



**EARLY CHURCH CONVERSIONS
IN THE BOOK OF ACTS**



A STUDY ON BIBLICAL SALVATION:

- 1. REPENTANCE**
- 2. BAPTISM IN JESUS' NAME**
- 3. RECEIVING THE HOLY GHOST**

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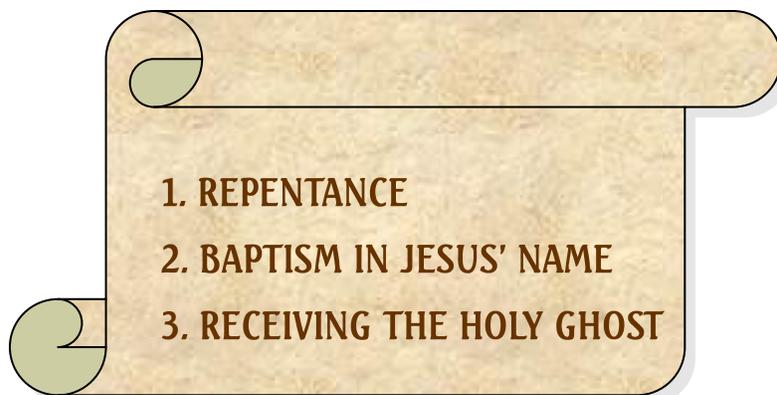
- Introduction -

In our study we will examine conversions which take place in the book of Acts. We will see a pattern of repentance, baptism in Jesus' name, and receiving the Holy Ghost—repeated over and over again!

Let's read Acts 2:38.

Acts 2:38 *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 2:38** clearly demonstrates three essential requirements of biblical salvation:



Now let's look at the New Testament. These 27 books can be divided into four major categories. The following chart will illustrate why the book of Acts is so important.

New Testament Books

Matthew Mark Luke John	The Gospels: Gospel means good news. These four books tell us of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. They do not record anyone being “born again” (i.e. baptized in Jesus’ name or being filled with the Holy Ghost).
The Book of Acts	The Book of Acts: Acts is the church in action. It is a historical book which documents the birth of the church. This is the only book where we find examples of people actually being “born again.”
Romans to Jude	The Epistles: These 21 books are letters of instruction to the church, written to those who have already experienced being “born again.” The primary purpose of these books is to clarify the doctrine and serve as a guide for Christian living.
The Book of Revelation	The Book of Revelation: This is the last book of the Bible and is primarily a prophetic book. This book does not show examples of people being “born again,” but it does show what happens to those who do not obey the plan of salvation.

As you can see from this chart, the book of Acts is the blueprint for biblical conversions. This is why we will focus most of our attention on this book. We will first look at the Gospels, but only to see how Jesus foretold of the things that would happen in the book of Acts. The facts presented from the Word of God will clearly establish the New Testament plan of salvation for today!

- Part I: The Gospels -

Jesus Christ Lays the Foundation of Salvation Through His Teachings

In this section we will examine some of Jesus' teachings as He instructs His disciples in the New Testament plan of salvation. Keep in mind, the apostles did not teach or act upon these teachings until after Jesus had risen from the dead and returned to heaven.

In Luke 13:3 Jesus Christ declared, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Jesus said we must repent (turn away from our sins) or perish.

Then in John 3:3 Jesus boldly proclaimed, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

In John 3:5, Jesus explained this more clearly and said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Then in John 3:7 Jesus said, "Ye must be born again."

 Jesus said that we must repent and that we must be born again. To be born of the water and of the Spirit is not an option, because without this experience you cannot see or enter the kingdom of God. This is an important point to remember as we continue this study.

Later, Jesus told Peter that he would be given the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Peter was the first to declare the New Testament salvation message on the day of Pentecost.

Matthew 16:18-19

¹⁸ And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

The following scriptures confirm the fact that the apostle Peter (also known as Simon) was NOT yet born again while Jesus was on the earth. Peter was a believer of course, but neither he, nor anybody else, could have received the Holy Ghost because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Luke 22:31-32

31 And the Lord said, **Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:**

32 **But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.**

John 7:38-39

38 **He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.**

39 (But this spake he of the **Spirit**, which they that believe on him **should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given;** because that **Jesus was not yet glorified.**)

Those that believe, should receive the Holy Ghost. This is a promise to every repentant believer. The next section will prove that God gives the Holy Ghost to those who OBEY Him.

The scriptures used will emphasize one or more of the following: repentance, baptism, the infilling of the Holy Ghost, and speaking in tongues. All of these are integral aspects of the “born again” experience.

- Part II: The Book Of Acts -

Ten Accounts of People Being Born Again According to the New Testament Plan of Salvation

When Jesus' earthly ministry was nearly finished, He instructed His disciples to return to Jerusalem where they would receive the Holy Ghost.

Acts 1:4-9

⁴ And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but **wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.**

⁵ **For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.**

⁶ When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

⁷ And he said unto them, **It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.**

⁸ **But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you:** and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

⁹ And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Now, let's examine what took place after the disciples arrived in Jerusalem. Jesus had already ascended into heaven and a large group of His followers gathered together in an upper room.

The Spirit of God was poured out and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues.

1. The Conversion of Peter and the Apostles, Mary the Mother of Jesus, and other Men and Women—About 120 in All

Acts 1:13-14, Acts 2:4

¹³ And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

¹⁴ These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

 **Here are two main biblical principles:**

- **The gift of the Holy Ghost was given as promised in response to their obedience.**
- **These disciples received the Holy Ghost and they ALL (about 120) spoke with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. This is the sign of receiving the Holy Ghost.**

The disciples obeyed Jesus and received the Holy Ghost! The next verse demonstrates the importance of obedience.

Acts 5:32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

2. The Conversion of the 3,000 Who Gladly Received the Word and Obeyed Acts 2:38

After receiving the Holy Ghost, the apostle Peter preached his first sermon. He preached that Jesus Christ was crucified for our sins. Those who heard him and believed asked the question, “what shall we do?” Most churches today would say, “just believe,” but Peter proceeded to tell them God’s plan of salvation.

Acts 2:37-39

37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

38 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.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

 **Peter was taught by Jesus Christ Himself and Peter responded correctly when he declared Acts 2:38 as the salvation message. Verse 39 clearly states that this command with promise is for EVERYBODY. All of the disciples were present and were in agreement with Peter. In fact, each one of them was saved in the same manner as was stated by Peter. The following verses confirm that this message which was taught by the apostles is in fact the salvation message.**

Acts 2:40-42, 47

40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

 Notice that souls were saved and the Lord added to the church daily as they willingly received and obeyed God's wonderful plan of salvation.

3. The Conversion of the Samaritans

Acts 8:12-13

12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

 The emphasis there was on baptism, although receiving the Holy Ghost was not excluded as we're about to read.

After the people of Samaria were baptized, Peter and John came to pray for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost.

Acts 8:14-17

14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

 Together these verses demonstrate the need for both baptism in the NAME of Jesus and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost.

4. The Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch

Acts 8:35-39

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

 Again, the focus is on baptism. Simply believing is not enough (v. 37). Sprinkling or infant baptism is not biblical. The biblical mode of baptism is by full immersion in water.

5. The Conversion of Saul—The Apostle Paul

Acts 9:17-18

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, **and was baptized.**

📖 The scriptures once again emphasize water baptism AND receiving the Holy Ghost. Did Paul speak in tongues? We will let Paul answer that for himself.

1 Corinthians 14:18 I thank my God, **I speak with tongues** more than ye all.

Here is another account of Paul's conversion:

Acts 22:12-13, 16

12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,

13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

16 And now why tarriest thou? **arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.**

📖 Water baptism in the NAME of the Lord cleanses us by washing away our sins. Notice the urgency of baptism—Paul was baptized immediately.

6. The Conversion of Cornelius and His Household

Acts 11:13-14

13 And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;

14 **Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.**

📖 Verse 14 states that Peter is going to tell Cornelius how to be SAVED. In the following passage, we read that those “words” included the commandment to be baptized.

Acts 10:44-48

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

 **Once again we see believers baptized in the NAME of the Lord. They also received the Holy Ghost and spoke with tongues. Peter COMMANDED them to be baptized—it was not an option.**

7. The Conversion of Lydia and Her Household

Acts 16:14-15

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there.

 **Lydia was baptized immediately after hearing the things spoken of by Paul.**

8. The Conversion of the Prison Guard and His Household

Acts 16:25-33

25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

 **The emphasis above is on the need for baptism. Notice in every instance baptism was administered almost immediately. This was not merely a ceremony, but an essential element of salvation.**

9. The Conversion of Justus, Crispus and His Household, and Many of the Corinthians

Acts 18:7-8

7 And he (Paul) departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

8 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.**

 Yet again, we see the need for baptism—not just hearing or believing alone—action must follow. We must obey the Word.

10. The Conversion of the Twelve Disciples at Ephesus

Acts 19:1-7

¹And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

² He said unto 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.

³ And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

⁴Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

⁵When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

⁷ And all the men were about twelve.

 The preceding event occurred several years *AFTER* the day of Pentecost. The emphasis was still on baptism in Jesus' name AND receiving the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues.

These verses clearly demonstrate four salvation principles:

- Believing does not guarantee that one has received the Holy Ghost (v. 2).
- The evidence of receiving the Holy Ghost is speaking in tongues (v. 6). See Mark 16:16-17.

- The apostle Paul baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (v. 5). He did not baptize using the titles Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
- Rebaptism in the NAME of Jesus is essential if one has not been baptized in this manner (v. 4). There was no hesitation on the part of the disciples at Ephesus to be baptized again when they heard of baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus (v. 5).

This covers the conversions in the book of Acts. As the Bible has established, there is only one way to be saved—there is no other way. This is the gospel message!

- Part III: Baptism In Jesus' Name -

A) Scriptural Support for Baptism in Jesus' NAME

The following verses offer sound scriptural support for baptism in the name of the Lord.

Colossians 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

📖 The Bible instructs us to do ALL in the saving name of Jesus. Baptism is no exception.

1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

📖 The apostle Paul is writing to the church—to those who have already been saved through the new birth. He says that they are washed, sanctified, and justified in the NAME of Jesus.

 **The Bible tells us that sins are remitted or washed away through BAPTISM in the name of Jesus.**

Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

 **The NAME of Jesus SAVES us! Jesus is the only SAVING NAME. We must use it in baptism! The apostles did!**

Philippians 2:9-10

⁹ Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.

 **These passages of scripture tell us that the NAME of Jesus is above every name. We have studied many instances where the name was applied at the time of baptism.**

Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the NAME of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

 **Jesus clearly instructed His disciples to baptize using the NAME (singular) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost—which IS Jesus. “Father”, “Son”, and “Holy Ghost” are not names—they are titles.**

 **The disciples clearly understood that Jesus is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. (See Isaiah 9:6; John 14:7-11, 17-18; 1 Timothy 3:16; John 10:30.)**

Not believing in the name of Jesus is a very serious offense according to the following scripture:

John 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

 **Jesus said that people would be condemned because they refused to believe in His NAME.**

B) Historical Evidence of Baptism in Jesus' NAME

Baptism has always been administered in the name of Jesus by the true Apostolic Church, but it was changed to the titles “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost” by the Catholic Church in the second century. This false practice spread and was adopted by Protestant churches as well as other religious groups. The following historical evidence proves that the original baptismal formula established by Jesus was changed:

Encyclopedia Britannica , vol. 3, p. 82.

“Everywhere in the oldest sources it states that baptism took place in the name of Jesus Christ.”

Encyclopedia Britannica , 11th ed. vol. 3, p. 365-366.
“The baptismal formula was changed from the name of Jesus Christ to the words Father, Son, & Holy Ghost by the Catholic Church in the second century.”

Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion, vol. 2, p. 377.
“Christian baptism was administered using the words ‘In the name of Jesus.’”

The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (1957) vol. 1, p. 435.
"The New Testament knows only baptism in the name of Jesus . . . which still occurs even in the second and third centuries."

- Part IV: Conclusion -

A Review of Acts 2:38 as the Plan of Salvation

1. Is repentance required for salvation? Yes.

Luke 13:3, 5

³ I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

⁵ I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

2. Is baptism required for salvation? Yes.

Mark 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

1 Peter 3:20-21

²⁰ Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

3. Did the apostles baptize in the name of Jesus? Yes.

Acts 19:5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

4. Is receiving the Holy Ghost required for salvation? Yes.

1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Romans 8:9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

5. Is speaking in tongues the sign of receiving the Holy Ghost? Yes.

Mark 16:17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

 **Jesus boldly stated in Mark 16:17 that the sign of speaking in tongues SHALL follow them that believe. In Acts 2:4 Jesus' words were fulfilled when these believers received the Holy Ghost with the sign of speaking in tongues!**

Is the promise of salvation for everyone? Yes, including you!

Acts 2:38-39

³⁸ 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.

THE
Acts 2:38
Bible Study

