you, please let me know.

## *Holy Ghost Baptism and Water Baptism*

The Lord said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). Some say they believe that "baptism" saves, but that it is "Holy Ghost baptism" that saves. But, the baptism of the foregoing scripture is not "Holy Ghost baptism," but water baptism.

Not very many people were ever baptized with the Holy Ghost. The twelve apostles, and Cornelius and his household were overwhelmed, or baptized with the Holy Ghost (see Acts 1:1-6; 2:1-5; 11:15).

Baptism in the Holy Ghost was such a rare occurrence even in the days of the apostles that Peter was amazed at its occurrence at the house of Cornelius. The fact that Peter said that the Holy Ghost fell on Cornelius and his household, "as on us at the beginning" is evidence that it was not a common event (Acts 11:15). (The "beginning" was the day of Pentecost; the "beginning" of the Christian dispensation; the beginning of the church).

If Holy Ghost baptism was a common event, why did not Peter compare the case at the house of Cornelius with cases more recent than the one that had happened about ten years before in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost?

Holy Ghost baptism was designed for special purposes in the apostolic age. By it, the apostles were guided into all truth (John 16:13). By it, Jews were convinced that Gentiles were gospel subjects (Acts 10:45).

No one was ever baptized with the Holy Ghost to be saved. The Lord saves men when they follow the directions of the Holy Ghost as given in the Bible.

Holy Ghost baptism was a promise of the Father to certain ones for certain purposes (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 5). The baptism of the Great Commission of Christ (Mark 16:16) is a command of God

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to be obeyed by people that they may reach the blood of Christ and have their sins remitted (Acts 2:38). A thing cannot be a command and a promise both at the same time.

Men were to administer the baptism of the Great Commission, and they did administer it, and it was baptism in water! (Acts 8: 35-39). Only our Lord administered Holy Ghost baptism (Matthew 3:11; John 1:33).

Holy Ghost baptism had ceased when Paul wrote the Ephesian Letter, which was about A. D. 64, for he said: "There is one baptism," referring to water baptism (Ephesians 4:1-6).

### BAPTISM IN WATER

There is a baptism mentioned in Matthew 28:19, 20 that is obviously the "one baptism" that is to last "always, even to the end of the world" (Ephesians 4:5). What is the baptism of the Great Commission of Christ? "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Amen."

"And he said unto them, 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).

The day that the apostles began to carry out this commission was the first Pentecost after Christ's resurrection (Acts 2). On that day the Holy Spirit guided Peter to say to the crowd that was convinced that Jesus was divine, and that God had raised him from the dead: "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

Therefore the baptism of the Great Commission was a command of God to be obeyed by those who needed the remission of their sins. But, neither from the Great Commission, nor from the record in Acts 2:38 can we determine what element was employed

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in that baptism. Luke says that they who gladly received Peter's message were baptized (Acts 2:41), but he does not say what element was used in their being baptized.

The book of Acts is a record of the work of preachers who diligently carried out the Great Commission of Christ. In Acts chapter eight, Luke tells us that water was the element used when people were baptized in keeping with the command of the Great Commission. For he tells about a man who heard the gospel, believed that Jesus is the Son of God, and was baptized in water. This proves that the baptism of the Great Commission is water baptism.

### NOT MY OPINION

I have been told this: "It is just your opinion that baptism is essential to being saved from sin." However, those who say this are wrong, for it is not my opinion. Jesus said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). And that is not my opinion.

Through the apostle Peter, the Holy Spirit said: "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). And that is not my opinion. I do have some opinions about various matters but I would not use precious space here to present them. I must use this space to tell you what God's word says, and not what my opinions are. My opinions could not redeem one soul from sin, but God's word is able to save the souls of men (James 1:21).



## *The Gift of the Holy Ghost*

*Spirit* and *ghost* are translations of Greek *pneuma*. Spirit is from Latin *spirare* that means to blow or to breathe, so it came to mean the soul. *Ghost* is from Anglo-Saxon (Old English) *gast* that meant breath or spirit.

*Holy Ghost* or *Holy Spirit* are names of one of the three deities which constitute the *Godhead* or *Godhood* we read about in the Bible.

Jesus our Lord promised his apostles they would be baptized with the Holy Ghost (John 16:7-13; Acts 1:4, 5). The apostles were baptized with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2). They were guided into all truth (John 16:13) by the Holy Ghost coming on them in the baptismal measure. When they were baptized with the Holy Spirit they began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 1:4).

The Holy Spirit convicted and converted sinners by what he said through those who were guided by the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11). The Holy Spirit enabled those whom he guided to perform miracles to confirm the fact that they were speaking the Holy Spirit's message, or God's message.

The Holy Spirit guided Peter to tell sinners under conviction "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

Many ask, "What is the gift of the Holy Ghost of Acts 2:38?"

### OBSERVATIONS

1. What Peter said in Acts 2:38 refers to becoming a child of God with attendant blessings under the New Covenant or the Covenant of Christ. Later children of God under that covenant were called Christians (Acts 11:26). In the New Testament being a

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Christian was the same as being a member of the church which we read about in the New Testament.

2. In many New Testament passages we are told that the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit dwells in Christians, or those in the Lord's church or family.

God gives the Holy Ghost to them that obey him (Acts 5:32).

Paul told the Roman Christians God's Spirit dwelt in them (Romans 8:11).

God's church we read about in the Bible is God's temple. It is not a physical building. God's Spirit dwells in that temple which is his church (I Corinthians 3:11).

The Holy Spirit dwells in the physical body of each Christian (I Corinthians 6:19).

Paul told the Thessalonian Christians that God "hath given unto us the Holy Spirit" (I Thessalonians 4:8).

In view of the foregoing scriptures, and in view of other passages which are in the New Testament, surely all will agree that the New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit dwells in Christians.

3. If someone gave you a million dollars, that would be a gift of money. If someone else gave you a dollar, that too would be a gift of money. Even so "gift of the Holy Ghost" in the Bible does not always mean the same thing.

4. The "gift of the Holy Ghost" of Acts 2:38 is not a miraculous gift. The "gift of the Holy Ghost" was promised in Acts 2:38 to as many as received remission of sins. It is indicated in the New Testament that not all those who were saved or became members of the church had miraculous gifts.

There were some members of the New Testament church other than the apostles who received the power to perform miracles by the laying on of the hands of apostles.

In Samaria people were baptized in the name of Jesus (Acts 8:16). According to Acts 2:38 they received the gift of the Holy Ghost, but they did not receive miraculous gifts or powers

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because the apostles Peter and John went to Samaria to lay their hands on those new converts so they could receive a miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17).

If "the gift of the Holy Ghost" of Acts 2:38 was a miraculous gift, it follows that the apostles laid their hands on those who received it. This would mean that Peter virtually told the people on Pentecost "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins and let us apostles lay our hands on you so you can receive the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit." Obviously, Peter did not mean such.

5. "Gift of the Holy Ghost" in Acts 2:38 was not the word, because the people received the word before being baptized (Acts 2:41).

6. If we say the Holy Ghost dwells in a Christian figuratively, to be consistent we would have to say God and Christ dwell in a Christian figuratively. The Bible says God and Christ dwell in Christians (John 14:23; 17:21, 23; Ephesians 3:17; 4:6; Colossians 1:27; 1 John 3:24; 4:13; II Corinthians 6:16-18). If God and Christ dwell in Christians figuratively, it would follow that Christians dwell in God and Christ figuratively. But to be in Christ (Colossians 1:2) is equated with being in his church (Colossians 1:8; 3:15). Do Christians just dwell in the church figuratively? Of course not! Christians are literally in the church!

7. The Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian through the word. But this does not mean that the Holy Spirit really does not dwell in the Christian but that just the word dwells in the Christian. The word of God must dwell in Christians (Colossians 3:16).

Obviously, one must accept God's word and follow it in order for the Holy Spirit to dwell in him. But to make that mean that the Holy Ghost does not really dwell in him makes it mean what is contrary to what the Bible says, because the Bible says many times the Holy Spirit dwells in Christians!

To say a man dwells in a house by means of a door would not mean the man really does not dwell in the house. To say water gets into a tank by means of a pipe would not mean there was really no water in the tank. The water is one thing, the pipe is something else!

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8. To say the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian "exclusively through the word" still would not mean that the Holy Spirit does not really dwell in the Christian. It would just mean the word is the only means by which the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian!

### MATTER OF FAITH

The Holy Spirit's dwelling in the Christian is a matter of faith, which means Christians *believe* the Holy Spirit dwells in them. They believe it without having any special feeling as evidence, because they believe what God said! Christ dwells in the hearts of Christians by faith (Ephesians 3:17). Christians believe this because God's word says it. That is sufficient evidence!

The Holy Spirit's dwelling in the Christian is no more miraculous than God's dwelling in him or than Christ's dwelling in him. It is no more miraculous than the Christian's dwelling in Christ is miraculous. It is no more miraculous than the Christian's dwelling in the church is miraculous! How does one know he is in the church? He does not know it by feeling; he knows it by faith! He knows it because he did what God said one must do to get into the church!

The only evidence a Christian has that the Holy Spirit dwells in him is that God says it! I do not believe I would know I have a spirit and that my own spirit dwells in me if God had not told me in his word I have a spirit!

### WHAT DOES IT DO FOR THE CHRISTIAN?

What does the Holy Spirit's dwelling in the Christian by faith do for the Christian? Why not also ask, "What does God's dwelling in the Christian do for the Christian?" What does God do? We ask him to dwell with us. We ask him to be with us. We ask him to be with our brethren. Must God perform miracles to answer such requests?

Do we mean miracles will be involved if we say to a brother, "God be with you," or if we say "God bless you"? Of course not!

## THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST

By faith we can ask God to be with someone without having to think that God will have to perform miracles to be with him! God is operating a universe in what we call natural processes and he is doing it without performing what the Bible identifies as miracles. Why should we think God would have to perform miracles in order to be with and bless a brother in Christ? Why should we think miracles have to be involved if the Holy Spirit dwells in a Christian?

Are miracles involved in our doing all things through Christ who strengthens us? (Philippians 4:13). Must Christ perform miracles to strengthen us? Of course not! Then why should we think that for the Holy Spirit to strengthen us, miracles would have to be involved? Paul prayed that God would strengthen Christians with might by his Spirit in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16). Why should we think Christ can strengthen us (Philippians 4:13) without miracles being involved, but the Holy Spirit's dwelling in us cannot strengthen us without miracles being involved?

What does the Holy Spirit's dwelling in the Christian by faith do for the Christian? It strengthens a Christian to believe that deity dwells in him. It encourages a Christian to follow God's word when he believes God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit dwell in him. This was the obvious reason Paul told the Christians in Corinth that the Holy Spirit was in their bodies. To believe this surely would restrain a Christian from doing things with his body that were wrong, such a fornication, one of the sins with which Paul dealt (I Corinthians 6:19).

It is a great source of comfort to a Christian for him to take God at his word and believe that deity dwells in him, and that he is that closely related to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

### BEWARE!

Beware, beloved, and do not make the serious blunder of thinking you must rationalize deity and reason that the Holy Spirit cannot dwell in a Christian unless it is in a miraculous sense, or unless you can figure out how he could do it. Who are we to put deity, as it were, in a test tube and determine that the Holy Spirit just cannot dwell in the Christian unless he does it in a miraculous sense because we just cannot understand how he could?

