

The Conversion of the Three Thousand on Pentecost

Act 2:1-47

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. A Brief Analysis of Acts Chapter Two—

1. Acts 2:1-4 stipulates the time and the place of the fulfillment of the promise to baptize the apostles with the Holy Spirit (Matthew . 3:11; Luke . 3:16; 24:47-49; John 14:26; 15:26, 27; 16:7, 8, 13; Acts 1:1-8).
2. Acts 2:5-13 identifies the people present and their response to what was seen and heard. It is explained to us what it means to “speak in tongues” and who spoke in those “tongues.”
3. Acts 2:14-36 records Peter's sermon: his proposition, his proof, and his conclusion. The sermon could be correctly titled: “Jesus of Nazareth Is the Messiah.”
4. Acts 2:37-40 indicates the immediate effects this sermon had on the hearers, their response, inquiries, and the inspired directions in reply.
5. Acts 2:41-46 shows what those who accepted the inspired instructions and continued to do under the direction of the apostles of Christ.
6. Acts 2:47 reveals to us of what church these people, the first Christians, became members, how they became members of that church and when they became members of that church.

B. The Significance of the Conversion of the Three Thousand—

1. Our study will concern the details of the conversion of the 3,000 on Pentecost. These were the very first people who ever heard the gospel and became Christians.
2. If there are any Christians in the world today, we would expect them to emulate the “original” Christians.
3. Therefore, let us observe their conversion with a view to comparing them to those today that claim conversion to Christ or preach how men ought to be converted.

C. The Historical Background of Acts Two—

1. The Feast of Pentecost:
 - a. One of the three annual feast days of the Jews (Exodus 34:22, 23).
 - b. It came fifty days after the Passover Sabbath (Leviticus 23:15, 16).
 - c. The particular Pentecost of our text was the first to be celebrated after the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:9ff).
2. The Great Commission:

- a. Jesus, after His resurrection, was seen forty days of his apostles and others (Acts 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8).
 - b. During this time Jesus further illuminated the Twelve concerning His identity and the purpose of His coming (Luke 24:44-46).
 - c. During this time He gave the Twelve what is called the “Great Commission” (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:47-48; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:4-8).
 - (1) During Jesus' personal ministry the apostles had operated under a “Limited Commission” (Matthew 10:5, 6).
 - (2) However, now they would operate under the broader scope of the “Great Commission.”
 - (3) The events of Pentecost constitute the “beginning” of that “Great Commission” (Acts 11:15).
3. Jerusalem:
- a. Jerusalem was the chosen beginning place for the preaching of the gospel (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 5).
 - (1) The prophets foretold that Jerusalem would be the place from which Messiah would send forth His Word (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Micah 4:1).
 - (2) This is one example of how the Old Testament institutions were designed to facilitate the arrival of Messiah.
 - b. The great assembly of “devout Jews” (Acts 2:5) was occasioned by the feast of Pentecost (Deuteronomy 12:10-18; 1 Kings 8:29; 2 Kings 21:4).
 - c. The apostles were there because Jesus had told them to go there and wait (Acts 1:4-8).

II. DISCUSSION:

A. A Direct Operation of the Holy Spirit Was Instrumental in the Conversion of the Pentecostians Three Thousand, But Upon Whom—

- 1. The Holy Spirit operated directly on the Twelve and only on the Twelve (1:26; 2:7, 14, 37, 38).
 - a. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was promised to the Twelve (Acts 1:4, 5, 8; John 14:26; 15:26, 27; 16:13).
 - (1) It was not a promise for everyone (cf. Matthew 2:7-11).
 - (2) It was for the purpose of convicting Jews that salvation in the name of the Messiah was available (2:33-36).
 - (3) For the apostles it was to inaugurate their work as the “witnesses and “ambassadors” of Christ.
 - b. The “they” in Acts 2:1-4 refers to the Twelve in Acts 1:26.
 - c. The audience recognizes those speaking tongues as “Galileans” (2:7), a term not applicable to all that would have been among the 120 (1:15), or the audience (2:9-11).

- d. The mockers refer to certain men in 2:13, and the text says, “Peter, standing up with the Eleven ...” (2:14).
 - e. Peter in his sermon refers to the “witnesses” of Christ (2:32). The qualifications for a “witness” were given in 1:22, they are the same as those for an apostle (cf. 1:8; John 15:26,27).
 - f. The audience when convicted addressed Peter and the Eleven (2:37), not Peter and the 120.
 - g. The address of the convicted hearers was “Men[a form of *aner*] and brethren, “limiting those upon whom the Spirit had a direct operation to males (1:14,15), a designation that would only fit the Twelve. [The margin of the NASB says, “literally, “Men brothers.”]
 - h. That in which the converted continued was the “apostles’ doctrine”(2:42), not the doctrine of the 120 or the doctrine of the 3,000.
 - i. The miracles that were done after Pentecost were attributed to the apostles (2:43) and not the 120 or the 3,000.
2. A quick look at popular false teaching refuted by the facts of this chapter--
- a. The United Pentecostal Church Doctrine of water baptism and evidence of salvation by “tongue speaking”.
 - (1) It does not occur in this text. It is tongue speaking (only in the Twelve) and then baptism.
 - (2) The “tongues” spoken are human language (2:4, 6, 11) not the “ecstatic utterances” of Holiness Revivals.
 - b. The Calvinist dogma of “enabling grace” resulting in conversion and regeneration.
 - (1) It is not what occurs in this text. Peter does not call any to the altar, or urge them to “come under conviction;” nor do we read of the Holy Spirit “dealing” with anyone.
 - (2) The Holy Spirit operated indirectly on the 3,000 (Acts 2:38-41; 2:4, 6-7, 11, 14, 16-17, 25, 29, 31, 33-34, 37, 40, 42).

B. The Conversion of the Three Thousand Was Effected by the Holy Spirit through the Preaching of the Gospel—

- 1. It was the gospel and the gospel only that effected the conversion of the three thousand on Pentecost.
 - a. The 3,000 were urged to have faith and save themselves through preaching (2:36, 40).
 - b. They were not instructed to come to the altar and pray for the converting grace of the Holy Spirit.
 - (1) What Scripture authorizes such?
 - (a) Jesus promised the Holy Spirit in response to prayer (Luke 11:13).
 - i. Yes, and Acts 8 demonstrates exactly how such was effected.
 - ii. Through the laying on of the apostles’ hands (cf. Acts 19:1-11).
 - (b) Saul of Tarsus was converted as a result of “prayer and fasting” (Acts 9).

- i. No, Saul was converted on the basis of what he was told he “must do” (Acts 9:6; 22:10, 15-17; cf. 10:6; 11:14).
 - ii. There is no evidence that Paul received anything necessary to his conversion apart from the gospel message.
 - c. Neither Peter nor the Eleven prayed that God send down his Holy Spirit directly upon any others in the audience in order that they might be converted as is commonly done in modern charismatic revivals.
 - d. That to which the audience responded was the Holy Spirit inspired word alone as preached by the apostles (Acts 2:37,41).
 - e. Other Scriptures affirm that it is the design of the gospel alone to effect salvation (Romans 1:16,17; 10:8-17; 1 Corinthians 1:17,18; Mark 16;15-16; Hebrews 4:12).
2. That gospel consisted of a message—
- a. First preached by the prophets of the Old Testament (Joel 2;28-32; Psalm 16:8-11; 68:18; 110:11).
 - b. Which announced man's universal need of a Savior (Acts 2:21,23).
 - c. Presenting the life of Christ (Acts 2:22).
 - d. Presenting Jesus' death as God's foreordained will (Acts 2:23).
 - e. Arguing the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:24-32).
 - f. Calling men to obedient faith (Acts 2:33-38,40).
 - g. Detailing the conditions for pardon or steps of salvation (Acts 2:38).
 - h. Filled with exhortations and warnings of judgment (Acts 2:40).
3. Observe that they did not seek to effect conversion on the basis of—
- a. Religious tradition (cf. Matthew 15:2-9).
 - b. Personal testimony (cf. 1 John 4:1) .
 - c. Subjective feelings (cf. Romans 8:16).
 - d. Emotionalism (cf. Acts 19:24,28).

C. Observe That Their Conversion Necessitated Faith—

- 1. After preaching the word, Peter commands faith (Acts 2:36).
 - a. This is the purpose of preaching (Romans 1:15, 16; 10:8-17).
 - (1) This faith was not apart from the preaching, but the result of preaching.
 - (2) Faith is the product of credible testimony.
 - (3) It results in trust coupled to obedience (Hebrews 11:1 ff; 1 Corinthians 1:18)
 - b. Without faith men cannot be saved (Hebrews 11:6; John 3:17, 18).
 - c. However, it is not faith only (James 2:24).
- 2. Perfect faith is working faith.

- a. Not works of law (Romans 4:1-8)
 - b. Not works of personal merit (Titus 3:5)
 - c. Faith working by love (Galatians 5:6; John 14:15; 1 John 5:3)
3. These Jews understood this concept:
- a. "What shall we do?"
 - b. Here are men who believed as a result of gospel preaching, but were unsaved (cf. John 12:42, 43).
 - (1) If salvation at the point of faith then there was nothing to do.
 - (2) However, Peter told them to do something (2:38).
 - (3) What he told them to do was "for their salvation" (Luke 24:44-48; cf. 2:38).
 - c. Belief only is not enough (James 2:14).

D. The Three Thousand Repented Unto Life in Their Conversion—

1. "What shall we do? Repent..."
- a. Repentance is a change of mind which always results in an amendment for the better (Mt. 21:28; Lk. 15:11-24).
 - b. That of which one repents is sin (Luke 3:3, 10-14; 15:4-10).
 - c. Repentance is effected through preaching the gospel (Romans 2:4; Matthew 12:41; cf. 2 Corinthians 7:8-11).
2. Repentance and faith
- a. Notice that believers are told to repent unto remission of sins (2:38).
 - b. They were not saved at the point of faith.
 - (1) In order to the sustain doctrine of direct operation of the Holy Spirit and escape the consequence of Acts 2:38 some argue that repentance and faith are "inseparable graces."
 - (2) Passages cited as proof: Mark 1:15; Matthew 21:32; Hebrews 6:1; Acts 20:21.
 - (3) Reply:
 - (a) Not one of these passages identifies repentance and faith as an effect of a direct operation of the Holy Spirit.
 - (b) Matthew 21:32 indicates that faith was separate from repentance.
 - (c) In those passages where repentance precedes faith as a condition of salvation they are said to be toward two different objects.

E. The Three Thousand Were Baptized for the Remission of Sins—

1. The Greek preposition εἰς—
- a. More than 40 uses such as "into, unto, toward, in order that, etc."

- b. However it is translated, it never means “because of” (as in, “sent to jail for stealing”). This would require a different preposition, *διὰ*, (e.g. John 5:16).
 - c. “Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven” (NIV).
 - d. Compare to Matthew 26:28.
 - (1) Jesus died “for the remission of sins.”
 - (2) Question: Did Jesus die “because sin was already forgiven?”
2. Repentance is necessary but baptism is not.
 - a. BOTH are “unto the remission of sins”.
 - b. AND is like the coupling pin between two box cars.
 - c. The one preposition FOR cannot have two meanings in the same sentence (i.e., repent “in order to remission,” but baptized “because of remission”).
 3. Exceptions to the rule? (Matthew 3:11; Matthew 12:41; 28:19; Mark 1:44; Acts 19:3; Romans 6:3; 1 Corinthians 10:2)
 4. Teaching of the Scriptures elsewhere: (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3-6; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:11-12; 1 Peter 3:21).

F. Those That Believed, Repented & Were Baptized, That Is, Those That Were Saved, Were Added to the Church by the Lord—

1. The common concept:
 - a. Saved by one process and added to a “church,” denomination, by another process.
 - b. “Church membership” is not necessary to be saved.
 - c. Is it enough to be a Christian only while you live and go to heaven when you die?
2. The Biblical concept--
 - a. Those who receive the word bring faith to completion in obedience being baptized (2:41).
 - b. The baptized are “added”(2:41).
 - c. Those who are added are the saved (2:47).
 - d. That which saved a person is what causes him to be added to the church, which is the saved, *not a denomination*.
3. Saved people follow the Scriptures and them only (Acts 2:42-47).

III. CONCLUSION:

A. By what have you been converted?

B. Is your faith perfect?

C. Has the Lord added you to the church?