

New Testament Conversions – No. 11

Summary of Conversions

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We have surveyed the subject of “New Testament Conversions” in ten previous articles in this series of brief articles in *The Scripture Cache*. This survey covered nine distinct cases of conversion recorded in the book of Acts, in which we are given the detailed information either about what the lost were told to do to be saved, what they did to be saved, or both. These cases involved as few as one person (Acts 8:35–39) and as many as “about 3,000 souls” (Acts 3:42). In concluding this series of articles, we can draw some appropriate conclusions:

1. Not all the conditions of pardon are mentioned in every case of conversion. Some do not mention faith (Acts 2:38, 41); some do not mention repentance (Acts 8:12). However, they are all implied in every case. Even if they were not implied, it would be both logical and scriptural to assume that the terms of divine pardon were and are uniform. If God saved some on only one condition (such as faith), others on two conditions (faith and repentance), and yet others on even more conditions, (faith, repentance, and baptism), this would make God a respecter of persons, which He most certainly is not (Acts 10:34–35).
2. These cases of conversion teach us that the doctrine of “faith only,” contrary to men’s creed books, is neither very wholesome nor full of comfort. There is not one of these cases that gives credence to the “faith only salvation” position; rather, they unanimously refute the popular doctrine. Moreover, one can go anywhere in the Word of God, Old Testament included, and never find God’s grace bestowed upon anyone based on **merely believing** anything or anybody. Truly, men are often said to be saved by faith, and this we fully accept and teach, but by **faith only, never!** The inspired James plainly points out that faith only avails nothing with God (Jam. 2:17–26).
3. The only condition of pardon that is specifically mentioned in every one of these cases of conversion is **baptism**. We have always thought a much stronger case could be made for a doctrine of “baptism only” than for “faith only” since faith is sometimes not mentioned, but baptism always is. Those who stress the Lord’s and apostles’ teaching on baptism as a condition of pardon are often accused of teaching “baptism only” or “water salvation.” However, such accusations are false and are usually no more than a smokescreen with which to dodge the force of plain statements of Scripture that make baptism just much a condition of salvation as is faith. To emphasize the necessity of baptism for the alien sinner to be forgiven is not the same as saying that baptism is **all** that is required. It is no more important than a confessed faith in Christ and repentance of sins to be saved, but the Scriptures make it no less important (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Water has no power to wash away a single sin, but neither are sins taken away by faith or repentance alone. The blood of Christ is the only thing that cleanses men of sin (Mat. 26:28; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 1:5), but it does not do so automatically or unconditionally. If it did, then all would be saved with no

choice in the matter and the Universalist's theology would be true. The blood of Christ cleanses only upon conditions specified by the one who shed that blood, which conditions **begin in faith and end in baptism.**

4. A summary of the conditions recorded in these cases of conversion shows that upon **hearing** the Gospel, the people who were converted **believed** it, and were required to openly **confess** it (Acts 18:8; Rom. 10:9–10). They were further required to **repent** (turn away from) their sins and begin living like Christ commands (Acts 2:38). In addition to these things, they were commanded to be **baptized**, at which point they were promised remission and washing away of sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16) which brought great rejoicing (Acts 8:39; 16:33–34). These conditions of a confessed faith, repentance and baptism unto salvation agree perfectly with the great commission given to the apostles (Mat. 28:19; Mark 16:15–16; Luke 24:46–47).

If you can show from the Scriptures that our reasoning or interpretation is faulty on this subject, we would deeply appreciate being corrected. This is a matter about which we dare not be mistaken.

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