

CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 3

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

CHAPTERS 2 B

INTRODUCTION

The local Church of Jesus Christ was born on the day of Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the twelve Apostles and the one hundred and twenty disciples. This phenomenon astounded and attracted many Jews who were in Jerusalem for the celebration of the Feast of Harvest. These devout Jews asked for an explanation for what had happened. Peter stood forth and presented his explanation. This was Peter's first sermon after Pentecost. Peter began by dismissing the charge that the disciples were drunk for they could not be since it was only the "third hour" (9a.m.) of the day. Peter continued to explain that what had happened at Pentecost was the fulfilment of the prophecy spoken by the prophet Joel that in the last days God would pour His Spirit upon all people. And more wonders and signs of stupendous magnitude would occur before the "great and notable day of the Lord." This reference to Joel's prophecy signifies the beginning of the last days. The end of the last days would be preceded by the heavenly signs, which will occur at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Then Peter proclaimed that "whosoever shall call on the name

of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21). At this point of his sermon, Peter made his hearers focus on Jesus of Nazareth. Peter set out to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was the people's long awaited Messiah and Lord.

The second part of the study of chapter 2 falls naturally into three sections:

- i) the continuation of Peter's sermon (vv. 22-36);
- ii) the response of the hearers (vv. 37-40); and
- iii) the effect on the people who believed and were baptised (vv.41-17).

Luke's faithful account of what happened should have a great spiritual impact on all Christians today.

COMMENTARY

Jesus of Nazareth

Peter particularly called on his Jewish hearers to pay careful attention to what he was going to declare. Peter proceeded to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was not an insignificant man who was crucified and slain by wicked men. Peter's argument is based on three grounds. Firstly, Jesus of Nazareth was approved by God and by miracles i.e. wonders and signs. His hearers knew these things; of what Jesus did in His earthly ministry. There was no doubt or dispute about the miracles and wonders that Jesus performed. These signs overwhelmingly authenticated Jesus' claim of who He is, the Son of God.

Secondly, Jesus of Nazareth was not just a mere victim of wicked men who crucified Him and put Him to death.

Peter revealed that it was “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”. Jesus had declared that as the Son of God, He came to be the Saviour of the world (John 3:16, Luke 19:10). The entire plan of God’s salvation lies in the hand of God almighty. Man is helpless to stop God. Man did not capture Christ but Christ gave His life. John 10:17-18: Jesus says, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.” This “determinate counsel and foreknowledge” or plan of God to save sinners necessitated the delivering of Jesus to wicked men who had crucified and slain Him. God’s foreknowledge (Greek *prognosis*) does not simply mean knowing beforehand but it includes the determining of the action of the wicked men. God who designed to send His Son to die on the cross so that the world can be reconciled to Him made sure that His enemies, who willed to kill His Son, carried out their evil act. Peter clearly and firmly put the blame on his hearers who had crucified Jesus. God was in full control every step of the way and yet man is found guilty for what evil they did in bringing about the persecution and crucifixion of Christ. Peter thus revealed the most important doctrine that is affirmed throughout Holy Scripture—the Sovereignty of God and the Responsibility of Man.¹

Thirdly, this Jesus of Nazareth whom they considered as a mere man was raised by God from the dead with a glorified supernatural body. Peter then spent at length in his sermon on the resurrection of Jesus who is their Messiah or the Christ. God freed the agony of death from His Son Jesus. In addition, it was impossible for Jesus to be held in the power of death. Having declared the fact of Jesus’ resurrection, Peter showed from Scripture that it was already predicted that the Messiah or Christ would be raised from the dead. Peter quoted Psalm 16 and specifically drew their attention to verses 8 to 11. The portion speaks of the Messiah whom God would raise from the dead. Peter pointed out that David was not speaking of himself. This was evidenced by the fact that David was dead and buried and his tomb was still with them in Jerusalem. David, as a prophet, knew that God, who had sworn with an oath that “the fruit of his loins”, would raise the Messiah or Christ to sit on His throne. David was then speaking of the resurrection of Christ. The soul of Jesus Christ would not be left in “hell” (Greek, *hades*) (v.31). *Hades* should be understood as an intermediate place between heaven and the Lake of fire (the final place for those condemned or who rejected Jesus Christ). And it was also a fact that the body of Jesus Christ did not experience corruption. In other words, when the body of Jesus Christ was laid in the tomb for three days, it did not rot. Peter then stressed that “we all are witnesses” (v.32).

Peter “therefore” introduces the next part of his sermon (v.33). He linked all that he had said and shown concerning Jesus Christ to what he was going to say at this juncture. Peter now focussed on the exaltation of Jesus

¹ This is best illustrated in Luke 22:22 – And

Christ. Jesus is not only the Messiah or the Christ, and that He had resurrected from the dead, but that He was exalted by God and now seated on the right hand of God (v.33, 34). Once again, Peter cited Psalm 110:1, which was spoken by David. Once again, what David wrote in that verse cannot refer to David himself. David did not ascend to heaven, neither was he exalted to the right hand of God. It was Jesus Christ whom God had raised from the dead and who ascended to heaven and God would one day exalt Him and make His enemies His footstool. At this point, Peter concluded his sermon by charging all Israel that they could not deny the fact that the man Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, was made both Lord and Christ by God (v.36).

Response of The People

Peter's sermon was powerful. He pulled no punches but addressed the issue directly to the people. He charged his listeners for having crucified Jesus Christ and for having done this wicked deed. Therefore, they had sinned against God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The listeners realized the seriousness of their guilt. They were "pricked in their heart", literally, their hearts were pierced or stabbed. So, they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles (v.37): Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Peter directly and plainly replied (v.38): "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Repentance must be understood as genuine repentance. It means forsaking sin, that is an inner change of heart that affects the sinner's whole personality, and turning to Jesus Christ by believing and trusting Him completely as Saviour

and Lord. The verb tense of the word "repent" (the aorist imperative) is one of authority and demands a decisive act that is to stand once and for all. Then by calling the people to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ implies that Peter did not allow for any secret disciples. Baptism would make a public break from Judaism insofar as the Israelites were concerned, and identification with Jesus Christ. This action indeed helped to weed out any conversions that were not genuine.

The requirement to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ is to accept Christ in all that had been revealed concerning Himself, in particular, the acknowledgement that He is God's Son, His atoning death for the sins of the sinner, and His resurrection. Peter also mentioned "every one of you" thus making repentance and baptism a personal and individual decision. It also means that the sinner's condition or position in this world does not in any way absolve him from sin and the need of Christ as Lord and Saviour. Hence, salvation deals with each person personally. The teaching of baptism as a requirement for salvation by using Acts 2:38 is unwarranted and definitely unbiblical. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:8). Baptism is an act of obedience to God that conveys a person's covenantal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and with God.

It is God's covenantal promise to every one who repents and believes in Jesus Christ and is baptized in His name. The promise is not only to every Israelite and his children, but also "to all that are afar off" that means all Gentiles! The Old Testament covenant included children. Certainly, the New Covenant would also include them. The

administering of baptism upon the children is man's duty but the gift of the Holy Spirit is God's. This is done by not doubting but by trusting in God. Peter concluded by further exhorting, pleading and warning his listeners to save themselves from this evil generation. Even in those days, the moral and social condition of the world was decadent and evil.

The Resultant Effect

Three thousand souls joyfully received Peter's word and they were baptized on the same day! How the angelic hosts in Heaven rejoiced! The first Church had now more than three thousand disciples, including men, women and children. These believers were true to their profession of faith in Jesus Christ because they were not afraid to make a public testimony. This is further affirmed by their continued steadfastness in the Apostles' doctrine. There was no argument against what Peter had preached to them. They readily believed and accepted his teaching because they were biblical. Then the believers continued steadfastly in fellowship (Greek *koinonia*). There is one word in the English language to describe the rich meaning of "koinonia". The word means "partnership" or "sharing". This entails that all the disciples of Jesus Christ, including the Apostles, were members of each other. They were one spiritual body, inwardly by faith in Christ, and outwardly by confessing Christ. There was no partisan-spirit, divisive attitude or schism. Like members of their natural family, these disciples shared their life, possessions and goods with those who were in need. All that believed were together and had all things in common (v.44).

They then observed the "breaking of bread" which is commonly known today as "the Lord's Supper" or "Holy Communion". When the disciples gathered round in the "breaking of bread", they acknowledged Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord. Every one is a sinner saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every one is equal before God. One's material means and social status has no significance before God!

Then the newly converted disciples continued steadfastly in prayers. The first Church was a praying church. The Apostles knew the power of prayer. They remembered what the Lord Jesus Christ had taught them (Luke 18:1): "...*Men ought always to pray and not to faint*". The consequence of this godlike attitude and action was that "fear came upon every soul". There was a sense of reverence and awe towards God. They visited and hosted one another in their homes. They did all these things with joy and simplicity and singleness of heart. In short, they were a spiritual, sincere, loving and caring body of believers, praising God. And as a result, other people thought well of them and treated them well! For such a church, the Lord would readily add to the number of members of the church.

PRACTICAL VALUE

The paradoxical tension between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of Man is a most wonderful and comforting truth. God in His sovereign awesome power is able to turn the wickedness of men to fulfil His plan and purpose for His people. And God always means good for His people. We who are His disciples have no fear of what our enemies can do when we

are doing His will. Paul echoes this marvellous truth when he declares (Romans 8:28): *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* In comforting ourselves when using this promise, make sure that we cite the whole verse. Many cite only the first part and conveniently omit the latter part. Christians should not expect the deeds done to evil men who are against God's will and Word to work for their good if they refuse to repent and come to Christ. They will end up in Hell for their sin if they were to die without the Saviour as their advocate. This promise is for believers only and not unbelievers.

Peter has argued beyond a shadow of doubt that Jesus is the Messiah (in Hebrew), the Christ (in Greek), and the Son of God, who came to save and to die for the sins of the world. God's prophecies in the Old Testament spoken by His prophets concerning Jesus Christ, and the irrefutable fact of Christ's resurrection and exaltation, affirmed that Jesus Christ is both Lord and Saviour. Believing in Him brings salvation, the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ will result in grievous consequences due to unforgiven sins. They who reject Jesus Christ will ultimately end up being cast into the Lake of Fire.

The question asked by Peter's listeners: "What shall we do?" is a question a person needs to ask in his entire life. The decision he makes will decide his eternal destiny. After death, where will he spend eternity, in Heaven where God is and all the angels and others who have believed and trusted in Christ, or in Hell where the devil and all the demons are, and all those who have

rejected Christ? There is no reason for not believing and trusting the Lord Jesus Christ. His life, teachings, death, resurrection and ascension are undeniable. Anyone who refuses to believe in Christ does so to his own hurt and loss, without hope and without God.

Many people today profess belief in Jesus Christ. But are these true professing Christians? We learn from Peter the meaning of repentance and that repentance has got to be genuine. A person must be convicted of his sin. If there is no acknowledgement of sin, there is no need for confession, and no need for repentance, and ultimately no need for God to forgive his sin. But that is not the truth for all have sinned against God. So, true repentance demands an acknowledgement of sin and repentance and turning to Christ and embracing Him from his heart as Lord and Saviour. Genuine repentance means that he must publicly testify that he belongs to Jesus Christ, his Saviour and Lord. Then in his life, he continually keeps the teachings of God's Word and does His will. Observing and doing the will of God require the Christian to read and study God's Word. As a genuine Christian, he loves to be with other Christians in fellowship, in worship and in prayer. These are things that are foundational to a Christian's faith and conduct. If a Christian has not diligently and conscientiously done these things, can he say that he is a true disciple of God and the Lord Jesus Christ? The answer is definitely "No". It is therefore necessary for every professing Christian to examine himself and affirm without any doubt that he is truly a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. This would remove any question of his salvation and his eternal destiny with God in

Heaven. No one can do the self examination for him. AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: Acts 2:22-24; Isaiah 53:10-12; John 10:14-18.

Tuesday: Acts 2:25-32; Revelation 1:18; Hebrews 12:2.

Wednesday: Acts 2:33-36; Hebrews 1:2-4; Philippians 2:9-11.

Thursday: Acts 2:37-40; Hebrews 4:12-13; Jeremiah 32:39-40.

Friday: Acts 2:41-47; Ephesians 4:1-6; Colossians 4:2.

- 3. Why do you think Peter emphasised the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ? How important is it? What would happen to Christianity if it were not true?

Discussion Questions

- 1. How did Peter know that God has exalted Jesus of Nazareth, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:19-36)?

- 4. What two offers are made in Acts 2:38, and on what are the conditions?

- 2. What was the question that the people asked Peter (2:12)? After Peter's preaching and teaching, what question did they ask Peter (2:37)? What valuable lesson can be drawn from this?

- 5. What are the ways in which the Spirit-filled Christians celebrate their new life in Christ?

6. What spiritual and practical benefits can you get from frequent fellowship with other Christians which you cannot get from private study and personal devotion?

7. What signs are there in a person's life when repentance is real?

8. Why do we find sharing or giving our possessions difficult?
