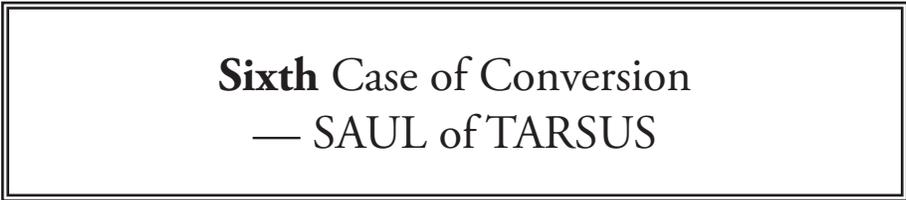




Basic Bible Course

by *Ira Y. Rice, Jr.*



Sixth Case of Conversion — SAUL of TARSUS



Lesson Seventeen

INTRODUCTION: With this lesson-study, we come to the **HALF-WAY MARK** in our investigation of the **CASES OF CONVERSION** as recorded in Acts. From this lesson onward, we can all enjoy that psychological lift we all derive from realizing we are **NEARING THE COMPLETION** of a worth-while undertaking. And surely, however imperfect some of our efforts may have been thus far, we must all agree that our **KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WORD** has been **GREATLY ENHANCED** through a study of this nature.

From our study of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th cases of conversion (in Acts 8), we gleaned considerable information about our subject in hand. From the case of the **SAMARITANS**, we learned that Philip's preaching caused them to **BELIEVE** and be **BAPTIZED** (verse 12). From the case of **SIMON**, the **SORCERER**, we learned that he himself **ALSO BELIEVED** and was **BAPTIZED** (verse 13). And from the case of the **ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH**, we learned that Philip's preaching led him, **ALSO**, to **BELIEVE** and be **BAPTIZED** (verses 35-39).

The constant association of **BOTH BELIEF AND BAPTISM** is too persistent in the cases of conversion that we have studied thus far for **EITHER belief OR baptism** to be merely **ACCIDENTAL** or **INCIDENTAL** (as some would have us believe concerning baptism). The same Word of God that teaches **ONE** likewise teaches the **OTHER**—and for the **SAME PURPOSE**. Moreover, as we learned in an earlier study of the **GREAT COMMISSION**, Jesus Christ **HIMSELF**, in sending out the apostles **THEMSELVES**, commanded that it be **TAUGHT, PREACHED AND DONE THIS WAY**.

Several points were outstanding from our study especially of the **ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH'S** conversion:

- 1) He **SOUGHT** baptism **EAGERLY** rather than having to be **PERSUADED**:
- 2) Philip taught him that **BELIEF** must **PRECEDE** baptism (which necessarily would exclude all from being baptized who are mentally incapable of belief, e.g., infants, insane, animals, etc.):
- 3) The eunuch confessed his **FAITH** in Christ, not his sins, prior to baptism:
- 4) The eunuch's baptism involved both Philip and himself going **DOWN INTO THE WATER**, his being **BAPTIZED**, then both of them coming **UP OUT OF THE WATER**. (From Romans 6:4 and Colossians 2:12, which **DESCRIBES** baptism, we concluded that a **BURIAL** (immersion) must have taken place there, which harmonizes with the description given. Ephesians 4:5 teaches "ONE baptism." If that "ONE" is a **BURIAL** in water, then what **SCRIPTURAL** reason exists for these **TWO** other **SO-CALLED** "baptisms," i.e., **SPRINKLING** and **POURING**! Not a shred of **BIBLE** evidence exists for **EITHER**; and both are contrary to the clear teaching of the new testament **ALL THE WAY THROUGH**, as well as the example of the eunuch:
- 5) Lastly, the eunuch's rejoicing was **AFTER** (not before) he was baptized.

Now we come to the case of **SAUL OF TARSUS**, who was later to be known as the apostle Paul. The initial account of his conversion is found in Acts 9:1-22. However, later on, Paul recounts his conversion at Jerusalem, which record is found in Acts 22:1-16. Please read **BOTH ACCOUNTS** carefully before undertaking the following study:

- I. SAUL GETS HIMSELF AUTHORIZED TO GO TO THE SYNAGOGUES OF DAMASCUS TO BRING BACK TO JERUSALEM ANY CHRISTIANS HE MIGHT FIND THERE TO BE PUNISHED (Acts 9:1-2; Acts 22:4-5).
- A. On his way to Damascus, as he came near, a light from heaven shined around him (Acts 9:3; Acts 22:6).
 - B. Saul fell to the earth (Acts 9:4; Acts 22:7).
 - C. Saul heard a voice, saying, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:4; Acts 22:7).
 - D. Saul asked, “Who art thou Lord?” (Acts 9:5; Acts 22:8).
 - E. The Lord said, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks” (Acts 9:5; Acts 22:8).
NOTE: Bible students are often puzzled as to the meaning of this last clause, “IT IS HARD FOR THEE TO KICK AGAINST THE PRICKS.” Those of us who are familiar with driving oxen possibly will find it easier to understand than others. Oxen, as we know, are driven with a goad or stick. The driver sits on the cart behind them, and they know by the prick of his stick what he wants them to do. Evidently Jesus was referring to Saul’s conscience, as if it were an ox rebelling against its master. Just as an ox finds it hard to kick against the prick of a goad, even so Saul’s CONSCIENCE was having difficulty resisting the EVIDENCES that Jesus was whom he CLAIMED to be—THE SON OF GOD. These evidences “pricked” his conscience. It was “hard” for him to “kick” against the “pricks.”
 - F. Saul, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to DO?” (Acts 9:6; Acts 22:10).
 - G. The Lord said, “Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou MUST do” (Acts 9:6; Acts 22:10).
 - H. Saul’s companions stood speechless (Acts 9:7).
 - I. They were afraid (Acts 22:9).
 - J. Saul’s companions heard a voice, but saw no one (Acts 9:7).
NOTE: Acts 22:9 says they “saw indeed the light...but they heard not the voice.” This seeming contradiction with Acts 9:7 may not be a contradiction after all. The word “hear” has many meanings. Sometimes it means for a SOUND TO MAKE AN IMPRESSION on the eardrums. Sometimes it means to OBEY. At other times it means to UNDERSTAND, etc. Thus it would be possible for Saul’s companions to have “HEARD” (Acts 9:7) in ONE of these senses of the word, yet to have “HEARD NOT” (Acts 22:9) in an entirely different sense. For instance, they could have HEARD in the sense that the sound MADE AN IMPRESSION ON THEIR EARDRUMS yet NOT have heard in the sense of UNDERSTANDING what was said.
 - K. Saul arose from the earth (Acts 9:8).
 - L. When Saul opened his eyes, he could not see (Acts 9:8; Acts 22:11).
 - M. His companions led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus (Acts 9:8; Acts 22:11).
 - N. Saul was blind for three days (Acts 9:9).
 - O. During these three days, he neither ate nor drank (Acts 9:9).
- II. THE LORD SENDS ANANIAS TO TELL SAUL WHAT HE *MUST DO*.
- A. Ananias was a disciple of Jesus, who lived at Damascus, who was well-reported by the Jews (Acts 9:10; Acts 22:12).
 - B. The Lord appeared to Ananias in a vision (Acts 9:10).
 - C. The Lord said, “Ananias” (Acts 9:10).
 - D. Ananias said, “Behold, I am here, Lord” (Acts 9:10).
 - E. “rise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight” (Acts 9:11-12).

- F. Ananias seemed hesitant to go because of Saul's reputation as a persecutor of Christians. He said, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name" (Acts 9:13-14).
- G. But the Lord told Ananias to go ANYWAY, "for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16).
- H. So Ananias obeyed the Lord, went as directed, and entered the house (Acts 9:17).
- I. Ananias went to Saul, put his hands on him, and 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" (Acts 9:17).
- J. Ananias said, "Brother Saul, receive thy sight" (Acts 22:13).
- K. Immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales (Acts 9:18).
- L. Saul received his sight forthwith (Acts 9:18).
- M. Saul looked upon Ananias (Acts 9:18).
- N. Ananias then PREACHED to Saul, "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:14-16).
- O. "AROSE, and was BAPTIZED" (Acts 9:18).

NOTE: It is admitted by all that Saul's conversion was a VERY SPECIAL case, in that Jesus Christ was choosing him not only to become His "DISCIPLE" but also an "APOSTLE." That his choosing to be an apostle was "special" is evident, when we remember that the OTHER apostles had to "have companied...all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up" (See Acts 1:21-22). This certainly could not be said of Saul of Tarsus, who later declared that Christ was "last of all he was seen of me also, AS OF ONE BORN OUT OF DUE TIME. For I am the LEAST of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Corinthians 15:8-9).

The reason Saul was permitted to SEE Jesus as well as to HEAR the voice of his mouth, Ananias said, was so he could be His WITNESS unto all men of what he had SEEN and HEARD. (How utterly different from those who call themselves "Jehovah's Witnesses" today! Saul had both to SEE and HEAR Jesus to WITNESS what he had SEEN and HEARD. These spurious "witnesses" today have NEITHER SEEN NOR HEARD Jesus—yet claim to be his "witnesses." Some witnesses! They "testify" to what they have neither seen nor heard; they "witness" to what they have NOT witnessed!).

Some teach erroneously that Saul's sins were forgiven him, when the light shined round about him from heaven and Jesus spoke to him on the road to Damascus. This sentimental doctrine sounds convincing to some; the trouble is IT IS JUST NOT SO.

Firstly, it is presumptive to teach such, since the Word of God says nothing to that effect.

Secondly, instead of the Lord forgiving him then and there, He commanded him to "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be TOLD thee what thou MUST DO" (Acts 9:6). Jesus did not even PREACH THE GOSPEL to Saul directly; rather he had ANANIAS do it. This harmonizes with 2 Corinthians 4:7 where Paul declares, "we have this treasure [the gospel] in EARTHEN vessels" (i.e., human beings).

Thirdly, when Ananias had finished preaching to Saul, he concluded by saying, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be BAPTIZED, and WASH AWAY THY SINS" calling on the name of the Lord."

QUESTION: If Saul's sins had already been forgiven him on the road to Damascus, why did Ananias command him to "BE BAPTIZED, and WASH AWAY THY SINS" in the city of Damascus THREE DAYS LATER?

How deceived some people can get! In Saul's conversion his being BAPTIZED is clearly connected with WASHING AWAY HIS SINS. Thus he "arose, and was BAPTIZED" (Acts 9:18) even before receiving meat (verse 19).