

8. The Book of Acts 2:38

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
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We currently in Acts 2 looking at 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—verses 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.

A. Repent

We looked at what biblical repentance is all about last time and began to further give a breakdown of the gospel based on verse 40:

Acts 2:40 (NKJV)

⁴⁰ And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."

Luke (who wrote the Book of Acts) is telling us that Peter's presentation of the gospel in verse 38 is only a synopsis—not the complete presentation of what he gave to the crowd that day.

The other important truths of the gospel are:

B. Jesus Christ is Almighty God—Lord of all

Salvation is inextricably linked to the doctrine that Jesus Christ is God Almighty *and* Lord of all!

The reason these go 'hand in hand' is because—as God He created all things, and therefore He has the right to control all things as sovereign Lord (Master) of His creation!

Colossians 1:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

If you were created by Him—you were created for Him in the sense that salvation means surrendering your life to Him as your Lord and Master. You can't separate His divinity from His sovereignty because they are inextricably linked together to Who He is as God!

Jesus is God (that's who He is)—but salvation only comes to those who believe He is God and then receive Him as the God and Master (Lord) of their lives—

John 1:12 (NKJV)

¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

Believing in Jesus is essential if a person is going to be saved—but receiving Him as your Lord is where you make the commitment to Him that actually saves you!

Folks, this is where faith as mere head-knowledge—becomes saving faith (a heart commitment)!

Philippians 2:9–11 (NKJV)

⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

However, only those who bow the knee to Jesus as Lord over their life here on earth are saved. The rest *will* bow the knee and confess that He is Lord on the Day of Judgment—but then it will be too late to save them! In the Old Testament, when you see the word **“LORD”** (all capitals) it is the name of God ('Yahweh') the Great “I AM.”

But when you see the word **“Lord”** it is the translation of the Hebrew word 'adoni'—which means '**master**' or '*the one who controls your life.*' The problem with so many professing Christians today is that—they use the word '**Lord**' as a *name* for Jesus when it is really a *title* for the One who controls their life.

His name is *Jesus*—His title is Lord—the Master of your life. Those who *call* Jesus Lord but don't *submit* to Him and obey Him as their Master are deceiving themselves that they are one of His disciples and saved—

Luke 6:46 (NKJV)

⁴⁶ "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?"

From there He goes on to talk about 2 kinds of faith found among professing Christians (churchgoers)—head knowledge that produces no obedience to Him, and then saving faith rooted in the heart demonstrated by obedience to His word.

Luke 6:47–49 (NKJV)

⁴⁷ Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: ⁴⁸ He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. ⁴⁹ But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.”

Obedience to God's Word doesn't save you it just proves that you are saved. The true gospel is all about telling people that they must believe in and bow the knee in submission to the Lord Jesus Christ—without which no man or woman can be saved!

C. Jesus Christ Died for Their Sins

When you present the gospel to people, you need to make sure that they understand (from God's Word) that—being “good” (whatever that means) won't get them into heaven.

Proverbs 20:6a (NKJV)

⁶ Most men will proclaim each his own goodness...

Jesus said that there is only one Person who is “good” (morally perfect) and that is God! (Matthew 19:17) That is why Jesus *had* to die on the cross for our sins—because we *weren't* ‘good’—we weren't and never would be in our own strength, good deeds, and religious observances.

We are fallen sinners, condemned to spend eternity in hell—and the only way we could escape that judgment was if God *redeemed* us (to buy out of slavery by paying a price)—

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NKJV)

¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

When we share the gospel with people today, since everyone thinks they're a ‘good’ person (“*not perfect, but certainly good enough to get into heaven!*”). We must communicate to them, that if our good deeds and religious works could atone for our sins then Jesus would not have had to die but since He did He therefore died in vain—Galatians 2:21b!

Again, Paul the apostle in Romans 3:23 said, “*For all have sinned (missed the mark) and fall short of the glory of God (sinless perfection and heaven)*” and in Romans 6:23 he said and, “*the wages of sin is death (eternal death in hell)*” Romans 6:23a.

You see, the bad news for religious folks, is that God only lets *perfect* people into heaven! The good news is that anyone who receives Jesus into their heart as Savior is pronounced *perfect* (‘positionally’) by God and given the gift of eternal life in heaven. The reason is because I am now in Christ and God no longer sees me, He sees only Jesus—the perfect One!

D. Jesus Christ Rose from the Dead

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the central message of all apostolic preaching in the Book of Acts. You see, without the resurrection there is no Christian faith, no salvation—and no hope for man.

As Paul the Apostle said in 1 Corinthians 15—

“If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is useless, your faith is meaningless, we are still in our sins, those who have died believing in Christ are lost and we are of all men the most pathetic...We might as well eat, drink, and be merry for there is nothing more to life than this.”

However, in verse 20 he went on to say,

“But now Christ is risen from the dead and is the first fruits from the grave of those who have died believing in Jesus.”

Luke 24:1–6 (NKJV)

¹ Now on the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain *other women* with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. ² But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. ³ Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. ⁵ Then, as they were afraid and bowed *their* faces to the earth, they said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶ **He is not here, but is risen!** Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee.

At this point let me quote from one well-known Bible apologist on the subject of Jesus’ resurrection—he said and I’m quoting him:

“All but 4 of the major world religions are based on philosophical and ethical principles. Of the 4 that are based on personalities only Christianity claims an empty tomb due to the resurrection of its founder.

- 1. Abraham, the father of Judaism died about 1900 BC, but the Jews never claimed he rose from the dead.*
- 2. The original accounts of Buddha’s life and death never claimed any resurrection from the dead for him.*
- 3. Mohammed died on June 8, 632 AD at the age of 61 in Medina where his tomb is visited each year by thousands of devout Muslims—but neither the Koran nor the Hadith ever claimed that Mohammed rose from the dead.*

Their bodies (bones) are still in their graves because, only the tomb of Jesus is empty—only Jesus is risen!”

E. The Invitation

After you’ve given the gospel *presentation*—it’s time for the invitation.

Ask the person you’re witnessing to if they would like to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

“I like to let them go home and think about it.”

Well, the Bible teaches that—*“Tomorrow isn’t promised to anyone.”*

God’s Word admonishes unbelievers not to put off receiving Jesus when the gospel is presented to them— *“Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts...”* (Hebrews 3:7-8); *“...behold, now is the right time, now is the day of salvation.”* (2 Corinthians 6:2)

May God give us a burden for the lost, and a great sense of urgency to reach them with the gospel—but that we would give them the true gospel!

VI. The Invitation—verses 38-39

Acts 2:37–38 (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?” 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 was used of ships that had sunk and were ‘*baptized*’ into the sea—and also of a piece of cloth that was immersed into a vat of dye and was now ‘*baptized*’ into the dye.

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.

1. The baptism of suffering

Matthew 20:23

So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with...["

2. The baptism of distress or of being overwhelmed

The word is still used this way in Greece today—for example: If they wanted to say, "*I'm overwhelmed with problems today*", they would use the word "*baptizo*" meaning that they feel as though they are "*immersed*" or "*drowning*" in their problems.

In fact, that is how Jesus used the word in Luke 12:50—

Luke 12:50 (NKJV)

⁵⁰ But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!

Here He was talking about the cross and how He was immersed in His *mission* to die for the sins of the world—but also, of being immersed in the emotional *duress* of wanting to finish the work the Father had given Him to do.

3. The baptism with the Holy Spirit

Acts 1:5, 8 (NKJV)

⁵ for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now... ⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." [*This is the baptism of power for service*]

4. The baptism of judgment

Matthew 3:11–12 (NKJV)

¹¹ I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit [*salvation*] and fire [*judgment*]. ¹² His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn [*the redeemed into His Kingdom*]; but He will burn up the chaff [*the unredeemed*] with unquenchable fire [*the Lake of Fire i.e., "Hell"*].

5. The baptism of salvation

1 Corinthians 12:13 (NKJV)

¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...

If you look at the context of this verse, you will see that salvation is in view—so this is speaking of the baptism of salvation.

The baptism of salvation is a “dry” baptism where a person who receives Jesus as their Savior is instantly, invisibly and supernaturally ‘*immersed*’ (baptized) into the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit.

But since the baptism of salvation is not what Paul has in mind here in Acts 2:38—it leaves us with one final baptism he must be referring to—the one we most often think of when we hear the word baptism—water baptism.

6. Water baptism

Water baptism is mentioned throughout the New Testament.

The doctrine of water baptism, instead of being a symbol of us being washed from our sins and becoming members of one body—the Body of Christ.

Instead of bringing us together, has become a subject that has divided Christians from one another over the centuries. The reason for this division is because many Christian denominations believe that water baptism is essential for salvation (a doctrine called ‘*baptismal regeneration*’).

While many other Christian churches (like ours) believe that, while water baptism is a beautiful symbol of our oneness with Christ thru our faith in Him—it is not essential for our salvation.

Let me set this up by first of all saying that—water baptism isn’t a uniquely *Christian* thing. A lot of Christians don’t know that the Jews practiced a form of baptism *before* Christianity.

Before they went into the Temple to worship the LORD, they would undergo a ritual purification in a special cleansing pool or bath known as a ‘*mikveh*.’ They would immerse (‘baptize’) themselves in the waters of this cleansing pool, washing off the dirt from their bodies—which would symbolize a purification from sin and all outward defilements. Then (and only then) were they considered *ceremonially clean* and could go in and worship the Lord in the Temple.

In New Testament times, if people wanted to convert (proselytize) to Judaism, they went through a ceremonial washing referred to as *baptism*.

We must be careful to note that the baptism of John the Baptist was not *Christian* baptism—but was a baptism connected with *Israel* and its acceptance of their Messiah.

In Christian baptism we identify with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection which comes *after* we have received Him into our hearts as Savior—whereas John’s baptism *preceded* the receiving of the Messiah.

It’s important to remember that Jesus submitted Himself to the baptism of John—

Matthew 3:13–15 (NKJV)

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ And John *tried to prevent* Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?” ¹⁵ But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit *it to be so* now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him.

Of course, the question is: if Jesus was sinless and didn’t need to be ceremonially cleansed from any sins and therefore had no need to repent (John’s baptism was the baptism of ‘repentance’—Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 13:24; Acts 19:4)—why did Jesus submit Himself to John’s baptism?

He did it to identify with sinners—and to allow us to then identify with Him when we get water baptized. Please understand, Christian water baptism does not in any way *wash* us of our sins.

“But didn’t Peter say it does 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 for 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.

1 Peter 3:21 (NKJV)

²¹ There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh [not water baptism], but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ [the baptism of salvation is in view here—1 Corinthians 12:13],

Water baptism is the sign of the New Covenant just like a wedding ring is the sign of the marriage covenant.

A wedding ring isn’t essential for marriage—even as water baptism isn’t essential for salvation.

The thief that died on the cross next to Jesus professed Him (and received Him) as Lord and Savior—at which time Jesus said to him, *“Today you’ll be with Me in paradise”* acknowledging that he was in fact saved—without being water baptized.

The Philippian jailer, in Acts 16, asked Paul and Silas what he had to do to be saved—and Paul said, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved...”*

He didn’t say, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized in water and you will be saved.”*

Romans 10:9 (NKJV)

⁹ ...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Notice that water baptism is not mentioned. 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 1 Corinthians 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 were separate and distinct things that were 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 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!

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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