

# Repent and be Baptized

Acts 2:37-47

On the Day of Pentecost as told to us in Acts 2, there was a day of continual miracles:

- The miracle of the coming of the Holy Spirit,
- The noise as of a mighty rushing wind,
- The divided tongues, as of fire landing on each one in the house,
- The gifts of praising God in a multiple of languages,
- The boldness of Peter's message.
- And of course there had been 120 people all gathered together for 10 days, all in one accord or agreement together.

But let's not forget the greatest of all miracles which took place that day, ***"...that day about three thousand souls were added to them."***

Once the men gathered in Jerusalem on that morning heard the message Peter had preached to them, these men were convicted of their guilt and their need, and cried out –

*<sup>37</sup> Now when they heard this, **they were cut to the heart**, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"*

*<sup>38</sup> Then Peter said to them, "**Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**" <sup>39</sup> **For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.**"*

And what a powerful promise it is:

- It is in our brokenness that God's mercy becomes active.
- It is in our repentance that God's forgiveness covers our sin.

There is much to look at here in Peter's declaration and instruction to them. But let's not miss the **primary intent** of Peter's message –

## **Repent**

Peter was speaking to men who were going the wrong way;

They were believing the wrong thing;

They were depending upon a salvation they could earn;

They were depending upon their ability to maintain good works and live under the Law.

These were proud men of Judaism with a solid commitment to the necessity of fulfilling the Law; **and their world was about to be turned inside out.**

Because of the move of the Holy Spirit (“...*they were cut to the heart*”) and the evidence of such a move in the question they asked (“*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*”), Peter used this opportunity to direct them in how to overcome their spiritual deficit and receive true forgiveness and true eternal life.

You see it’s not enough simply to be **moved by the Holy Spirit of God... it’s not enough to even seek for the answer...** there has to come a point in your life where you much **respond** to that move of the Spirit and give a **response** which leads to salvation.

Peter’s answer for their dilemma was first of all the **spiritual response** necessary to receive the forgiveness of God in their lives: **repent.**

The meaning of the word is simple – “*change your outlook or have a change of heart*”. However, it is more than a simple rhetorical answer to the command to repent, **there needed to be a reality of both internal intent and external action.** Biblical repentance, repentance that leads to salvation deals with a reversal of the direction of your life.

An individual cannot say, I repent and continue to travel in the same direction, to wallow in the same mud. The emphasis is correctly placed on the mind and the outlook, but if the mind is changed, there will be an obvious change of conduct.

Don’t receive this incorrectly. This isn’t a salvation of works, but this **IS** a salvation which changes an individual’s life from the inside out. The Apostles continually called for **the need of repentance** throughout the book of Acts.

Yet, today too many preachers and teachers of the Word are too fearful to offend people by telling them they need to repent.

Peter knew the background and the lifestyle of these Jewish men. He knew the direction they sought to go in to gain salvation. His message was in essence, *“Turn around and begin traveling the other way. You are on the wrong road!”*

He told them, *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...”*

The balance of Peter’s statement here in Acts 2 has led to some problematic responses as to the meaning of the statement – and all of it dealing with baptism.

The **FIRST ISSUE**: the Format of Baptism

The **SECOND ISSUE**: the Effects of Baptism

### **THE FIRST ISSUE: THE FORMAT OF BAPTISM.**

Because here and in a couple of other places in the New Testament we read of being baptized *“in the name of Jesus”*; some have incorrectly interpreted the phrase as the only way to be correctly be baptized is through a **ritualistic declaration**: *“in the name of Jesus”*.

They feel that the **methodology, the verbiage**, must be correct in order for the affect to be complete. They believe this **in spite of the fact** that Jesus Christ, Himself told His disciples to go and *“...make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”* (Matthew 28:19)

The problem or issue comes from a **contextual reality** that they are missing. What they are missing in this whole issue is that, **“Jews had already been baptized”**.

As a matter of fact, a Jew is **baptized multiple times** in their life as a **form or sign of spiritual cleansing**. Even John the Baptist’s baptisms were a **prelude to the baptism in Christ**.

So here we see that the Jew needed to understand that as they came to faith in Christ, they now needed **to be baptized in** (or for a better understanding - **“into”**) *the Name of Jesus Christ*. The phrase more commonly used with baptism is literally “into the name.”

This wasn't some ritualistic verbiage, it was symbolic of their recognition of Jesus as being the fulfillment of the **Jewish Messiah**.

*“I'm now being baptized into Jesus!”*

On the other hand, for the Gentile convert, they needed to understand that their baptism was symbolic of their **new found relationship with the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit**.

Matthew 28

*<sup>19</sup> “Go therefore and make disciples of **all the nations** (that is the Gentile world), baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

**It really is as simple as that.**

**THE SECOND ISSUE (and this is a big one):**

### **THE EFFECTS OF BAPTISM**

Too many have been led astray believing that there is a **portion of our salvation** which is **dependent upon baptism**, that baptism itself has a part in the remission or payment for our sins. Yet, Biblically we see baptism is actually a **sign of what has already taken place in an individual's life**: not as a **necessity FOR** or even as a **necessary part OF** salvation, but as a **SIGN** of salvation and a changed life.

All we need to do is look at John the Baptist. Matthew 3 is a very clear reference that needs to be studied deeper than we have time for this morning. But, once again there are two issues:

**FIRST:** John told the Pharisees and the Sadducees to “Go and show signs of repentance” before he would baptize them. The baptism couldn't do anything to save

them. They had *to repent and be saved from the wrath to come*, before he would consider baptizing them.

**SECONDLY:** Later in the same chapter, Jesus came to be baptized by John, certainly **not in order to be saved**, but symbolically showing Himself already submitted to the Father's will and plan: Jesus said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."*

We must continually return to the truth of the Scripture: Forgiveness of sins is based on faith alone!

The cry of the Reformers remains true:

We are saved by **Grace** alone,  
Through **Faith** alone,  
In **Christ** alone!

John 3

Even the words of Jesus: <sup>16</sup> *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes (has faith) in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

John 3

<sup>36</sup> *"He who believes (has faith) in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."*

The **thief on the cross** wasn't baptized, but Jesus told him that on that very day the thief would be with Him in Paradise.

Even here in Acts, as Peter shares later on, his focus is on **the heart of faith not the act of baptism**. In Acts 10 we see in Cornelius' house, salvation came to them by evidence of the coming of the Holy Spirit and this was **prior** to their baptism –

Acts 10

As Peter preached to them of Christ, he declared <sup>43</sup> *"To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."* <sup>44</sup> *While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.*

It was only **after** their salvation that Peter said they needed to be baptized.

In Acts 13 when the Apostle Paul preached at Antioch of Pisidia, he preached the whole gospel message, calling for men to believe **without ever once speaking of the necessity of Baptism.**

And then there is the issue of Paul speaking to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1:14f);

*<sup>14</sup> I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, <sup>15</sup> lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. <sup>16</sup> Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. <sup>17</sup> For **Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.***

Paul didn't make a huge deal out of Baptism. Yes, it was important, and he speaks of the need for us as Believers, but if it was a salvation issue, I believe he would have made a stronger statement about it.

I fully understand that you can't build doctrine on what is not said, but it can help you to see the connection with other verses.

And most importantly, the abundance of verses dealing with the issue of works verses faith. Baptism is a "work of righteousness and obedience", but it does not save. Paul makes that so adamantly clear in Titus 3:4-6

Titus 3

*<sup>4</sup> But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, <sup>5</sup> **not by works of righteousness which we have done** (baptism's sacrifices or rituals), **but according to His mercy He saved us**, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior...,*

Let's not get hung up on these side issues and miss the most important part:

*<sup>40</sup> And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." <sup>41</sup> Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and **that day about three thousand souls were added to them.***

The balance of this chapter deals with the life of the Church living corporately together. We will look at it the next time.

*<sup>42</sup> And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. <sup>43</sup> Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.*

*<sup>44</sup> Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, <sup>45</sup> and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.*

*<sup>46</sup> So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*