

## Acts 2:37-41 Teacher's Lesson Repent and be Baptized

**Introduction:** We are in the middle of a study of the Acts of the Holy Spirit. Today we will be talking about the conviction of sin, repentance, baptism and forgiveness. It is a Gospel message.

### Review:

**Promise:** Shortly before His ascension, Jesus promised His followers that would be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

ESV **Acts 1:5** . . . you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

**Purpose:** One important result of being baptized in the Holy Spirit is power from the Holy Spirit to be Jesus' witnesses.

ESV **Acts 1:8** . . . you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses . . .

**Pentecost:** The Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost. As a result, they were supernaturally given the ability to speak in foreign languages.

**Reaction:** Upon hearing the sound of the disciples loudly proclaiming the mighty deeds of God in foreign languages, a large crowd gathered in amazed astonishment. Some, however, mockingly said that they were drunk (2:13).

**Felt Need Surfaced:** A felt need had been surfaced by the Holy Spirit. The multitude wanted to know how this was possible. Peter had their attention. Peter stood with the eleven other Apostles, lifted up his voice, and presented the Gospel.

\*\*\*\***How did Peter account for the miracle of Pentecostal tongues (2:14-16)?** Peter said it was the fulfillment of a Messianic prophecy made long before by the Old Testament prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-32), 2:16. (The rabbis of that day taught that Joel's prophecy was Messianic.)

\*\*\*\***What word of hope did Joel (and Peter) offer in 2:21?** Whoever would call on the name of the Lord would be saved. In the Hebrew of Joel's prophecy, the word "Lord" translates Jehovah. Paul quoted this same verse from Joel in his letter to the Romans and applied it to Jesus:

ESV **Romans 10:9-13** . . . if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved . . . For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

-----  
\*\*\*\***How did people respond to Peter's Gospel invitation (2:37-41)?** They were cut to the heart (2:37). Three thousand people responded in faith and were baptized (2:41).

**1. What does it mean to be cut to the heart (2:37)?** In Greek thinking, the heart was the center of the mind, will and emotions. These people were moved in their core being. The Greek word for “cut” means “to prick violently”. Metaphorically it means “to pain the mind sharply, agitate it vehemently”.<sup>1</sup> These people were under deep conviction by the Holy Spirit:

ESV **John 16:8-9** . . . when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me . . .

**Prior Preparation:** The Holy Spirit’s job is to convict the lost of the sin of not believing in Jesus (Jn 16:8-9). However, He does not do this in isolation. He uses other people and events in the conviction process. This was not the first time the multitude had heard about Jesus. Peter’s message came at the end of three years of public ministry by Jesus, attested to by God with mighty works and wonders and signs (Acts 2:22). Next the multitude witnessed the miracle of tongues at Pentecost in fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. These people were primed and ready. When Peter preached the Gospel, they responded.

ESV **1 Corinthians 3:6** I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

**Application:** People come to Christ in steps. It is a process. God wants to use each of us along the way in His divine process of bringing people to Christ. If you have the Holy Spirit, you too have power to be a witness for Jesus.

ESV **Acts 1:8** . . . you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses . . .

**What question did the multitude ask Peter in 2:37?** They wanted to know what they needed to do to be pardoned for having crucified their own Messiah. When people are under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, they will come looking for answers.

**2. How did Peter answer their question of 2:37 (2:28)?** Peter told them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus, 2:38.

**Application:** *Is Peter’s answer different from what yours would have been? (Rhetorical).*

## Repentance

**3. Why didn’t Peter mention faith in his answer (2:27)?** Repentance and faith are opposite sides of the same coin. There would be no repentance without faith.

**4. What does it mean to repent (2:37)?** It is from *metanoeo*; *meta* means “change” and *noeo* means “to think”. At its most basic level it means “to change one’s mind”; it is a “change of thinking”. Normally it means a change of thinking that leads to a change of action. Repentance is the difference between saving faith and make-believe. A faith that does not change you is no faith at all.

---

<sup>1</sup> Thayer, *katanusso*, #2660.

**Example:** If a principal calls an unruly boy into his office, he might say, “Young man, you’d better change your thinking”. The principal means by this a corresponding change in actions.

## Baptism

**5. Luke himself recorded that this multitude was made up of “devout” Jews (2:5). Outwardly they were already living righteous lives. In what way did they need to repent (2:37)?** In context, it is clear that they needed to change their thinking about Jesus. Peter is using the word repent as a synonym for faith.

**6. Peter told them to be baptized (2:38). What does the word “baptized” mean?** It is from *baptizo* and means “to dip, to sink, to immerse, to submerge”. It was used outside the New Testament to refer to sunken ships.<sup>2</sup>

**Applications: 1)** In the New Testament, water baptism was always by immersion — not sprinkling and not pouring. **2)** The only candidates for baptism were those who had believed, not infants. Instead of paedobaptism they practiced credobaptism (“credo” means “I believe”).

*The Baptist Faith and Message of 2000* states, “Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead.”<sup>3</sup>

**7. What is the relationship between repentance, baptism, and forgiveness (2:38)?** See *Matthew 3:7-11*. The three clearly are associated together. There is a close link between the three. They are a salvation Trinity!

**8. Some have erroneously concluded that a person has to be water baptized in order to be forgiven. How do we know this is not what Peter meant?** See *Matthew 3:11*, *Ephesians 2:8-9*, *1 Corinthians 1:17*. This would contradict the teaching of Scripture elsewhere that plainly states we are saved by grace through faith alone. Baptism is the outward sign of an inward act. Baptism is the sign of salvation, not the substance of salvation.

**Example:** Suppose you drove to Nashville, Tennessee. Eventually you would see a sign that said, “Welcome to Nashville”. You would not park the car, climb up on the sign and say, “We’re here!” The sign is not Nashville. It only symbolizes Nashville. To say one has to be water baptized to be saved is not far from saying one has to be circumcised to be saved (as said the Judaizers).<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Thayer, #907.

<sup>3</sup> “The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message”, Article VII, [sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp](http://sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp)

<sup>4</sup> In the Greek, the word “repent” and the phrase “for the forgiveness of your sins” are both second person plural (y’all) and are connected. It looks like this: ESV Acts 2:38 “Y’all repent (2P) . . . for the forgiveness of y’all’s sins (2P) . . .” The significance of this is that repentance and forgiveness go together grammatically. Peter was telling them to repent for the forgiveness of their sins. However, “be baptized every one” is actually in the third person singular (“let each one be baptized”). The significance of this is that it stands alone grammatically. Thus, Peter literally told them, “Repent, all of you, for the forgiveness of yours sins; and let each one (of y’all who repent) be baptized.”

If baptism were necessary for salvation, that would make it part of the Gospel message. However, Paul stated:

**ESV 1 Corinthians 1:17** . . . Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel . . .

**Don't Slip On The Ice!** The Greek underneath "for" is *eis*, a word that has many meanings. For example it is translated almost 50 different ways in the NASB. We must be careful so we do not slip on the *eis*! It would be unwise to build a doctrine of baptismal regeneration on one slippery little preposition. Usually it is translated as "in" or "into" or with reference to. Water baptism is to be done with reference to the forgiveness of sins. Water baptism symbolizes the washing away of our sins.

**Goal or Cause?** One way to understand what Peter meant lies with the word "for" (as in, "for the forgiveness of your sins", 2:38). The word "for" can denote an objective ("He went to jail for twenty years — in order to serve twenty years) or it can denote a cause ("He went to jail for stealing" — the reason he went to jail was because he stole. In the first example, punishment was the goal. In the second example, the theft had already occurred and it resulted in jail. The whole of Scripture makes it clear that Peter did not mean that one should be baptized in order to get forgiveness. Peter meant one should be baptized because he has already received forgiveness.

**John The Baptist:** John's baptism was "for" repentance ("I baptize you with water for repentance", Mt 3:11). **What did John mean?** He did not baptize people so that they could repent, but rather as a sign they had already repented. Thus, John refused to baptize the Pharisees and Sadducees (Mt 3:7-11) unless they showed fruit in keeping with having actually repented.

**Application:** Baptism is Important! What Acts 2:38 does show us is the importance of water baptism. It has been called the first act of obedience in a believer's life. The idea of someone being a genuine Christian but not baptized is unknown in the New Testament. Water baptism is the external sign by which a believer is publicly incorporated into the church. It is sort of a rite of initiation.

**Lord's Supper:** Almost all churches hold that only baptized believers should partake of the Lord's Supper. *The Baptist Faith and Message of 2000* states, "Christian baptism . . . is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper."<sup>5</sup>

**Denying Jesus?** F.F. Bruce suggested that to refuse baptism may make one guilty of Matthew 10:32-33.<sup>6</sup>

**ESV Matthew 10:32-33** . . . everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

**Application:** New Testament baptism was clearly by **1)** immersion and **2)** for professing believers. *Have you been biblically baptized?*

<sup>5</sup> "The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message", Article VII, [sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp](http://sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp)

<sup>6</sup> Bruce, 77.

## The Name of Jesus

### 9. What does it mean to be baptized in the “name” of Jesus Christ (2:38)? What’s in a name?

It is a figure of speech, such as “Stop in the name of the law.” The law has no name. It represents everything Jesus taught and who Jesus is.

## Forgiveness

### 10. What is forgiveness (2:38)? To have one’s sins forgiven means they have been cancelled. The word was also used for the release of prisoners.

ESV **Isaiah 43:25** . . . I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

Your sins will be cast into the sea of God’s forgetfulness. The lyrics of an old Gospel song go, “I remember the days when I was bent low, With the burden of sin and strife; Then Jesus came in and rescued me, And he gave me a brand new life. And now as I thank Him day after day, For washing my sins away; It seems I can almost hear the voice Of the Blessed Savior say, “What sins are you talking about? I don’t remember them anymore; From the Book of Life they’ve all been torn out, I don’t remember them anymore.”

## The Gift of the Holy Spirit

### 11. Peter declared that they too would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit as promised (2:38-39). What did he mean? See 1: 4, 2:1-13, Ephesians 1:13-14. The whole reason the multitude gathered was in response to coming of the Holy Spirit upon the 120 disciples. It got their attention! Peter explained it was a fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. Peter was not talking about spiritual gifts per se. His point was that by believing in Jesus they too could get the gift of the Holy Spirit Himself, as predicted by Joel and promised by God the Father.

**According to 2:39, who is the promise of the Holy Spirit for?** See also 13:48, 2 Timothy 2:10. It was for them, their descendants and those far off, as many as are called by the Lord.

### 12. Who are those who are far off (2:39)? Peter probably meant all the Jews scattered throughout the Roman Empire, but Peter later learned it is for Gentiles too!

**Application:** Ever since Pentecost, whenever anyone believes in Christ, he too receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. To be clear: the Holy Spirit Himself is the gift.

ESV **Ephesians 1:13-14** . . . you also, when you heard . . . the gospel . . . and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance . . .

### 13. What qualifier is given in 2:39? It is for those who the Lord calls to Himself.

ESV **Acts 13:48** . . . as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

ESV 2 Timothy 2:10 . . . I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus . . .

**Application:** Even though the whole multitude heard the Gospel, the only ones to respond were those called by God to Himself. God calls people to Himself, but God uses people like Peter (and us) to do it.

### Save Yourself!

**How does 2:40 reveal that what we are reading here are just Cliff notes of Peter's message?**

**14. Based on 2:40, what was the gist of Peter's invitation?** It was to for them to save themselves from their crooked generation. In a sense you save yourself by believing in Jesus. It really is you who believe, as empowered by the Holy Spirit.

**Application:** Peter did not simply state the facts and then move on. Peter exhorted them to act on the information. When you talk with someone about the Gospel, it is appropriate to encourage them to repent and believe. Don't be like the new salesman who is afraid to ask for the sale!

**15. What made their generation especially crooked (2:40)?** See *Luke 11:29-32*. They crucified their own Messiah!

ESV **Luke 11:29-32** . . . This generation is an evil generation . . . The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

**In 2:41, how did those who received Peter's word respond?** They were water baptized. This shows they were serious about Jesus. There was immediate obedience.

**Application:** If you are serious about believing in Jesus, you need to be baptized! Faith without repentance is not a saving faith. Faith without baptism is probably not a saving faith. Jesus hung naked on a cross for us; surely we can be identified with him through baptism. There is something about baptism that shames the devil and gives the glory to God.

**Infant Baptism:** To be baptized before you believe is like having your funeral before you die. Get your baptism on the right side of your salvation!

### So What?

**16. What truths were dealt with in today's passage that you need to act on?**

\*\*\*\* = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the text of the ESV.
- You can hear this lesson being taught at [SermonAudio.Com/NTRF](http://SermonAudio.Com/NTRF).

Stephen E. Atkerson NTRF.org

06/18/2017