

Answer 2: 27 proofs of “The First Church”

2. They were converted (Matt. 3:5-8; 18:3; Luke 9:1-10).

This begs the question: What is conversion in the Scriptural sense? Is it not being born-again in Christ, and as a result having the nature of the soul changed from that of Adam to that of Christ? If it isn't, what other meaning can one have for it – with the express exception of Peter?

In the context of using this as proof of a New Testament church, the implication here is that prior to Christ beginning His earthly ministry no one was converted. What else can he mean by using this as a proof of the existence of a New Testament church? If he doesn't mean that, then he does the same thing with this point that he did with Point 1, which is make every Old Testament saint a member of the New Testament church, which they were not, and are not.

Since the only implication of Point 2 can be that no one was converted prior to the Lord Jesus Christ beginning His earthly ministry, he calls into question the doctrine he holds concerning salvation prior to Christ's earthly ministry. However, as is shown in the answer to Point 1, the Scripture is very plain that salvation has always been the same. The only difference between what they believed and we believe has nothing to do with salvation per se, but has to do with when they believed the promise would be effected. They believed that the Messiah would come, and we believe that He has come, the point of change being the cross.

Since salvation has not changed, the effect of salvation has not changed either. Then, as now, when one believes in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation, in faith and repentance, they are instantly born-again and the soul is

transformed from unrighteousness, to righteousness, from being of Adam and in Adam, to being of Christ and in Christ.

In examining the Scriptures S.E. Anderson uses to support his supposition we find that, that it is most likely that he meant salvation by grace through faith was not available prior to John the Baptist's appearance:

Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: . . . (*Matthew 3:5-8*)

And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. (*Matthew 18:3*)

Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. And he said unto them, Take nothing for *your* journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece. And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them. And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where. Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead; And of some, that Elias had appeared; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again. And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him. And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went

aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. (*Luke 9:1-10*)

A brief discussion of Peter's 'conversion'

In Luke 22, verses 31-32 we find the following statement recorded:

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. (*Luke 22:31-32*)

Now, the Arminists use this passage to demonstrate that Peter lost his salvation and then later regained it. However, they use the broad brush here and take the meaning of the rest of the uses of the word "converted" in the New Testament and apply it to Peter, all the while flying in the face of extensive Scriptural support of the eternal security of the believer. Of course, I would expect that of an Arminian.

The word "converted" has many meanings, both in English and in Greek, and some of those meanings are contextual in nature. Thus, to understand what is meant by the word, we must ask all the pertinent questions and eliminate all answers that conflict with the rest of Scripture. Immediately, we can eliminate the definition that would state, or imply that Peter would lose his salvation and later regain it. That leaves us with only one really valid definition – to turn again. Now, to "turn again" is not the same as "to turn", which would mean the first time. Rather, this is going to be a turning back to something, place, or person, which he is going to turn away from. Since we know that Peter denied Christ three times, yet we find Peter in service to the Lord later on, the answer is obvious – Peter will turn back to the Lord after his denial. In short, Peter will be converted, but not in the sense of salvation, but in repentance from his error.