

**--CONVERSION STORIES--  
PENTECOST ATTENDEES**

If you want to know how to be saved, then turn to the book of Acts. The New Testament book of Acts is composed of stories of conversion. It is the story of the church of Christ over its first 30 years in the world. The word "conversion" means "to change." The book of Acts tells us about changes that were made in the lives of men and women when they heard and obeyed the news about Jesus Christ, and were added to the church. When **you** hear and respond to the news about Jesus Christ, you too can be converted; you can make important changes in your life; you can be saved and added to the church of Jesus Christ.

Hello I'm Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ.

The New Testament of Jesus Christ contains 27 items that we call books. One of those books is the book of Acts. It is also called the Acts of the Apostles, which is a little inaccurate because actually the book revolves primarily around the work of just two apostles, Peter and Paul. One of the conversion stories you read about in the book of Acts is the story of the conversion of the apostle Paul. Yes, Paul was converted from being the worst enemy of Jesus Christ to an apostle of Jesus Christ. You too can be converted from being the enemy of Christ. You can become a Christian. But let's start at the beginning of the book.

The book of Acts begins with the account of the Ascension of Jesus Christ back to His heavenly Father. By the time Jesus was ready to leave this earth He had taught and trained 12 apostles. The word "apostle" means "sent one." Jesus had trained those men so that He could "send" them with the good news of salvation and establish and build the church of Christ. However, one of those men betrayed Jesus and collected 30 pieces of silver for his betrayal. That apostle's name was Judas Iscariot. Evidently Judas did not think that putting Jesus into the hands of his enemies would result in Jesus' death. For when Judas saw that Jesus would be killed he took the 30 pieces of silver back to Jesus' prosecutors and said, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." Judas then slung the money at the feet of the prosecutors and went out and hanged himself. (Matthew 27:3-5)

Therefore, when Jesus gathered his apostles together after his resurrection there were only 11. And so, in the opening chapter of the book of Acts those eleven

men were standing with Jesus on a mountain for the last time on earth. Jesus was ready to leave the earth. He had already foretold that this day of departure would arrive. On one occasion Jesus spoke to a crowd in the temple area and said, "I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." So the Jews said, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins." (John 8:21-24) Even today, friends, you cannot SEE Jesus even if you seek him. He is not here in the flesh anymore! Therefore, to find Jesus you must seek him through "faith." That's right! Unless you believe that Jesus is the Savior, the Son of God, you too will die in your sins. Faith is the only that bridges the gap between earth and heaven where Jesus is! Believing in Jesus is to believe and obey His teaching and the teaching of those apostles whom he sent.

Jesus also told his apostles about his departure. The night of Judas' betrayal, and after he went out of the upper room in order to collect his money, Jesus said this to those eleven who remained in the room, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:33-35) They were all sorrowful for hearing this but Peter said, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times. But "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 13:37 through 14:6)

And so, when we come to the book of Acts we are ready for Jesus' departure from the earth. It was on the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem that Jesus' eleven

apostles "Gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city." (Acts 1:6-12) Friends, you can imagine the astonishment of these eleven men when they saw Jesus begin to lift off the earth! They watched until Jesus disappeared in a cloud. They continued watching to get another glimpse of him. They continued until startled by two men in white who told them Jesus would come back the same way He went.

The apostles then journeyed back to Jerusalem to wait the great day when they would be immersed in the Holy Spirit. They only had to wait 10 days. The Day of Pentecost arrived, a great holiday for the Jewish people. Jewish people gathered in Jerusalem from all the nations around the Mediterranean world. There were people there from Syria and Armenia, Iran and Iraq. There were people there from Kuwait and the Arabian tribes, also people from up and down the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates. There were also people there from all the provinces of modern-day Turkey, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia. There were also people from northern Africa, Egypt and parts of Libya. There were also people there from Rome, Italy, and the islands off the coast of Greece; these people were Jews and converts to Judaism. (Acts 2:8-11)

Jesus had been killed at the Passover of that year, but on the 50<sup>th</sup> day after the Passover, in Jerusalem around 9 a.m. on the first day of the week, there was heard a rushing, mighty wind. It filled the place where the apostles of Christ had already come together. There were 12 of them now. While waiting in Jerusalem the disciples had chosen another man to take Judas' place. When the sound of the wind came there also appeared "divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:3-4)

It did not take very long for the news of this miracle to spread around the city and thousands of people in the crowded city gathered to see what all the commotion was about. The people discovered 12 men, Galileans, who were speaking in the native languages of the people who were gathering. Obviously, the crowd was amazed to be hearing God's message in the native languages of all those who were gathered. In Acts 2 you can read what Peter was preaching, which was probably being repeated by the other apostles in all of those native languages.

Peter addressed the crowd in these words: "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it." (Acts 2:22-24) Peter went on to tell the people where Jesus was at that moment: "This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing." (Acts 2:32-33)

Then Peter concluded this way: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:36-41) Verse 47 says that the Lord did the adding; Jesus added them to the church of Jesus Christ. Glory be to God who grants forgiveness of sins through His Son's sacrifice and our response by believing, repenting, and submitting to immersion in water. Are you ready to be saved? Are you ready to be changed? Are you ready for conversion?