

Unusual Conversions

Before ascending to heaven, Jesus gave His people the mission of preaching the gospel to the world (Matthew 28:19-20). Acts shows us when and how they carried out the Lord's marching orders! The gospel is first preached in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-38). Three thousand people are baptized and added to the church (Acts 2:41). The church continues to multiply (Acts 4:4; 5:14).

Despite this evangelistic success, in Acts 7, something terrible takes place. Stephen is stoned by the Jewish council (Acts 7:51-60). This event motivates Saul of Tarsus to begin a vicious assault against the church (Acts 8-13). The disciples continue spreading the word (Acts 8:4).

Acts 8:5, through Acts 10, gives a detailed description of who the disciples were preaching to once they fled Jerusalem. These are some very unusual cases of conversion!

The Samaritans (Acts 8:5-12)

- The Jews had an intense hatred for the Samaritans (John 4:9). They were prejudice towards the Samaritans because they had Gentile blood.
- Philip (a Jew), goes from Jerusalem to Samaria and preaches Christ. He immerses many Samaritans into Christ (Acts 8:5, 12).

Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:13)

- Simon was a trickster and deceiver among the Samaritans.
- He also believed the gospel and was baptized.

The Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-39)

- Eunuchs were not allowed in the congregation of Old Covenant Israel (Deuteronomy 23:1).
- This eunuch was also the treasurer for Candace. He was returning to Ethiopia after spending time in Jerusalem, worshipping God.
- Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch and baptized him for the remission of sins (Acts 8:35-39).

Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:1-19)

- Saul led an intense persecution effort against the church (Acts 8:1-3).
- After seeing the Lord on the Damascus road, he is later immersed and has his sins washed away (Acts 22:16).
- Saul would later become a preacher and apostle! He would risk his life spreading the gospel throughout the world.

Cornelius the Gentile (Acts 10:1-48)

- Gentiles were not God's people under the Old Covenant.
- Through the gospel, both Jews and Gentiles are welcomed into the family of God (Ephesians 2:13-14).
- Cornelius and his household were the first Gentiles to enter into the kingdom of God!

What can we learn from these unusual conversions?

- God extends His grace to everyone (John 3:16; Titus 2:11)!
- God's gospel is powerful! The gospel has the power to both save and transform (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).
- God's gospel must be shared (Acts 8:4; Matthew 28:19)!

Conclusion: Do you need to be converted by the gospel?

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