

3. Conversions on the Day of Pentecost—Acts 2

The previous two lessons studied the Great Commission as presented by the Lord and recorded in Matt 28:19-20, Mark 16:15-16, and Luke 24:46-48. When we summarized the three accounts, we found that the complete teaching of the Lord required the apostles to teach and preach the gospel, which included all things that he had commanded. They were to preach to all nations, even the whole creation, beginning at Jerusalem. The hearers of the gospel thus taught were to believe and be baptized. As a result, the obedient believers had their sins forgiven, were saved, and were made disciples. The Lord was with them always, even to the very end of the age. The objective of this and succeeding lessons is to study the examples of conversion in Acts of the Apostles in order to see the faithful fulfillment of these commands of the Lord.

Peter and the apostles preached on the day of Pentecost.

On the day of Pentecost after the death of the Lord, the apostles came together and the Holy Spirit ascended upon them, empowering them to speak so that each hearer heard “them in his own native language?” Acts 2:8. The description that follows is one of a man fervently preaching to those gathered together. Acts 2:14 records, “Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd.” After Peter finished the recorded sermon, he continued, “With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Acts 2:40. The method, used on that day of Pentecost, was preaching, just as the Lord had commanded.

The preaching was to all nations.

The Lord had commanded that the apostles preach to all nations, the whole creation. In Acts 2, the apostles did just that. Acts 2:5 tells, “Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.” The hearers described themselves as coming from all over the world in Acts 2:8-12: “Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs – we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” In Acts 2:39, Peter extended the scope of the preaching to all men, even the gentiles, “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Peter quoted Joel, who had forecast the scope of the gospel call, in Acts 2:21, “And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Sectarianism, by definition, and its specialized messages subdivide the universal call of the Lord – all nations, the whole creation, all those far off. Peter and the apostles did exactly what the Lord had commanded.

The apostles preached the gospel.

The Lord commanded that the gospel be the message preached, and the apostles preached only that message. That gospel remains the only message that is the power of God unto salvation. Rom 1:16. 1 Cor 15:1-5 defined the gospel:

I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. 3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.

In Peter’s sermon, he proceeded immediately to lay out these facts of the gospel, including the empirical evidence of his resurrection (He was seen.). Acts 2:23 speaks directly of the **death** of Christ: “This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.” Peter quoted David in Acts 2:27 to illustrate how that Christ **was buried** but that the grave could not hold him, “Because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.” Peter concluded the facts of the gospel with the **resurrection**, “But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.” Acts 2:24. In Acts 2:31-32, Peter

summarized the gospel that he preached and added that they were all **eyewitnesses**, “Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.”

Those who heard the gospel believed.

Peter concluded his preaching with an appeal for them to accept the gospel. In Acts 2:36, he said, “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” *To know assuredly* is the essence of *belief*, fulfilling the Lord’s command in Mark 16:16 that said, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.” Heb 11:1-2 defines faith as “being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” Their assurance ran so deep that they were convicted in their hearts. The response of those who heard was immediate and emphatic as they obeyed the command of the Lord to believe. “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’” Acts 2:37. Peter preached belief, and they obeyed the Lord by believing and crying out, “What shall we do?”

Peter preached repentance and baptism and the hearers repented and were baptized.

Acts 2:38-39 records Peter answering those believing people, cut to the heart, telling them just what to do: “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.’” Their response to the gospel call was just as direct as Peter’s message, as recorded in Acts 2:41. “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” These believing, penitent people were baptized, just as the Lord had commissioned that they should be.

They received the forgiveness of sins, were saved, and were made disciples.

The combined result of Peter’s preaching and of the people’s obeying patterned exactly the commands of the Lord in his commission. Peter said in Acts 2:38 that they should repent and be baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.” Luke recorded Jesus saying that remission of sins should be preached, and it was. Mark had recorded him saying that those who believed and were baptized would be saved. Acts 2:47 tells us, “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” The Lord said that they would be saved, Peter preached that they would be saved and they were. Matthew recorded the Lord commanding, “Make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to obey all things that I have commanded.” That the conversions in Acts 2 made them obedient disciples is clear. Acts 2:42-43 tells us, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.”

Conclusion

In Acts 2, the apostles preached, and the people obeyed, exactly what the Lord had commanded in all three of the accounts of the Great Commission. If preachers of today preach what the Lord said preach, and if the people obey what the Lord commanded, the outcome will be certain salvation and the forgiveness of sins. Jesus sealed the fate of those who do not believe and do not obey his word in Mark 16:16, “Whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

Study Questions

1. Review Matt 28:19-20, Mark 16:15-16, and Luke 24:46-48. What are the elements of the Lord’s commission? _____
2. What are the verses in Acts 2 that show the fulfillment of each of these elements? _____
3. What benefits did the penitent believers receive when they obeyed by being baptized? _____
4. How is one added to the number of those who believed (the church)? _____