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Discovery

Scripture & Science for Kids

SOS

Save Our Souls

EVERYONE TO BE SAVED

In the early church, there was one main way for Christians to spread the Gospel—by word of mouth. There was no Internet, no telephone, no radio, no television. The apostles and disciples had to take the message of God to the people directly, often walking hundreds of miles. However, this did not stop them from taking the good news of Jesus everywhere they could!

In Acts 8:1-4, we read that the church in Jerusalem was scattered, and Christians went everywhere preaching and teaching. Philip went north from Jerusalem to the city of Samaria, where he taught the Samaritans (Acts 8:5-13). What made this so amazing was that the Jews and the Samaritans hated each other. John 4:9 says, “Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.” Why did the Jews hate the Samaritans so much? The answer is found in the Old Testament. After King Solomon died, God allowed the kingdom of Israel to be split. Rehoboam ruled in the south (the country of Judah), and Jeroboam ruled in the north (the country of Israel). Sadly, the people of Israel were unfaithful to God, so God let the Assyrian Empire take them into captivity. Those few who remained violated God’s command not to marry people from other nations, and as a result, they were an ethnically mixed people. They were no longer just Israelites; they became known as Samaritans.

Can you imagine what the Samaritans thought about Philip, a Jew, preaching to them? For hundreds of years, the Jews had treated the Samaritans with contempt. Now the Jews were preaching to Samaritans about Jesus, and encouraging them to obey the Gospel. To do so would mean that the Samaritans would unite with certain Jews in the Christian faith. This must have made a major impression on the Samaritans, because it says that “the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did” (Acts 8:6). The power of the Gospel is so

great that it allows the prejudices of hundreds of years to be removed in a matter of hours or days. The conversion of the Samaritan people also shows that God wants everyone to be saved, and will accept everyone who obeys His Word (read Acts 8:12). The disciples and apostles in the early church took the Gospel everywhere they went. Even though there are many more stories in the book of Acts about those who were converted, the story of the Samaritans’ conversion shows us a lot about God and His faithfulness.



THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

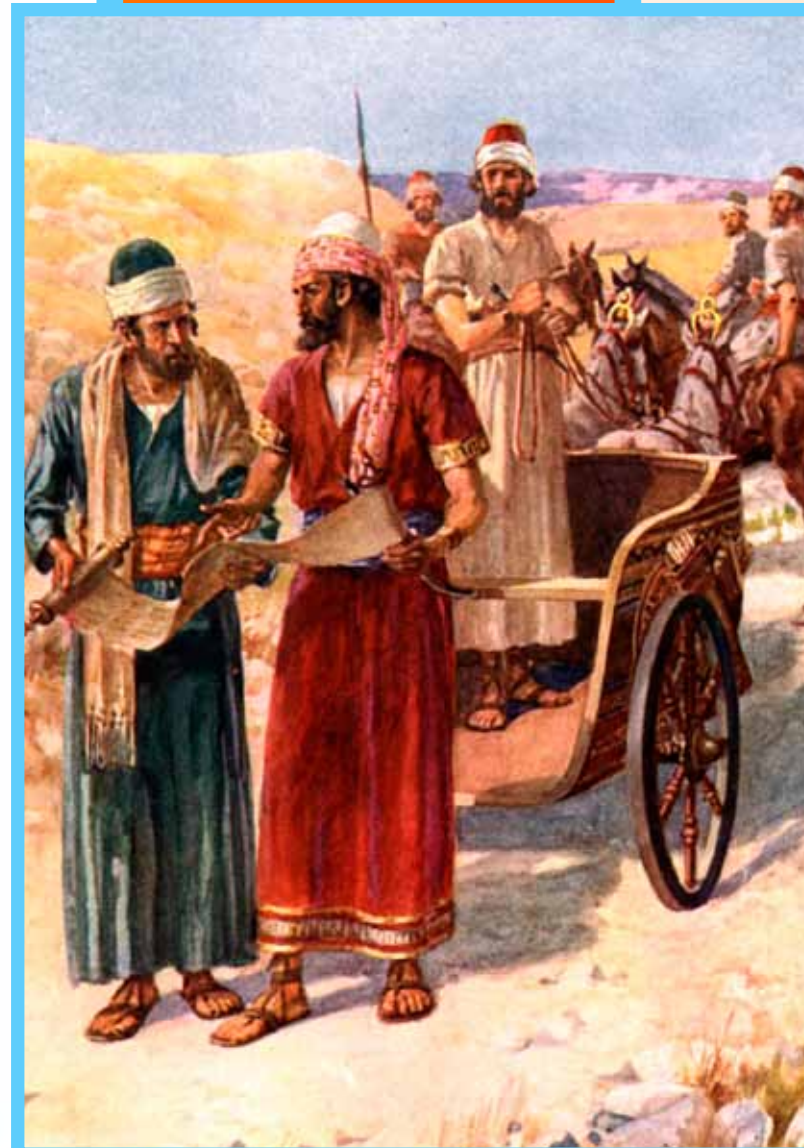
After Philip assisted in the conversion of a large number of people in Samaria, an angel from God came to talk to him. The angel told Philip: “Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza” (Acts 8:26).

Philip departed after the angel spoke to him, and soon saw a chariot. Sitting in the chariot was a man from Ethiopia (a country in Africa). The man was a eunuch who had much power in his country, which was ruled by Queen Candace. The eunuch was in charge of taking care of all of the queen’s money—he was her treasurer. He was going back to his home in Ethiopia after worshiping in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit told Philip to go and join the treasurer in his chariot. Philip was so excited to preach the Gospel that he ran to catch up with the chariot.



Once Philip got to the chariot, he heard that the eunuch was reading from the book of Isaiah. Philip asked the man, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The eunuch answered, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” The eunuch asked Philip to come into the chariot and sit with him. Philip saw that the eunuch was reading from Isaiah 53:7-8, which says: “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opened not his mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth.”

The eunuch asked Philip who Isaiah was writing about. Philip then began to tell him all about Jesus, and what a person needs to do to be in a right relationship with Him. After Philip and the eunuch had traveled down the road for a while, the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” (Acts 8:36). Philip then ordered the chariot to stop, and he baptized the Ethiopian official. The eunuch went back home very happy, because he had just made the greatest decision of his life: he decided to become a Christian.



The Conversion of Saul

Before Paul became a Christian, his name was Saul. At that time, he was a devout Jew. He followed the commands of the Old Testament Law, not understanding that Moses' law had been done away with by the death of Christ (Colossians 2:14).

Because Paul was so faithful to Judaism, he wanted to stop people who tried to convert Jews to any other religion—including Christianity. So he persecuted Christians. He imprisoned, and sometimes even killed, any Christians he could find.



In Acts 9, we read that Saul had been given orders from the high priest to go from Jerusalem (where the church of Christ started) to Damascus, to arrest more Christians. Saul, honored to be a brave soldier for the cause of preserving the Old Law, headed for Damascus.

While he was on the way, however, something unusual and amazing happened—something that changed Saul's life forever. At about noon, a bright light flashed all around Saul. It frightened him so badly that he fell to the ground. Then, he heard a voice speak from the light: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:4).

Saul, knowing that he was in the presence of great power, answered, "Who are you, Lord?" The voice replied, "I am Jesus, Whom you are persecuting." Jesus told Saul to go on to Damascus, where he would be told what to do. Saul had been blinded by the light, however, so his group of

helpers led him to Damascus.

Saul had no idea of the important work he would do for Jesus in the future, but he did know that he wanted to obey Him. Ananias told Saul to arise and be baptized to have his sins washed away (Acts 22:16). Paul did exactly that, and turned his energies from persecuting Christians to boldly preaching Christianity to Jews in the synagogues. Before he died, Paul went all the way to Rome, defending the faith.



Cornelius Becomes a Christian



Have you ever known someone who did some very good things, but was not a Christian? There are many people who help others, but never go to church. These people may even believe in God and pray to Him, but they have never been taught the truth about Christ. There is a man like this in the Bible. His name was Cornelius.

Cornelius was a leader in the Roman army. He was stationed in the Jewish city of Caesarea, where he learned about God from the Jews. He is described as "a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts 10:2). It is clear that Cornelius tried to be a very good man and wanted to please God. Yet, the things he did were not enough. Praying and helping the poor are good things to do, but by themselves they could never save him (Ephesians 2:8-9). Cornelius wanted to please God, so the Lord sent Peter to him to tell him what he needed to do. The conversion of Cornelius is very important, because he was the

first Gentile the Bible records who became a Christian. Up to this point, God allowed the Jews (and Samaritans) to hear the Gospel. It was first preached to the Jews by Peter and the rest of the apostles on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Peter would now be the first to present the Gospel to the Gentiles. God told Peter that the Gospel was for everyone, both Jews and Gentiles, and he began his sermon to Cornelius by saying that "God shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34).

After Cornelius and his family were taught about Jesus, they decided to commit their lives to Him. Cornelius was a good man, but he still needed to believe in Christ and be baptized in order for his sins to be washed away and to be pleasing to the Lord. In this way, God brought salvation to the Gentiles. The story of Cornelius shows us that it is not enough to try to be good and believe in God; we must also be baptized "in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48). This story also shows us that the Gospel is for everyone. It is wonderful that God doesn't leave out anyone who will obey Him!

ACTIVITY PAGES

WORD SEARCH

B N O M W W O V E Z L O
 G S Z M V I L U T E S Y N
 Z D B S K B V L H B I X A Z D
 R H A X R E T U I I T G T Z F
 X F H M J L X A O K T Q I L F
 K Q Y L A Q Y P P F G V R M H
 X S B T O S M V I J T U A K X
 E O J P K H C F A F R L M H S
 K M M I C F Y U N W L N A Q E
 U D I U I D A L S Z S H S C R
 T E N Y Y W N B E T L S A O T
 Z U C H R I S T I A N D L H N
 E D K Q Z O F J R U N I M D C
 U S O W R S C X H A A F C G G
 W B Q O J A T G C J E T P X A

Jailor Ethiopian
 Damascus Candace
 Christian Eunuch
 Paul Samaritan

TRUE OR FALSE

- God only wants Jews to be saved.
- Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus.
- The Ethiopian eunuch realized he had to be baptized to be saved.
- Christians should not spread the Gospel.
- For the most part, Jews loved the Samaritans very much.
- An angel talked to Philip.
- The Ethiopian was a treasurer.
- The Ethiopian was reading the book of Isaiah.
- Saul was instructed to be baptized.
- Before Paul became a Christian, his name was Solomon.

COMPLETE THE VERSES (NKJV)

- "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be _____ and wash away your sins, calling on the _____ of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).
- "See here is _____. What hinders me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36).
- "Arise and go toward the _____ along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza" (Acts 8:26).
- "Saul! Saul! Why are you _____ me?" (Acts 9:4).

- The occupation of the Ethiopian eunuch
- The disciple who taught the eunuch
- Paul was formerly known by this name
- Non-Jews
- The eunuch was riding in this before meeting Philip
- Taught Cornelius the Gospel
- Jesus came to save man from
- The Eunuch was from this country
- Saul was blinded on his way to this city
- Where Paul and Silas were when the Philippian jailor was converted

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| A. Philip | F. Peter |
| B. Gentiles | G. Jail |
| C. Chariot | H. Damascus |
| D. Saul | I. Ethiopia |
| E. Treasurer | J. Sin |

MATCHING



Illustrated by Emma Baker Montgomery, AL

Dear Digger Doug,

Is the life and story of Jesus just a version of past pagan gods?
 —Steven, E. Patchogue, NY

Dear Steven,

Some people say that Jesus is just one of many characters in the past who falsely claimed to be Lord. Atheists, for example, believe that religion came about purely naturally, with no help from any real Christ. So, they would like for us to believe that Jesus did not come from heaven and is nothing special.

There are some similarities between Jesus and His teachings, and earlier personalities and their teachings. Some resemblances happened because God made people to be generally religious, and to have a sense of right and wrong. Other similarities happened probably because pagan people heard God's prophets, such as Jonah. Still, Jesus is completely unique because He is a historical—not merely mythical—person. Also, Jesus taught many original things. We can be sure that Jesus really is the only Son of God (John 3:16; 1 Timothy 6:15). For more information about this topic, check out our book, *Behold! The Lamb of God*.





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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



The Conversion of a Philippian Jailer

If you have ever visited someone in jail, then you may know that there you will find criminals of all sorts—people who have robbed stores, committed murder, and done countless other crimes. Those who have the job of guarding these prisoners often appear to be unfriendly, because it is their job to keep the prisoners under control. This is a very serious job that puts great demands on the guards.

In the book of Acts, Luke tells us of a non-Christian who was a prison guard. When Paul and Silas were thrown into prison, the guard put their feet in large wooden stocks, so they couldn't move. He put them into the deepest part of the prison so that an escape would be much more difficult.

This man didn't know that God was watching over Paul and Silas. At midnight, while Paul and Silas were praying and singing, and the other prisoners were listening to them, a great earthquake shook the entire prison, and all the doors opened (Acts 16:25-26).

The guard, who had been sleeping, was awakened by the earthquake. Seeing that the doors to the prison had been opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself (because, normally, Roman guards who lost their prisoners were sentenced to death). But Paul called out to him and said, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here" (Acts 16:28).

The jailor called for a light and went inside to find the two apostles. The jailor trembled at the feet of Paul and Silas and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:30-31). Then, Paul and Silas taught the Gospel to the jailor and his family, and they all were baptized that very night.

Isn't it amazing that even a prison guard, who didn't know about the way of salvation a few hours before, could be saved from his sins the very night he first learned about Jesus? God's commandment is that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). God wants us to help our non-Christian friends by teaching them about Jesus and His commands.

ANSWERS

9. H (Damascus); 10. G (Jail).
 4. persecuting. MATCHING: 1. E (Treasurer); 2. A (Phillip); 3. D (Saul); 4. B (Gentiles); 5. C (Chariot); 6. F (Peter); 7. J (Sin); 8. I (Ethiopia);
 TRUE OR FALSE: 1-F; 2-T; 3-T; 4-F; 5-F; 6-T; 7-T; 8-T; 9-T; 10-F. COMPLETE THE VERSES: 1. baptized, name; 2. water; 3. south;
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