

Basic Bible Course

by Ira Y. Rice, Jr.

Third, Fourth & Fifth Cases of Conversion —the SAMARITANS, SIMON the SORCERER & the ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH



Lesson Sixteen

INTRODUCTION: Thus far in our study of conversion, according to the New Testament, we have examined the **FACTS, WARNINGS, COMMANDS, PURPOSES** and **PROMISES** of the **FIRST TWO CASES** of conversion in the Book of Acts—1) of “about 3,000 souls” on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and 2) of “about 5,000” men (and later “multitudes both of men and women” (at Solomon’s Porch. (Acts 3, 4, and 5)...As we come now to the **THIRD, FOURTH** and **FIFTH** cases of conversion, please read, before undertaking this study, the entire chapter of Acts 8...

Third Case of Conversion— THE SAMARITANS

- I. FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF STEPHEN, THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR, A GREAT PERSECUTION WAS BROUGHT AGAINST THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM (v. 1).
 - A. All of the church in Jerusalem, except the apostles, were scattered abroad throughout Judea and Samaria.
 - B. Stephen was buried by devout men (v. 2).
 - C. Saul (who was later to become the apostle Paul) made havoc of the church (v. 3).
 1. He entered every house.
 2. He arrested men and women (for being Christians!).
 3. He committed these to prison.
 - D. Regardless of the persecution, those scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word (v. 4).

- II. RESULTING FROM THE PERSECUTION, PHILIP LEFT JERUSALEM, WENT DOWN TO THE CITY OF SAMARIA, AND PREACHED CHRIST UNTO THEM (v. 5).

NOTE: By this time (A.D. 41) the church founded by Jesus on Pentecost was already 8 years old. Yet, this is the first record we have of any preaching being done outside of the city of Jerusalem.

 - A. The people of Samaria “gave heed” to what Philip preached (v. 6).
 1. They HEARD the miracles which Philip performed.
 2. They SAW the miracles which Philip performed.

B. Samaria was full of joy (v. 8) caused by the following:

1. Unclean spirits were cast out (v. 7).
2. Many palsied people were healed (v. 7).
3. Many lame people were healed (v. 7).

III. BEFORE THIS TIME, THE PEOPLE OF SAMARIA HAD GIVEN HEED TO A CERTAIN MAN CALLED SIMON, A SORCERER (v. 9).

- A. Simon had bewitched the people of Samaria by sorcery.
- B. Simon exalted himself as some great one.
- C. All the Samaritans gave heed to Simon from the least to the greatest (v. 10).
- D. Samaritans said of Simon, "This man is the great power of God" (v. 10).
- E. Simon's prestige was great because he had bewitched the people with sorcery a long time (v. 11).

IV. BUT, WHEN THE SAMARITANS BELIEVED PHILIP PREACHING THE THINGS CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST,

- A. They were BAPTIZED.
- B. Both MEN and WOMEN (v. 12).

NOTE: What does the record say they did? They "BELIEVED" and were "BAPTIZED." Nowadays it has become popular to preach salvation or conversion as by "faith only;" however, please observe that this is NOT IN HARMONY with the ACTUAL CASES OF CONVERSION as recorded in Acts. On PENTECOST those "PRICKED IN THEIR HEART" were commanded to "REPENT and BE BAPTIZED." At SOLOMON'S PORCH, "REPENT...and BE CONVERTED"—evidently the same thing. Here again, the Samaritans not only "BELIEVED;" they were BAPTIZED, too—both MEN and WOMEN.

Fourth Case of Conversion— SIMON the SORCERER

I. SIMON HIMSELF BELIEVED ALSO (Acts 8:13).

II. SIMON WAS BAPTIZED (v. 13).

III. SIMON CONTINUED WITH PHILIP (v. 13).

- A. He was astonished by the miracles and signs which were done.

NOTE: This is the same Simon, referred to in the THIRD case of conversion—that "CERTAIN MAN" who beforetime had used sorcery to bewitch the people of Samaria. Later on in this chapter, when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he tried to BUY this power with money (v. 14-20). Peter severely rebuked him for this, saying, "Thy money PERISH with thee." Calling his corrupt act "wickedness," Peter commanded Simon to "REPENT...and PRAY God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (vv. 21-22). Penitent Simon asked Peter to "Pray ye to the Lord for me" (v. 24).

Because Simon FELL FROM GRACE almost immediately after his conversion, it is argued by some that he was never "saved." Yet, that he WAS SAVED before returning to the "gall of bitterness" and the "bond of iniquity" (v. 23), there is no just reason to doubt. In Mark

16:16, Jesus had promised, “He that BELIEVETH and IS BAPTIZED shall be SAVED.” In Acts 8:12, we see that the Samaritans did this; no one questions their salvation. Verse 13 says Simon did the SAME THINGS. Note the parallel, as follows:

MARK 16:16, “He that BELIEVETH and is BAPTIZED shall be SAVED.”

Acts 8:12, Samaritans BELIEVED and were BAPTIZED both men & women.

Acts 8:13, Simon also BELIEVED and was BAPTIZED...

That Simon’s believing and baptism were valid is seen also from Peter’s instructions to “repent” and “PRAY,” following this fall. John 9:31 teaches that “God hears not sinners,” but if one is a worshipper and “doeth his will, him he hearth.” Evidently Simon was deemed such a worshipper by Peter, else, instead of instructing him to REPENT AND PRAY, he should have taught him to BELIEVE AND BE BAPTIZED. Peter did not question Simon’s faith OR his baptism; his defection was subsequent to both. Here we see for the first time how Christians are to get forgiveness for sins committed AFTER baptism. Rather than being baptized over and over again, once baptized according to the New Testament, erring disciples REPENT and PRAY God to forgive them.

Fifth Case of Conversion— THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

- I. THE ANGEL OF THE LORD COMMANDED PHILIP TO GO SOUTH TO THE GAZA HIGHWAY, LEADING FROM JERUSALEM. (v. 26)
 - A. Philip arose and went (v. 27).
 - B. He saw an Ethiopian eunuch, sitting in his chariot, reading Esaias the prophet (v. 27).
 1. The eunuch was a man of great authority (v. 27).
 2. He had charge of all the treasure of Queen Candace, of the Ethiopians.
 3. He had been to Jerusalem to worship.
 4. He was returning to Ethiopia.

- II. THE SPIRIT COMMANDED PHILIP TO “GO NEAR, AND JOIN THYSELF TO THIS CHARIOT” (v. 29).
 - A. Philip ran to the chariot (v. 30).
 - B. Philip heard the eunuch reading from the prophet Esaias (Isa. 53).
 - C. Philip asked the eunuch, “Understandest thou what readest?” (v. 30).
 - D. The eunuch answered, “How can I, except some man should guide me?” (v. 31).
 - E. He then invited Philip to come up into the chariot and sit with him (v. 31).

- III. PHILIP BEGAN AT THE SAME SCRIPTURE THE EUNUCH HAD BEEN READING (vv. 32-33) WHEN THE EUNUCH ASKED THE MEANING (v. 34), AND PREACHED JESUS UNTO HIM (v.35).
 - A. As they went on their journey they came to a certain water.
 - B. The eunuch said, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be BAPTIZED?” (v. 36).
NOTE: Evidently, in preaching “Jesus” unto the eunuch, this must have included, baptism, too! Read verses 35 and 36 together and see if this is so.
 - C. Philip said, “If thou BELIEVEST with all thine heart, thou mayest” (be baptized). (v. 37).

- D. The eunuch answered, “I BELIEVE that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (v. 37).
- E. The eunuch commanded the chariot to stand still (v. 38).
- F. Both Philip and the eunuch “WENT DOWN BOTH INTO THE WATER” (v. 38).
- G. Philip BAPTIZED the eunuch (v. 38).
- H. They then came “UP OUT OF THE WATER” (v. 39).
- I. The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip (v. 39).
- J. The eunuch went on his way rejoicing (v. 39).

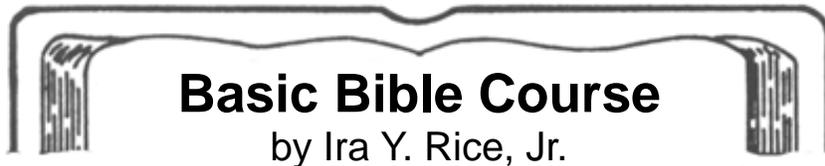
NOTE: Several things are outstanding in this FIFTH CASE of conversion. Observe, for instance, the WILLINGNESS with which Philip obeyed the “angel” (vv. 26-27) and the “Spirit” (vv. 29-30). Also consider the EAGERNESS with which the eunuch received the Lord’s instructions. Rather than having to be persuaded to be baptized, as soon as the eunuch learned the Lord required it, he wanted to know what had to be done so he COULD BE baptized.

From Phillip’s answer, it must be evident to all that NO MERE INFANT could POSSIBLY qualify for baptism. Philip said, “If thou BELIEVEST with all thine heart, thou mayest” (v. 37). Can an infant BELIEVE? The implication is clear from Philip’s statement that unless one BELIEVES, he may NOT be baptized. This necessarily would exclude infants as well as incompetents (mental).

From the eunuch’s reply, it is clear WHAT we are to confess at our baptism. Not our SINS (as some require), but our FAITH. The eunuch answered and said, “I BELIEVE that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” (After one has been baptized ALREADY, if he sins, later passages teach him to confess his FAULTS; however, at baptism, it is NOT FAULTS, but FAITH, one confesses, as this passage clearly demonstrates).

How FOREIGN is the modern practice of SUBSTITUTING either SPRINKLING or POURING for “baptism”, when contrasted with baptism as described in verse 38! In sprinkling and pouring neither the baptizer nor the one to be baptized comes “up out of the water” for neither goes “down...into the water.” Ephesians 4:5 teaches there is “one baptism”—not three! In verse 38 we see the “one baptism” demonstrated. Philip and the eunuch “went down BOTH into the water”; he BAPTIZED him; then verse 39 shows they both came “up out of the water.” Such a description can only harmonize with immersion—a BURIAL in water. (Compare Rom. 6:4 and Col. 2:12). It makes no sense whatever relative to sprinkling or pouring, in which case NEITHER should have GONE DOWN INTO the water at all.

Lastly, let us ask ourselves this question: WHEN did the eunuch REJOICE—BEFORE or AFTER he was baptized? (See v. 39). From Peter’s preaching on Pentecost, as we have learned already, baptism was “FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS.” Nowadays many people rejoice BEFORE they are baptized; the eunuch did not rejoice until AFTER baptism. After all, WHY SHOULD ONE REJOICE UNTIL HIS SINS HAVE BEEN REMITTED!



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Lesson Sixteen

Questions on Lesson Sixteen

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

REFERENCE NO. _____

GRADE _____

1. What was brought against the church following the death of Stephen? _____
2. What outstanding result regarding the spread of the gospel came from the persecution of the church at Jerusalem? _____

3. After leaving Jerusalem, where did Philip go? _____
4. What did Philip do, when he got to Samaria? _____
5. Before Philip came there, what had the Samaritans been doing? _____

6. Following Philip's arrival, what did the Samaritans do concerning his preaching?

7. Who was this man Simon in Acts 8:13? _____
8. What effect did Philip's preaching have on Simon? (See v. 13). _____
9. In Simon's conversion, did he do the same things as the other Samaritans? _____
10. If so, what things? _____
11. Later on, when Simon sinned, following his conversion, did Peter teach him to believe and be baptized all over again? _____
12. If not, then what did Peter teach him to do?

13. Whom else did Philip preach to in Acts 8? _____
14. Describe the man Philip converted on the road that leads to Gaza: _____

15. When Philip reached the Gaza Highway, what did the Spirit command him to do?

16. When Philip asked the eunuch if he understood his reading, what did the eunuch reply?

17. What (or whom) did Philip preach to the eunuch? _____
18. Resulting from this preaching, what did the eunuch ask? _____

19. In preaching “Jesus” did Philip also preach baptism? _____ Explain: _____

20. From the eunuch’s conversion, what makes us know that he was baptized in **water**?

21. Before the eunuch **could** be **baptized**, what did Philip say hindered him?

22. If a person has to **believe** before he **can** be baptized, then can an infant or mentally incompetent person be baptized? _____ Explain: _____
23. From the eunuch’s confession in verse 37, should we conclude that an unbaptized person should confess his **sins**, or his **faith**, before being baptized? _____
24. From the description of the eunuch’s baptism in verses 38-39, would you conclude he was **sprinkled**, **poured** or **immersed**? _____
25. When did the eunuch rejoice—**before** or **after** he was baptized? _____

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION? _____
