



Conversion Stories in the Book of Acts

An Adult Bible Class by Don Hooton

After His death and before He ascended into heaven itself, Jesus Christ gave disciples a charge that is designated commonly as “the great commission.” Matthew’s gospel contains the admonition to “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (28:18-20). Mark’s gospel ends: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved” (16:15-16). And Luke’s gospel ends, “repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (24:47). And Luke tells Theophilus that he had recorded this “account of the things accomplished among us” (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-2) so that he would know the exact truth about Jesus and His way. This series of lessons explores what the Bible shows are real life conversion stories in what was accomplished among the Apostles.

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Each Lesson will focus on aspects of the conversions as recorded in Scripture.

1. [3/7] The OverView and Objective
2. [3/14] The Conversion of some Jews on Pentecost (2:1-41)
3. [3/21] The Conversion of more Jews in Jerusalem (3:1-4:31)
4. [3/28] The Conversion of those Samaritans (8:4-25)
5. [4/4] The Conversions of an Ethiopian Eunuch (8:26-40)
6. [] The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus (9:1-19; 22:6-16; 26:12-18)
7. [4/11] The Conversion of Cornelius and his household (10:1-48; 11:1-18)
8. [4/18] The Conversion of some Philippians (16:14-15, 25-34)
9. [4/25] The Conversion of some Thessalonians and Bereans (17:1-4; 10-12), a ProCounselor in Paphos (13:6-12) and people in Rome (28:16-31)
10. [5/9] The Conversion of some Athenians (17:16-34)
11. [5/16] The Conversion of some Corinthians (18:1-11)
12. [5/23] The Conversion of some Ephesians (18:24-19:10)
13. [5/30] The Failed Conversions: Felix (23:10-25) and Agrippa (26:1-29)

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Lesson 1 (3/7/2021)

The Overview and Objective



After His death and before He ascended into heaven itself, Jesus Christ gave disciples a charge that is designated commonly as “the great commission.” Matthew’s gospel contains the admonition to “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (28:18-20). Mark’s gospel ends: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved” (16:15-16). And Luke’s gospel ends, “repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (24:47). And Luke tells Theophilus that he had recorded this “account of the things accomplished among us” (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-2) so that he would know the exact truth about Jesus and His way.

This series of lessons explores what the Bible shows are real life conversion stories in what was accomplished among the Apostles. The actual term for “conversion” (Gr. *epistrephei*) and its more common verb “to turn” (Gr. *epistrepho*) appears a total of twelve times in the Book of Acts (3.19, 9.35, 40, 11.21, 14.15, 15.3 [noun], 19, 36, 16.18, 26.18, 20, 28.27). Except for three instances (9.40, 15.36, and 16.18), the terms are exclusively used with reference to people turning to God in response to the Gospel. These verses show that people who were converted were repenting and turning (3.19; 14.15; 26.20), “turn[ing] to the Lord” (11.21), were seeking redemption (9.35; 15.3, 19; 26.18; 28.27) and had faith in Christ (26.18). Conversion is, therefore, a process where belief leads you to something God has presented in the message of the gospel. And in these lessons, we will learn what that really is.

Each lesson will also try to understand the people, their backgrounds and the reason the gospel was believed by them. It is true to say that they believed, they repented and they were baptized and this is precisely what was being accomplished among the disciples just as Luke wrote to Theophilus. However, the succeeding lessons will cover not merely what all of them had in common – but rather what made each of them different and compelling. It seems to me that the story Luke tells was intended to make the reader think about these unique aspects.

Still, it is important – even critical – in today’s pluralism in “Christianity” to see the consistency in the record that Luke wrote to Theophilus. It was, he said, the “exact truth” (Luke 1:4, NASB) that had been taught “so that you may have certainty” (ESV) or “know the certainty” (NKJV, CSB, NIV, HCSB). So Luke’s record of not merely the life of Jesus in the gospel – but his continued work to Theophilus in Acts was to help him know not just what he had been taught but that what he was taught was accurate.

The people were all different. Some were Jews; some were Jewish leaders; Some were followers of John; Some were soldiers; Some were businesswomen; Some were leaders in synagogues and others were pagan worshippers or idols. Yet all of them heard the same message and responded to the gospel with extraordinary consistency.

Further, the book of Acts also shows failures in the efforts of sharing the gospel. There was the failed attempt to convert Felix (Acts 23:10-25) and Agrippa (26:1-29) but as the gospel messages keeps being spoke, people keep believing.

In this lesson we want to trace with the chart on the next page what either was said by proclaimers or what was done by listeners (in Luke’s own words) in order for them to be saved by the gospel of Jesus.

Read through each of the Scripture Narratives and check the appropriate box for what either the presenter of the message said *should be done* or what is said *that the listener did* in order to be saved.

	Hear	Repent	Confess	Be Baptized	Significant Beliefs or Backgrounds	Approaches the Teacher Used
conversions						
Jews on Pentecost (2:1-41)						
Jews on Solomon's Porch (3:1-4:4)						
Samaritans (8:4-25)						
Ethiopian (8:26-40)						
Saul of Tarsus (9:1-19; 22:6-16; 26:12-18)						
Cornelius (Acts 10:1-ff)						
ProCounselor Sergius Paulus (13:6-12)						
Lydia (16:14-15)						
The Jailor (16:25-34)						
Thessalonians (17:1-4)						
The Bereans (17:10-12)						
The Athenians (17:16-34)						
The Corinthians (18:1-11)						
Apollos and the Ephesians (18:24-19:10)						
Jews and Greeks in Rome (28:16-31)						
non-conversions						
Felix (Acts 23:10-25)						
Agrippa (26:1-29)						

