**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

**On KTTR (99.7 FM) Every Sunday at 8:30 a.m.**

**Rolla, Missouri**

**12/27/2020**

**The Conversion of The Jews at Pentecost**

In the historical record of the book of Acts are many examples of conversions in which we find the apostles and other preachers leading people to Christ. The value of such examples of conversion cannot be overstated. These conversions occurred at the preaching of Holy Spirit inspired men, and the account of the conversions was recorded for us to read by a Holy Spirit inspired writer. We then can be assured that these examples of conversion inform us what it takes for one today to be converted to Jesus Christ and be saved. Today we hear or see different “gospels” being proclaimed. Even when many of the gospel facts are faithfully proclaimed, sometimes people are being told to respond in a manner not found in the inspired text. By reading and studying the Book of Acts and following the examples given there we can be sure that we are doing exactly what God has commanded for us to be saved.

Today I want to study the conversion of the Jews at Pentecost, recorded in Acts chapter 2. Let us consider the background for this case of conversion.

The occasion was the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. The feast called “Pentecost” was one of the pilgrimage feasts when the males of the Jews were required to travel to Jerusalem for its observance. This was now fifty days after the Passover when Jesus was crucified and then raised from the dead. After Jesus’ resurrection and before His ascension to heaven He told His apostles to wait in the city of Jerusalem until they be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49). Jesus told them, *“you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.”* (Acts 1:8) The Holy Spirit would then guide them in the preaching of the gospel. And so after Jesus ascended to heaven the apostles returned to Jerusalem where they waited. In Acts 2:1-4, Luke informs us that when the Day of Pentecost had fully come the Holy Spirit came. The text says that *“they* [that is the apostles] *were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”* These “other tongues” were languages they did not know, but which many in their audience did know. Verse 5 says, *“And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.”* You see, many of these Jews had traveled from other nations for the Day of Pentecost. They spoke different languages. Verse 6 says that “*everyone heard them speak in his own language.”* The people were amazed and perplexed. The apostles were Galileans and the people wondered how they were able to hear, each in their own language what was being said by the apostles. Some mocked, accusing the apostles of being drunk. Peter explained to them what had happened. They were not drunk. It was too early in the day for that. Rather, Peter tells them that what they were observing was a fulfillment of a prophecy of Joel in which God promised to pour out of His Spirit on all flesh (Joel 2:28-32). So we find a large gathering of religious Jews initially drawn by the miraculous events which occurred this day in Jerusalem. Having explained the meaning of the events, Peter immediately proceeded with a sermon about Jesus. Peter began with the miracles of Jesus, of which his audience was well acquainted, and he presents them as evidence that Jesus was approved of God. He laid the blame of Jesus' death at their feet, but said it was in keeping with God's predetermined plan. He then declared that God raised Jesus from the dead, and he provided three lines of evidence - the testimony of David (quoting from Psalm 16, a Psalm of David that predicted the resurrection of the Christ); the testimony of the twelve apostles who were eyewitnesses of Jesus’ resurrection; and the testimony of the Holy Spirit’s outpouring that they had just observed. The outpouring of the Spirit was evidence of Christ's exaltation to the right hand of God, and Christ receiving from the Father the promise of the Spirit. The evidence was overwhelming that this Jesus was whom He claimed to be. Peter reached the climax of His sermon in verse 36. He said, *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”* Yes, this Jesus whom you crucified is Lord – He is Ruler, and He is Christ – the anointed King.

Now, notice the response of the listeners. Verse 37 says, *“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?’”* They were “cut to the heart.” They were convinced of who Jesus is and they were convicted of their sins. They asked “what shall we do?” Peter told them what to do. He said, *“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.”* Verses 40 and 41 says, *“And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation.’ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.”*

About 3000 people are converted to Jesus Christ and are saved. What took place here? What can we learn from this case of conversion?

First of all, these who were converted to Christ were converted through hearing the preaching of the word. Notice, verse 37 says, *“Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart…”*  What convinced them of the truth and convicted their heart of sin was hearing the preaching of the word. As Peter presented the evidence of Jesus’ Lordship and Kinghood, he was bringing his audience to a realization of their error and their need of change. This is consistent through out all the cases of conversion in the book of Acts. We are not convicted by some mysterious moving of the Holy Spirit directly on our hearts, but the Holy Spirit convicts and converts through the preaching of the word which He has revealed. Paul said in Romans 10:17, *“faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* Whenever you read the word of God or hear it proclaimed the Holy Spirit is working on your heart.

Secondly, for these sinful Jews to be saved from their sins they were commanded to repent and each of them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (v. 38). He tells them to repent, that is, turn away from all sin and commit their lives to Jesus who is Lord and Christ. And he tells them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Now, we know this baptism is a baptism in water (read Acts 10:47,48), and this baptism is an immersion in water (read Acts 8:36-39 and Rom. 6:4) In addition to repenting, he tells each of them to a be baptized, immersed in water. But why were they to repent and be baptized? Peter says, “for the remission of sins.” Some have contended that the preposition “for” in this phrase means “because of.” They say that these Jews were commanded to be baptized “because” they already had the remission of sins. Now, first of all, I think it is important to note here that both of these actions, repent and be baptized were to be done. And secondly, both of these actions, repent and be baptized are connected to the prepositional phrase, “for the remission of sins.” Peter did not just say, “Repent for the remission of sins,” and he did not just say, “be baptized for the remission of sins.” What he did say is, “Repent, and each of you be baptized for the remission of sins.” What this means is that repentance and baptism stand in exactly the same relation to the remission of sins.

And that relation to the remission of sins – which is the same for both repentance and baptism – is expressed by the preposition “for” - “for the remission of sins.” If the word “for” means “because of,” then that would mean they had the remission of sins before they repented. They are commanded to repent “because” their sins had already been forgiven. The Greek word which is translated “for,” here in the English, is the word “eis.” What does the Greek preposition “eis” mean? The fundamental significance of “eis” is “into.” This basic meaning will be modified by usage in various context, but “into” remains the fundamental significance. Here in Acts 2:38 Peter tells the Jews to repent and each of them be baptized (eis) “into” the remission of sins. Repentance and baptism then are viewed as bringing one into the remission of sins. They bring him into the sphere, state, or condition in which he has the remission or forgiveness of sins. When this is put into idiomatic English it reads something like, “Repent and each of you be baptized in order to obtain the remission of sins.” And that is the way the authorities translate Peter’s statement. The New International Version translates the passage, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven….”

We know that is what this phrase means because this same propositional phrase “for the remission of sins” is also found in Matthew 26:28 where Jesus says, *“For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”* Notice, Jesus said that His blood was shed “for the remission of sins.” The phrase “for the remission of sins” in this passage is identical with that in Acts 2:38 in both the English translation and the in the Greek original. Why was the blood of Jesus shed? “For the remission of sins.” The phrase can only mean “to obtain the forgiveness of sins.” And so why were the Jews commanded to repent and be baptized? “For the remission of sins,” that is “in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins. It is clear then that it is not enough to just believe in Jesus to be saved. We must show our faith by repenting and being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

As we mentioned at the beginning of the program there are different “gospels” being proclaimed today as how to be saved, but if one follows the examples of conversion recorded in the book of Acts, he can know for sure that he is obeying the one gospel. Why not obey that one gospel today?

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