

09. The Book of Acts—2:38-42a

(6/24/26)

We are in Acts 2 which is divided into 3 main sections—

- 1.) **The outpouring of the Holy Spirit—v.1-13**
- 2.) **Peter’s first sermon as a Spirit-filled believer—v.14-41**
- 3.) **The practice of the early Church—v.42-47**

We’re currently finishing up Peter’s sermon to those Jewish pilgrims that were in town for the Feast of Pentecost.

Acts 2:37 (NKJV)

³⁷ 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?”

VI. The Invitation—v.38-39

Acts 2:38 (NKJV)

³⁸ 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.

The word ‘**baptize**’ comes as a transliteration of the Greek word, ‘baptizo’ which means to ‘*immerse*.’

The word is used 74 times in the New Testament and every time the idea is immersion—the question is into what?

Well, we have to look at the context of each passage to determine that—because the word is used to speak of 6 different kinds of baptisms.

The one we most often think of when we hear the word baptism is water baptism.

Water baptism is mentioned throughout the New Testament.

Please understand, Christian water baptism does not in any way *wash* us of our sins—nor is it an essential part of the gospel for salvation.

“But didn’t Peter say it cleanses us of sin in Acts 2:38?”

Acts 2:38 (NKJV)

³⁸ 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.

Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest (and others) have said that in the Greek, what Peter actually said was, “*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ because of the fact that your sins have been put away...*”

Salvation precedes water baptism and does not come *after* we are baptized in water.

And so, water baptism doesn’t wash sins away—nor is it a necessary part of salvation (no baptismal regeneration).

So, then what is the purpose in doing it?

It acts as an outward sign, symbolizing the washing away of sin through the blood of Christ, and identifying the new believer with their Lord Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

And then, in my mind, the greatest testimony against baptismal regeneration (that water baptism is essential for salvation)—comes from the mouth of Paul the apostle himself in 1Corinthians 1:

1 Corinthians 1:14-17 (NKJV)

¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. ¹⁶ Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel...

Notice how Paul separates *water baptism* from the *gospel*—indicating that they are separate and distinct things that are not working together to secure a person’s salvation.

Look, if water baptism was essential for salvation, it would be part of the gospel and therefore Paul (the quintessential evangelist) would never have said that the Lord *didn't* send him to baptize—if in fact baptism was necessary for a person to be saved!

If Paul believed that water baptism was essential for salvation, he would have rushed everyone who received Jesus as their Savior down to the river or lake as quickly as possible to *throw* them into the water and ‘seal the deal’ before anything happened to them, and they died before they could be baptized and would therefore be forever lost!

1 Corinthians 15:1–4 (NKJV)

¹ Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, ² by which also you are saved...³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

So here Paul gives us the gospel which he preached to save sinners—and notice that water baptism is not mentioned.

*“O yea? —what about what Jesus said in Mark 16:16—‘**He who believes and is baptized will be saved...**’—doesn't that prove baptism is essential for salvation?!”*

Please read the whole verse—

Mark 16:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. [Comment]

The Lord Jesus connected saving faith and water baptism together because water baptism is an important *symbol* of our commitment to Jesus.

So important that it became part of the command (the great commission) that Jesus left His Church with before ascending back to His Heavenly Father—

Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..."

Going, baptizing and teaching are all essential elements of the disciple making process.

We can see the importance of *evangelism* and *teaching* in making disciples—but why does Jesus include the act of water baptism in this process?

What is the purpose of water baptism in the Christian life since we have just proven it doesn't save?

As I just said, it is the outward *sign* of the New Covenant.

A sign *points* to something—water baptism is a public sign that points to our relationship with Jesus—that we now belong to Him.

However, water baptism not only speaks of our *belonging* to Jesus—it also speaks of us belonging to one another.

As Christians we're called to belong—not just to believe!

We belong to the family of God and are members of the Body of Christ—His Church.

This speaks of unity, unity among the people of God—

As one pastor put it,

“(Water baptism)...not only declares a person's allegiance to Jesus but also their acceptance into the Body of Christ. It says to the world—'This person is now one of us! We have fellowship with each other.'”

Water baptism is not only a symbol of salvation (our oneness with Jesus)—it's also a symbol of our oneness with other believers in Christ—that's why we do public baptisms. (Explain)

Unity among the people of God is from the Holy Spirit—division is of the devil.

Jesus said that against His Church the gates of hell (demonic attacks) would not prevail (Matt.16:18)—that is unless Christians voluntarily open their churches to let the devil in!

Christians do that all the time by inviting into their churches false teachers (whom they believe to be genuine men and women of God) and give them a platform to spread their lies.

But also, Christians open the door to Satan through gossip and backbiting each other and thus allowing the devil to *form* them into weapons to use against other Christians.

God said that if you allow the devil to do this—you are not going to prosper in your Christian life—

Isaiah 54:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ No weapon formed against you shall prosper...This *is* the heritage of the servants of the Lord...(Elaborate)

Acts 2:38–39 (NKJV)

³⁸ 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. ³⁹ **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.**”

“**For the promise...**”—what promise?—the promise of Joel (2:28-29) which was repeated by Jesus in John 14—

Joel 2:28–29 (NKJV)

²⁸ “And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. ²⁹ And also on *My* menservants and on *My* maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. [Which Peter quoted in Acts 2:17-21]

John 14:15–17a (NKJV)

¹⁵ “If you love Me, keep My commandments. ¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—¹⁷ the Spirit of truth...

Acts 2:32 (NKJV)

³² This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. ³³ Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

The promise of Joel (2:28-29) repeated by Jesus in John 14:15-17 and quoted by Peter in Acts 2:17-21—is simply the promise of the *‘Baptism with the Holy Spirit.’*

Acts 2:39 (NKJV)

³⁹ **For the promise is to you** [those standing there hearing Peter speak] **and to your children** [the next generation], **and to all who are afar off** [for every generation of believers down through the Church Age], **as many as the Lord our God will call.**”

This promise applies to every believer from Pentecost until Jesus returns to set up His Kingdom.

There are those today who say that the promise of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit (power for service) was only for the first century Christian church covering the Apostolic Period but at the close of the first century that promise 'expired' and is no longer available—I disagree—and I'm not the only one! —

One pastor—

“Precious people, don't let anyone deny you the gift and empowering of the Holy Spirit. Don't let them say it's no longer applicable or no longer available. The promise of the Father experienced on the Day of Pentecost is available to you, to your children, and to those who are afar off, regardless of how far spiritually or geographically we might be.”

Acts 2:40–41 (NKJV)

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

On Pentecost they would bring the first fruits of the wheat harvest to the Temple and give it as an offering to God and God would receive it and guarantee a great harvest in the Fall.

Here we see the first fruits of the Church harvest—signifying that a much greater harvest was coming at the Rapture, but ultimately innumerable people saved during the Tribulation Period (Rev. 7:9).

When the Law came down, three thousand men died (Exodus 32:28).

When the Spirit came down, three thousand souls were saved (made alive spiritually)—the Law kills, but the Spirit gives life! (2Cor.3:6)

As we come to Acts 2:42-47 we move into the third main section of this chapter—**The Practice of the Early Church**

Acts 2:42 (NKJV)

⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

This section gives us the *'blueprint'* or pattern for church life and I believe becomes the main reason the early church was so strong and effective—because it kept things simple.

They didn't allow themselves to get distracted from the basics and lose their focus as to what Jesus called them to do.

“And they continued steadfastly...”—they did other things too, like the food pantry ministry—but these 4 were the pillars upon which their church was built.

1. The Apostles doctrine—v.42

Acts 2:42 (NKJV)

⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine...

May I suggest that this is always the first mark of a Spirit-filled church.

One pastor and author said—

“A Spirit-filled church is always going to be a Bible-studying church. Those two things go together. There have been periods in history when the Bible has fallen on hard times and been neglected by God's people. These have been dry ages for the church.

There have also been periods when the Bible was not always readily available, sometimes because of political pressures. Sometimes even church officials kept the Bible from God's people. Nevertheless, wherever the church has been greatly blessed, where the Spirit of God has come upon God's people and the gospel has gone forth in great power and people have responded to it, these have always been ages in which the Bible has been studied carefully. Why? It is because the closer men and women come to God the closer they want to get to where he speaks to their hearts, and that is in the Bible.”

The word **‘doctrine’** is the Greek word, *‘didache’* a word we get our word *‘didactic’* from.

The Greek word means *‘teaching’* but also refers to the *style* of the teaching method—the teaching was didactic.

(Hold on to that I'll come back to it in a minute)

The early Church continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine.

The apostles received direct revelation from God which they then taught to those early Christians.

Eventually, these teachings were written down and became the N.T. Scriptures.

The teaching of sound doctrine has always been the heartbeat of the Church—

Titus 2:1 (NKJV)

¹ But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine [Gk.—‘hygienic teaching’]

Titus 1:9 (NKJV)

[A pastor/overseer must be a person who is] ⁹ holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

2 Timothy 2:2 (NKJV)

² And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

1 Timothy 4:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ These things command and teach.

1 Timothy 4:13 (NKJV)

¹³ Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

1 Timothy 4:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

The didactic method of teaching has always been the way God has communicated with man, and man has grown in his relationship with God.

The didactic way of thinking is ‘*black is black and white is white*’—it is thinking in terms of contrast—‘*right and wrong*’; ‘*truth and error*’; ‘*blessing and cursing*.’

Today, however, this way of thinking and teaching is being replaced with a new way of thinking.

It is a process or technique that is attributed to the German philosopher Hegel—but it goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden.

It is a process that seeks to move people from a *'black and white'* way of thinking where truth consists of absolutes (absolute right and absolute wrong)—into a more *centrist* position where truth consists of differing *'shades of gray.'*

This then allows people to justify behavior that is contrary to the clear commands of Scripture—things that God has condemned as being absolutely wrong (adultery, homosexuality, murder etc.).

As I said, the old way of thinking was didactic.

When we look at the Scriptures, we see that this is the way God communicates with us—“*I am God you are not*”; “*This is right, that is wrong*” etc.

For example, in the Law God gave 613 commandments—248 were *positive* (things that were right to do) while 365 were *negative* (things that were wrong to do).

That way of thinking and communicating is essential if we are going to be the people God desires us to be—or the church or community or nation.

We absolutely must be able to see things in terms of right and wrong—if we’re going to be able to obey the biblical injunction to use the Scriptures to “*Teach, reprove, correct and instruct people in the righteousness of God.*” (2Tim. 3:16)

As long as people think in that way (even if they are secular people), if they continue to think *didactically* in terms of right and wrong—God can still speak into their hearts bringing conviction, correction and change.

But today a paradigm shift has taken place in our society and in the Church away from the *didactic* way of thinking to a dialectic way of thinking.

The whole idea behind the use of the dialectic process is to bring people together and build relationships by getting them to soften or compromise what they know and believe with regard to biblical truth (doctrine).

Because, you see, knowing gets in the way of relationships (‘doctrine divides’)—and today the Church is all about relationships and community which takes precedence over doctrine.

The only way the Purpose Driven and Emergent Church movements succeeded in the past and other similar groups today is that—they have to change the way Christians think and so they are using this dialectic method and targeting church small groups.

That’s why more and more Christians all over the country, and in some cases the world, are saying, “*Our church isn’t what it used to be.*”

The host of Cross Talk read some letters she had received,

“Our church is changing, something’s happening, our church is moving away from a biblical Christ centered approach to ministry. The meaty sermons have disappeared and we’re getting entertainment. Our small group is memorizing large portions of the Purpose Driven Life (or similar books today) instead of memorizing Scripture. Something’s changing in our church, we can’t put our finger on it but it seems that our voices are being ignored. When we try to speak out in our small group people shout us down. We are viewed as Bible-thumpers in our own church.”

2 Timothy 4:1-4 (NKJV)

¹ I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ² Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have

itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

This prophetic warning is being fulfilled in our day!

So, what exactly is this dialectic way of thinking and teaching that has infiltrated the Church.

And furthermore, how is it being used by the devil to move Christians away from the absolute truth (right and wrong) didactic way of thinking and teaching which God communicated to us in His Word—into various shades of ‘grey’ where truth is relative and not absolute?

We’ll look at that next time.