



Basic Bible Course

by *Ira Y. Rice, Jr.*

‘ACTS of the APOSTLES’ — Book of CONVERSIONS



Lesson Fourteen

INTRODUCTION: Many grievous errors have crept into the teaching of many so-called “Christian” churches across the centuries, since THE CHURCH was first established on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Some few of these errors—a very few—have come through “interpretation.” However, for the most part, they have come either through teaching something the new testament does NOT teach, or through denying something it DOES teach.

Such errors can easily be avoided (or corrected) by the careful observance of a few simple new testament rules. In the latter case, 1 Peter 4:11 would remedy the matter: “If any man speak, *let him speak AS THE ORACLES OF GOD.*” By thus speaking where the Scriptures SPEAK (and not speaking where they do not speak), we should neither add to nor deny anything the “oracles of God” teach on any point.... As for errors of interpretation, we should remember “that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20). By foregoing any “private” theories of our own, and by calm, careful comparison of “difficult” passages with all the other Scriptures on the same subject, as a general rule we can come to a fair understanding.

Perhaps on no other Bible subject has there been more human error perpetrated among the people of God than on that of “conversion.” For some private reason of their own, practically all denominations teach either MORE, LESS or OTHER than God’s Word on this subject. Even those who restrict themselves to PART of what the Bible teaches on conversion almost always refuse to accept it ALL. They make discriminations where the testament makes none, affecting to perceive one part of the teaching as “essential” but rejecting another part as “non-essential.” From what the Lord told the devil, when He was tempted in the wilderness, we should realize the utter folly of such reasoning. “Man shall not live by bread alone,” Jesus said, “but by EVERY WORD that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

When it comes to a THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING of the subject of CONVERSION, where else can we better concentrate our attention than upon that BOOK OF CONVERSIONS—“THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES!” This book, certainly, does not contain ALL of the acts of ALL of the apostles; but it does contain SOME of the acts of SOME of the apostles—principally of PETER (chapters 1 through 12) and PAUL (chapters 13 through 28). Written by Luke, whom Paul called his “beloved physician,” ALL CASES OF CONVERSION RECORDED IN THE WORD OF GOD ARE FOUND IN THIS BOOK.

The object of our current study of the Book of ACTS, therefore, will be to determine what FACTS, PROMISES, WARNINGS and COMMANDS characterized each case of conversion thus recorded in the word of God. Once these have been ascertained (whatever they may be), if we BELIEVE the SAME FACTS, HEED the SAME WARNINGS, and OBEY the SAME COMMANDS (for the SAME PURPOSES as they), we then should ENJOY the SAME PROMISES they enjoyed, being “CONVERTED” to Christ in the SAME WAY.... We shall take up each case of conversion separately, in succession, study exhaustively each case under consideration before moving on to the next. No general conclusions will be drawn from any ONE case by itself. However, the matter contained in EACH case will be pin-pointed and fairly presented. So on through all the 11 cases of conversion, which the book of Acts clearly set forth.

At the conclusion of our study of ALL ELEVEN CASES, we shall THEN make a chart and summary of ALL that the book of Acts has to offer on the subject of conversion. By accepting “every word”—and not just one or two words here and there—we should “know the truth” on how to be converted to Jesus Christ. Now let us consider Case No. 1:

I. THE GREAT COMMISSION GIVEN FOLLOWING RESURRECTION.

NOTE: It must be remembered that Jesus Christ—just like the thieves on the crosses—lived and died as a Jew under the Jewish ten-commandment law. Neither He nor they were Christians: for the law making Christians was not yet of force (Read Hebrews 9:15-17). Following His death, Jesus lay in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights, rising from the dead on the morning of the third day. For the next 40 days thereafter, He associated with His disciples frequently—and just before ascending to heaven delivered the great commission recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke.

- A. According to Matthew (See Mat. 28:18-20).
- B. According to Mark (See Mark 16:15-16).
- C. According to Luke (See Luke 24:46-49).
 1. In Luke’s account, especially, we learn that this new and great commission was to BEGIN AT JERUSALEM (See verse 47).
 2. Also the apostles were not to begin at once, but to “TARRY” in the city of Jerusalem, “until ye be endued with POWER from on high.”

II. BRIDGING GAP BETWEEN GIVING OF COMMISSION AND PENTECOST.

NOTE: It is generally conceded by all Bible scholars that the same Luke, who wrote “The Gospel According to Luke” is the one who wrote “The Acts of the Apostles.” This agreement is strengthened by the writer of Acts beginning his book by referring to “the former treatise”—especially inasmuch as Acts begins where Luke finished.

- A. In the “former treatise” Luke had addressed “Theophilus” (compare Luke 1:3 with Acts 1:1), setting forth “all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up” (Acts 1:1-2).
- B. Before His ascension, certain events took place:
 1. Through the Holy Ghost, Jesus GAVE COMMANDMENTS unto THE APOSTLES whom He had chosen (verse 2).
 2. He SHOWED HIMSELF ALIVE to THE APOSTLES after dying on Calvary (verse 3).
 - a. He demonstrated He was alive again by many proofs (verse 3).
 - b. These proofs were infallible (verse 3).
 3. He was SEEN of THEM (apostles) 40 days after His resurrection before ascending to heaven (verse 3).
 4. He spoke of the things “pertaining to the kingdom of God” (verse 3).
 5. Being ASSEMBLED together WITH THE APOSTLES, He commanded THEM that THEY should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, said He, ye have heard of me (verse 4).
 - a. This promise of the Father to the apostles was the baptism with the Holy Ghost (verse 5).
 - b. Note that *THIS* “PROMISE” was to “THE APOSTLES” (read verses 1-5 again slowly and carefully); it was not to all, just to them.
 6. The apostles wanted to know more about THE KINGDOM.
 - a. Evidently, they thought it was to be the Kingdom formerly enjoyed by the children of Israel, for they asked, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (verse 6).

7. Jesus said this information belonged to the Father, rather than to them—but that they should receive “power” after the “Holy Ghost” should come upon them (verses 7-8). By this power they should witness unto him,
 - a. in Jerusalem
 - b. in all Judea
 - c. in Samaria, and
 - d. unto the uttermost part of the earth.
8. Having thus spoken, a cloud received Him out of their sight (verse 9).
- C. While the apostles “behold” and “looked steadfastly toward heaven” as Jesus went up (verses 9-10), two men clothed in white stood by them:
 1. “Ye men of Galilee,” they asked, “why stand ye gazing up into heaven?”
 2. “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven,” they prophesied, “shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”
- D. Then the apostles returned unto Jerusalem (verse 12).
 1. In Jerusalem, they went up into an upper room, which was their abode (verse 13).
 2. Only 11 apostles are named as abiding there (verse 13), for, some 43 days previously, one of the original 12 had committed suicide in remorse for having betrayed Jesus Christ to His death (Matthew 27:3-5; Acts 1:18-19).
 3. These 11 all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication (verse 14).
 - a. Some women were there also, including Jesus’ mother, Mary (verse 14).
 - b. Jesus’ brothers were there, too. (Compare verse 14 with Matthew 13:55).
 - c. The whole company together came to be about 120 in all (verse 15).
- E. While the apostles and other disciples were thus “tarrying” in Jerusalem, waiting for the “power” promised in Luke 24:49, and reiterated in Acts 1:8, the apostle Peter called certain facts to the attention of all assembled (verses 15-22).
 1. Citing a prophecy from David (Psalm 41:9), referring to Judas’ betrayal of Jesus, Peter explained that Judas’ act had been necessary that the Scripture might be fulfilled (verse 16).
 - a. This Scripture actually had been spoken by the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David (verse 16).
 2. Even though he betrayed Jesus, two facts were true concerning Judas (verse 17).
 - a. He HAD BEEN “NUMBERED” with the apostles.
 - b. He HAD OBTAINED part of the apostles’ “ministry.”
 3. Psalms 69:25 had instructed, “Let his [Judas] habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick [i.e., office] let another take” (Also see Psalm 109:8).
 - a. Therefore it was necessary to ordain one to be an apostle in Judas’ stead (verses 21-22).
 - b. The one to be ordained had to be a MAN (verse 21).
 - c. He had to have associated with the disciples all the time that Jesus went in and out among them, beginning from the baptism of John (see Matthew 3) unto that same day that he was taken up into heaven. (Compare verses 21-22 of Acts 1 with verses 9-11).
 - d. The purpose of his ordination was “to be a WITNESS” with the other witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection (verse 22).

NOTE: Consider carefully what qualification was required to be a “WITNESS” (verses 21-22).
- F. Of the other men who were together with the apostles, two men were picked out who fitted this description—Joseph and Matthias (verse 23).
 1. A prayer was offered wherein God was asked to show which of these two He had chosen (verse 24).

2. Whichever it was, he was to “take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas” had fallen (verse 25).
3. When lots were cast, the lot fell upon Matthias (verse 26).
4. Thus Matthias was “numbered with the eleven apostles” (verse 26).

NOTE: This ordination of Matthias to be an apostle with “the eleven” thus restored the number of apostles to TWELVE.

III. THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

- A. When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place (verse 1).
NOTE: Much dissension has plagued students of this passage as to the antecedent of the pronoun “they.” Some argue that “they” refers to “Matthias” and “the eleven apostles;” others that “they” includes all the “hundred and twenty” disciples referred to earlier in Acts 1:15...Inasmuch as Luke had just said, “and the lot fell upon MATTHIAS; and he was numbered with THE ELEVEN APOSTLES. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, THEY were all with one accord in one place,” it appears that the former position is correct, rather than the latter. However, from what Peter said in Acts 2:14-18, referring to both “sons” and “DAUGHTERS” prophesying as well as God’s SPIRIT being poured out on both “servants” and “HANDMAIDENS,” in all honesty it should be conceded that the pronoun “they” in verse 1 MAY actually refer to the “hundred and twenty.” Certainly the “hundred and twenty” appear to have included some “daughters” and “handmaidens” (see 1:14-15), which cannot be said of “Matthias...[and]...the eleven apostles.” And Peter said what happened is what Joel prophesied, re: foregoing...In any case, whether just the apostles or all the hundred and twenty, when Pentecost came, “they were all with one accord in one place.”
- B. Suddenly there came a sound from heaven (verse 2).
 1. The sound was like that of a rushing mighty wind.
 2. The sound filled all the house where they were sitting.
- C. There appeared unto them cloven (i.e., forked) tongues (verse 3).
 1. The tongues were like fire in appearance.
 2. The tongues sat upon each of them.
- D. All assembled were “filled with the Holy Ghost” (verse 4).
 1. All began to speak with other “tongues” (i.e., languages).
 2. Rather than choosing their own words, “the SPIRIT gave them utterance.”
- E. When this phenomenon was “noised abroad” (verse 6), a multitude of people came together to see what was taking place.
 1. They were all JEWS “out of every nation under heaven” (verse 5).
 2. They were all “confounded” because every man heard them speak in his own language (verse 6).
 3. They were all amazed and marveled (verse 7).
 4. They asked one another how it was possible for all these Galileans (not noted for scholarship) to speak in all these various languages (verses 7-8).
 5. The nationalities listed were as follows:
 - a. Parthians
 - b. Medes
 - c. Elamites
 - d. Mesopotamians
 - e. Judaeans
 - f. Cappadocians
 - g. Pontus

- h. Asia
 - i. Phrygia
 - j. Pamphylia
 - k. Egypt
 - l. Lybya (about Cyrene)
 - m. Rome (Jews and proselytes)
 - n. Cretes
 - o. Arabians
6. They all asked one another what it all meant? (verse 12).
 7. Some, mocking, made fun of it, saying these men were drunk (verse 13).
- F. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, denied the charge of drunkenness, explaining this miracle as fulfillment of prophecy (verses 14-16).
1. He quoted the prophet Joel. (Read Joel 2:28-32; compare Acts 2:17-21).
 - a. He said "THIS IS THAT" which was spoken by Joel (verse 16).
 2. He refreshed their memory of Jesus of Nazareth (verse 22ff).
 - a. He declared Jesus as "approved of God" among them by miracles and wonders and signs (verse 22).
 - b. He said these things were done by GOD through Jesus.
 - c. He said his listeners also KNEW this to be true.
 3. Peter then charged the people with crucifying and slaying Jesus (verse 23).
 4. He declared, however, that God had raised Jesus from the dead (verse 24).
 - a. He denied it was possible for death to hold Jesus.
 - b. He quoted David's prophecy. (Compare verses 25-28 with Psalms 16:8-11).
 - c. He demonstrated that this prophecy could not refer to David PERSONALLY, because David HIMSELF was "both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day" (verse 29).
 - d. He explained that David was a prophet; and that this prophecy from Psalms 16 referred to the resurrection and enthronement of Christ (verses 30-31).

NOTE: Jesus Christ was the fruit of David's loins; hence, referring to Christ, his own descendent, David spoke as if it were he himself. Thus, in actual fact, it was not David's soul PERSONALLY, but his descendent CHRIST'S soul that was not "left in hell" and whose flesh did not "see corruption." This Jesus hath "God raised up."

 - e. Peter proclaimed that he and all the apostles were WITNESSES that Christ had been raised from the dead.
 5. Not only had Christ been RAISED from death, but God had ENTHRONED him at his own right hand (verse 33).
 6. God, further, had given Christ His Holy Spirit (verse 33).
 7. Christ, in turn, had sent the Holy Spirit (verse 33).
 8. Peter said this is what the multitude was then witnessing at that very moment.
 - a. He went on to deny that David, personally, had ascended into the heavens (verse 34).
 - b. He quoted David as referring to his "Lord." (Compare verse 34 with Psalms 110:1).
 9. Peter concluded by saying that God had made "that same Jesus," whom they had crucified, "both LORD and CHRIST."
- G. When the multitude heard this, they were conscience-stricken for having crucified their own Lord (verse 37).
1. They asked of the apostles, "What shall we do?" (verse 37).

- H. Peter commanded, “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” (verse 38).
1. He said God’s promise of the Holy Ghost was to them and their children (i.e., the Jews) and to all that are afar off (i.e., the Gentiles), even as many as God should call (verse 39). (Also see 2 Thessalonians 2:14; God “calls” through the “gospel”).
 2. He testified to and exhorted them with many other words, saying, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (verse 40).
- I. They that “gladly received his word were BAPTIZED (verse 41) as Peter had commanded (verse 38).
1. “About 3,000 souls” were “ADDED” that day (verse 41).
 2. Verse 47 shows they were “ADDED to THE CHURCH” and that it was the LORD who did the adding.
- J. AFTER BEING BAPTIZED, these new converts “continued steadfastly” in—
1. The apostles’ doctrine (i.e., teaching) (verse 42).
 2. Fellowship (i.e., sharing) (verses 42, 44-45).
 3. Breaking of bread (verse 42).
 4. Prayers (verse 42).
 5. They were together (verse 44).
 6. They worshipped daily in the temple (verse 46).
 7. They broke bread (i.e., they ate with one another) from house to house (verse 46).
 8. They were happy (verse 46).
 9. They were united in spirit (verse 46).
 10. They praised God (verse 47).
 11. The people respected them (verse 47).
- K. The Lord added new converts to their number “daily” (verse 47).

NOTE: At the point of conversion (or change) from being the opponents of Jesus Christ to becoming His disciples, observe what happened:

First, after coming together, they HEARD Peter’s preaching (verse 37).

Second, they were “pricked in their heart” (i.e., they BELIEVED what Peter had preached to the extent their consciences hurt).

Third, in this spiritual condition, they asked what to do (verse 37).

Fourth, they were commanded to “REPENT” and “BE BAPTIZED” (verse 38).

1. This was in order to obtain “remission of sins” (verse 38).
2. It was also to “save” themselves (verse 40).

Fifth, those NOT RESISTING the word but who “GLADLY RECEIVED” it, did as Peter had commanded: they “WERE BAPTIZED.”

Sixth, “about 3,000 souls” were “added” that first day.

1. It was the “day of Pentecost” in Acts 2.