

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

SOUL-SAVING LESSONS

“Salvation as Seen in the Book of Acts”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

Are you saved? Are you **sure** you are saved? The real question is: Are you saved like men and women were saved in the Book of Acts. Welcome to our study of “Salvation as Seen in the Book of Acts.” Today we are going to be examining some examples of conversion that appear in the Book of Acts so that we can learn what the people there did to be saved and so that we can be saved today. The New Testament usually can be divided into four categories. Matthew through John tells us about the life of Christ. These are the Gospel accounts that tell us about Christ and what He did for us in this life. The Book of Acts has as its main purpose telling us about how people became followers of Christ, and what they did to be saved. Romans through Jude tell us how to live the Christian life. Now that we are Christians, how do we live as Christians? The Book of Revelation—the grand finale—tells us how to die as a faithful follower of Christ in order to gain the victory.

As we think about salvation in the Book of Acts, we begin in Acts 2 with the 3,000 who were saved on the Day of Pentecost. In Luke 24, there is history that leads up to the Book of Acts. Jesus had told His apostles to wait in Jerusalem until they were endowed with power from on high. There, they were to receive the power of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 1, at the ascension of Christ, Jesus tells His followers that they are going to be His witnesses, beginning in Jerusalem. Thus, we open to the events of Acts 2. These men are given the Holy Spirit, who gives them the ability to speak in different languages, just as had been promised in the Old Testament in Joel 2:28-30. In Acts 2, we have Peter and the rest of the apostles speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit. Every person is hearing the apostles speak in his own language, and as a result the Gospel is being preached for the first time. In Acts 2, and in every case of conversion, we see that there are basically five steps that occur. People first have to hear the Word of God. Then, they have to believe in Jesus as the One Who brings salvation. Then they confess Him as the Son of God, and repent in order to change the things in their lives that are not right. Last, they are baptized for the forgiveness of their sins in order to receive salvation.

In Acts 2, we look at this first step in the plan of salvation. We must hear God’s Word in order to be saved. The Bible tells us in Acts 2 that Peter and the other apostles opened up their mouths and spoke the Word of God to these people. They preached that Jesus was pre-appointed by God, and that the miracles and signs He performed showed that He was approved by God. He died for mankind, and He was raised out of the ground as the Savior of the world. Once the people heard this message, they were ready to respond properly because of the power of God’s Word. Romans 10:17 that we, too, must listen to and hear the Word of God. The Bible says, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Like those on the Day of Pentecost, we have to listen to the powerful message of salvation. This means that we have to recognize its authority. In Mark 9, we see the authority and power of God’s Word. Peter, James, and John are on the mountain with Jesus, and the voice of God booms down from Heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son in

Whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" So, today we must hear Christ as the final Authority on matters of salvation. Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 4:6 that we "must not go beyond that which is written," whether it is on the matter of salvation or any other matter. We must be sure that we obey what is written within the pages of God's Word. We cannot add to or take away from the Bible and its teaching or we will be condemned (Rev. 22:18-19). As we hear God's Word, we must recognize the power of the message and the authority of that Word. We then must be willing to search to see that what we are hearing is true. We must never encourage anyone (and God certainly does not!) just to accept something at face value. The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5:21, "Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good." We are told to study to study to show ourselves approved unto God (2 Tim. 2:15). Isaiah 34:16 says that we are to search from the book of the Lord, and read...." Thus, today we search in the Bible to see if what we are told is true to the Word of God. Then, if it is, we must be willing to obey its teachings. Hearing the Word of God, but failing to respond to it, will do us no good. In Matthew 7:21, Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." Jesus said that the person who **does** the will of the Father is the person who will end up going to Heaven. So, in Acts 2 we first see that the people heard God's Word.

But they also were willing to believe in Jesus as God's Son. In Acts 2:36, Peter brought his sermon to a climax when he said, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." The people heard the message, and then notice what it says in Acts 2:37. The text says, "Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'" Some versions say that "a dagger was run through their hearts." That is the idea. These people were convicted, and as a result they believed in Jesus as the Messiah and as the One Who could give them salvation. Belief in Jesus as God's Son is an essential step in the plan of salvation. Think about what Jesus said in John 8:24—"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." It is evident that one must obey God by believing in Jesus as His Son. Jesus said in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." In Acts 2:19-21 it says that "whosoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." That does not mean that all a person must do is "believe." There are other things that a person must do in order to properly call on God's name (as we will learn a little later in Acts 22:16). Belief is essential, but belief alone is not God's plan of salvation. It is interesting that when they asked in Acts 2:37, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?," Peter did not say "Don't do anything because Jesus has already done everything for you." That was not Peter's response. Rather, Peter said in Acts 2:38, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." The idea of belief alone saving us is not found within the Scriptures. In fact, the very opposite of that is taught in the Bible. James 2:24 says, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." Jesus asked in Luke 6:46, "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" Just believing (and believing only!) will not cause a person to be saved. In Acts 2, the people heard the Word. And they believed in Jesus. They were willing to repent. And they were willing to be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins in order to obey God's will.

A second case of conversion (or example of conversion) is found in Acts 8. Here we have the salvation of the Ethiopian eunuch. The Bible tells us in Acts 8 that the Spirit told Philip to overtake the Ethiopian's chariot. He gets up into the chariot, and finds that the man is reading from Isaiah 53 in the Old Testament. Philip asks, "Do you understand what you are reading?" (vs. 30). He responds by saying, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" At that

point, Philip begins to teach the man the Gospel. He hears the Word, and he believes what he hears because as they are going down the road, he asks, "Here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" The man believed in Jesus enough to be baptized. Philip says in Acts 8:37, "'If you believe with all your heart, you may.'" The man heard the Word. He believed in Jesus. And he was willing to make the changes in his life that he needed to make in order to get right with God. He also was willing to confess Jesus as the Savior. He said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." This is not the only time that we find confession as a step in salvation. This is seen in two other verses as well. Matthew 10:32-33 teaches that confession is essential. Jesus said, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven." Here, Jesus says that if you do not confess Me before men, then I am not going to confess before God that you are one of My children. But if you will confess Me, then I will say to God, "Yes, this is a child of Mine." Romans 10:10 is another passage that teaches us the importance of confession. Paul said, "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." In 1 Timothy 6:12, we are told that Timothy had made the good confession also. So one must confess Jesus as God's Son. The Ethiopian heard the Word, he believed in Jesus, he made the good confession, he was willing to make changes in his life and repent as necessary, and he also was baptized to complete God's plan of salvation.

A third example of salvation is found in Acts 9 and Acts 22. Here we come to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Saul is traveling down the road. Acts 7 and 8 tells us that he has been doing great harm to the church. He was found to be holding the coats of those who had stoned Stephen. He was a man who, in Acts 8, was dragging men and women who were Christians out of their homes and putting them into prison. Yet Saul is going to make great changes in his life. In Acts 9, as he is traveling down the road to Damascus, a bright light shines around him. He hears the voice of Jesus saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" Saul responds by asking, "Who are you?" Christ says, "I am Jesus, Whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." Saul then asks, "Lord, what would you have me to do?" He is told to go into the city and wait in a certain house, and it would be told him what he should do. Saul does that. He goes into Damascus and waits (Acts 9:10-12). He prays for three days and nights. Then, Ananias eventually comes to him and tells him what he must do to be saved. From Saul's account, we can see that he heard the words of Jesus. In fact, he **literally** heard Jesus speak to him on the road to Damascus. He believed in Jesus as the Son of God, as is evident from his question, "Lord, what would you have me to do?" That tells us that he not only believed, but that he also was willing to confess Jesus as Lord. One of the steps that we especially see in the example of Saul's conversion is the act of repentance. Saul repented of his past life and sins. Saul had been a man who had been very harmful to the cause of Christ. Acts 7 teaches us that he was holding the coats of those who slew Stephen. There is a very powerful lesson that we can learn from this. No matter **what** we have done in this life, if Saul could change, become a child of God, and go to Heaven, then so can we! The text of 1 Timothy 1:15 is so important. I have heard people say, "I'm just too bad to get right with God." The sins I've committed are just too heinous. I could never be a faithful child of God." But Paul said, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." If the chief of sinners—Paul himself (a man who had dragged Christians into prison)—could be saved, then so can we today. In fact, in this particular step of salvation, we learn that if we are willing to change our lives and repent as Saul did, then we can be saved. Do you remember Luke 13:3? The context is that certain people have come to Jesus to talk to him about people who had their sacrifices

mingled with blood, or about the eighteen people who were walking down the road and had a tower fall on them. Those who were talking to Jesus wanted to know if that was the vengeance of God on people who were worse sinners than other people. Jesus said, "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." Repentance is essential in God's plan of salvation. We must change our lives so that we turn **from** sin and turn **to** God. Luke 3:8 teaches us that it is a lifestyle change. Certain pious Jews came out to be baptized by John the Immerser. But he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance." Not only is repentance a change in the way that we think, but it also is a change in the way that we live our lives. In Acts 3:19 we are told to "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Romans 12:2 is probably one of the greatest examples of what repentance is all about. Paul wrote: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Repentance is a transformation that occurs first within our minds, and then that is lived out in our lives. That is what repentance is all about. So, we hear the Word, we believe in Jesus, we confess Him as the Son of God, we repent of those things that are wrong in our lives, and yes, we must then be baptized for the remission of our sins.

A fourth case of conversation is found in Acts 16:9-15. This is the conversion of Lydia and her household. Paul comes to Philippi, and some of the women were out by the river (as was customary). They were apparently studying and praying. Paul comes into the midst of them and begins to teach them the Word of God. They heard God's Word. The Scriptures tell us that they believed the message. No doubt they were willing to make changes in their lives by repenting and confessing Jesus as their Savior. So, the Bible tell us that Lydia and all her household were baptized. One of the most overlooked steps in the plan of salvation is baptism. Baptism is essential in salvation. Sometimes people will come to passages like Acts 16 and will suggest that infant baptism is something that we need to do today. Their suggestion is that Lydia **and her household** were baptized. The word "household" in the Greek does not necessarily represent people of all ages. Rather, it represents people in the household who were of an accountable age and who could work—slaves, servants, children who were old enough to work, etc. That is what represented by the word. But even if we did not understand that, we still could know that infants are not proper candidates for baptism because they do not have sin in their lives. Infant baptism is not necessary because infants are not born sinners. Matthew 18:3ff. is one of the strongest passages in the Bible on this point. In regard to certain small children who had congregated around Him, Jesus tells His disciples, "Do not forbid them. Allow them to come, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." What's that? Jesus said that the kingdom of Heaven is like little children? Was Jesus trying to say that there were a bunch of depraved little sinners running around in the kingdom? That is not what Jesus was teaching. Jesus was teaching that just as small children are innocent and free of sin, that is what those in the kingdom must be like as well. The strongest passage of all in this regard is Ezekiel 18:20—"The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself." This text clearly teaches us that we do not inherit either the sin or the guilt of our fathers. In fact, Isaiah 7:16 teaches us that there is an age of accountability—a point where we know to refuse the evil and choose the good. Before the age of accountability, we have no sin in our lives. In fact, it is impossible for infants to meet the requirements of salvation. How do I know that infant baptism is not something from God? How many infants do you know who can intelligently hear and understand the Word of God? It is an essential step in salvation. A person must be able to hear God's Word. How many infants can hear and comprehend God's plan of salvation? How many infants do you know

who can believe in Jesus as the Son of God? How many can confess Him as Savior and repent of the things in their lives that are not right? You see, infants cannot meet those requirements, and therefore they are not included in the group of people who needs to be saved. Infants are “safe.” They do not yet know (at that point in their lives) what evil and good are. We understand this. How many people would say that stillborn children are going to Hell? Consider a woman who is pregnant, but the baby dies before it can be born. Do you know what the logical conclusion of the doctrine of infant baptism revolves around? It revolves around the idea that the baby had sin in his life, and unless he is baptized he is going to be lost. How many people are going to say that a stillborn child is headed straight for Hell? People do not **really** believe that today because the Scriptures do not teach that. Infant baptism is not something taught in the New Testament.

What do we learn about baptism in the New Testament? Baptism, in the New Testament, is immersion. This is something that is clearly taught. In our religious world, some will say that you can have water sprinkled or poured on you. But in the New Testament, we find only one mode of baptism. We see one example of this in Mark 1:10 where, at the baptism of Jesus, the Bible says, “And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove.” To come up out of the water, what must you first do? You must first go down into water. That is the imagery that is presented in Mark 1. There are three other passages that teach us this. Acts 8:39ff. teaches that as the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip got out of the chariot, they both went down into the water, Philip baptized the eunuch, and they both came up out of the water. Again, both went down into the water, and both came up out of the water. Think, too, of the words of Romans 6:1-4. Baptism is likened unto a burial. A burial is an act where someone is completely covered. If you have been to a funeral, you have seen a person put all the way under the ground. He is covered on every side. He is placed in the ground and covered completely with dirt. That is the idea of baptism as a burial. Paul would not use an illustration that contradicts the mode of baptism. Another verse is John 3:23. The Bible tells us that “John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there.” Why did John need to be baptizing people where there was “much water”? It does not take much water to be able to pour or sprinkle a little water on someone. But it does take “much water” for full-body immersion. In fact, the Greek words *baptizo* and *rhantizo* (the words for immersion and sprinkling) teach us that baptism is the proper mode. *Baptizo* literally means to dunk or fully submerge. The language clearly bears this out. *Rhanitzo* is the Greek word for sprinkling. It is used in Hebrews 9:21-23 to describe the sprinkling of blood. The Greeks had a word—*rhanitzo*—for sprinkling, but it is never used to describe the act of baptism. God always uses the work *baptizo*, which literally means to plunge, to submerge, or to fully immerse in water. So baptism is seen as immersion.

Baptism is always seen as being essential to salvation. There are many in the world today who say that, yes, baptism is something that is good to do, and is something that we should do because Jesus was baptized. Yet not nearly as many people will say that baptism is essential to salvation. But the Scriptures do teach us this. Let’s see what the Bible has to say about this. Look in Acts 22:16, where we find an account of Saul’s conversion. He was told to go into the city of Damascus, where he would be told what he must do. Ananias comes to Saul in the city and says, “Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” According to Ananias (who was God’s inspired spokesman), it was baptism that washed away Saul’s sins. Remember that idea in Acts 2:19-21?—“Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Does Acts 22:16 teach us how to call on the Lord’s name? Yes it does—“Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” When we call out for God’s help and God makes a way for our salvation, we call properly only when we respond in the way that God

tells us to respond. Throughout the Scriptures, baptism is seen as something that is a necessary step in order for us to receive salvation. We do not “earn” it, of course. We are not saying that we can earn our salvation. There is nothing magical or mystical in the water. But baptism is necessary in order to obey God and to keep His will. Think of John 3:5. Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Baptism is being spoken of there. Jesus’ point was that we cannot enter the kingdom without being baptized. Think about Mark 16:16, which is one of the clearest passages on baptism. In this passage, Jesus said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” Both belief and baptism are linked together as being necessary to receive salvation. Think of Galatians 3:27, where Paul said, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Question: Must a person be “in Christ” to be saved? According to 2 Timothy 2:10-11, yes, he must. Salvation is found only “in Christ.” If salvation is found “in Christ,” then how do we get “in Christ”? Galatians 3:27 tells us. We are baptized into the body of Christ, and therefore baptism is essential to salvation. If God wanted to say that baptism is essential to salvation, how might He do that? Perhaps He would say something like what is found in 1 Peter 3:21—“Baptism does also now save us.” God could not say it any clearer if He wanted to. That is not to say that baptism alone saves us. It—combined with hearing, believing, repenting, and confessing—is essential to salvation. Think about what happened in Acts 2:38. In verse 37, the people had cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” The people who asked that question were asking, “What can do to relieve ourselves of this sin problem of having crucified the Messiah?” Peter said to these people, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” The word “for” there literally means “looking forward to.” The same Greek terminology is used in Matthew 26:28—“This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed **for** many for the remission of sins.” In this passage, did Jesus mean “because of”? No. And the text does not mean “because of” in Acts 2:38 either. So, yes, a person must be baptized to be saved.

Let me ask you again. Are you saved? Are you **sure** you are saved? Have you heard the Word of God, believed in Jesus as the Son of God, confessed Him as your Savior, repented of your past life of sin, and been baptized for the forgiveness of your sins? If not, let me kindly say to you that you have not been saved like the people in the New Testament were saved. I therefore beg you to obey the Gospel and become a Christian.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “SALVATION AS SEEN IN THE BOOK OF ACTS”

1. Have you been saved from your sins?
2. If your answer to question #1 above was “yes,” were you saved the way people in the New Testament were commanded to be saved?
3. What does Romans 10:17 say that a person must do in order to be saved?
4. What does John 3:16 say that a person must do in order to be saved?
5. What do Luke 13:3, Luke 13:5, and Acts 3:19 say that a person must do in order to be saved?
6. What do Romans 10:10 and Matthew 10:32-33 say that a person must do in order to be saved?
7. What do Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, and Acts 22:16 say that a person must do in order to be saved?
8. What does James 2:24 say will **not** save a person?
9. What does the Greek word *rhantizo* mean?
10. Where, in the New Testament, is the Greek word *rhantizo* used to refer to baptism?
11. What does the Greek word *baptizo* mean?
12. John 3:23 tells us that “John was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there.” Why did John need a place where there was “much water” to perform the baptisms he was carrying out?
13. According to Jesus’ comments in Matthew 18:3ff., are small children lost because they are born in sin?
14. What does Ezekiel 18:20 say?
15. Name several reasons, as discussed within the context of this lesson, why infant baptism is not correct.
16. Acts 2:19-21 says that “whosoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How, according to Acts 22:16, does a person “call on the name of the Lord”?
17. According to 1 Peter 3:21, what does baptism do for us?
18. According to 2 Timothy 2:10-11, where is salvation found?
19. According to Galatians 3:27, how does one get “into Christ”?