

## **The First Christians in Church History**

(Acts 2:37-47)

8/21/19; Wed PM Pine Grove

### **Introduction**

The Wright Brothers are credited with the invention of the airplane.

On December 17th, 1903 the *Wright Flyer* took flight in Kitty Hawk NC.

Launched into a 20 MPH wind, the plane lifted and stayed in the air for 12 seconds and covered a distance of 12 seconds.

Today, a Boeing 747 can stay in the air for 16 hours and cover a distance of 9500 hundred miles.

The first car was so slow that it was often passed by horse and buggy on the road.

Today, there are cars available to the public that will reach speeds of 250 MPH.

Needless to say, some things have very humble beginnings.

However, the beginning of the church is not one of those things.

The church began with the powerful arrival of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2..

And right off the bat, the Spirit began working in the lives of believers.

The first act of the Spirit was to enable the first group of Christians to speak in other languages.

We saw a few weeks back in verse 4 of Acts 2.

But then the Spirit moved the heart of Peter to preach the first sermon in church history.

And that sermon was no dud.

It was Spirit-empowered preaching aimed at those listening to it.

In the introduction to the sermon, Peter went after the mostly Jewish audience by explaining how the arrival of the Spirit was predicted in the book of Joel.

He then tied the arrival of the Spirit to the Messiah, who he identified in verse 22 as Jesus of Nazareth.

From there, he accused his listeners of rejecting the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus.

HE accused them wrongly interpreting the OT that they has studied all their life.

Then he ended his sermon last week by declaring the their Messiah was Jesus whom they had crucified just 50 days earlier...

We looked at that sermon and we drew some principle of preaching from it..

But preaching is not the goal i the church.

It is the mens to the goal.

The goal is to make disciples of all the nations.

The goal is for people to truth, acknowledge their sin, repent of their wickedness, and trust alone in Jesus as their Messiah...

So, will the church's first sermon be like the Wright Brothers first plane?

Will it fly just a few feet and then come crashing down?

Well, let's find out tonight..

I call this passage "The First Christians in Church History," and what I mean by that is this..

The church begins to grow from this first sermon.

Preaching always makes an impact in the lives of those who listen.

Some reject it.

Some embrace it.

Some obey it.

Some don't care for it.

But in Acts 2, the church's first sermon leads to the church's first membership drive.

Peter's sermon makes an immediate impact on those who had ears to hear it..

So, let's look at 3 truths that we observe as a result of the church's first sermon.

## **I. The Church is Filled with Christians (37-40)**

In verse 36, Peter issues an ultimatum.

***36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and [ai]Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”***

Interestingly, this is the same ultimatum that we speak to Jews today.

Christ is the dividing line between and Judaism.

We may have much in common with Jews, but where we differ with them is the most important issue.

The identity of Jesus Christ.

Yet, Peter does not bite his tongue.

He has been a lifelong Jew, but he now declares that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah who was killed by those he came to save.

If you want to cut to the chase with a Jewish person, ask them who Jesus is.

So Peter draws a line in the sand in verse 36..

What does the crowd say about Christ?

Well, we see one response of the crowd in verse 37..

Now remember, this crowd could be huge.

There were upwards of a million people in Israel for each of the Jewish festivals in the 1st century.

That would include women and children so a crowd of 100,000 Jewish men is possible..

Now we will see in a minute that 3000 in the crowd are going to be saved, and we often are impressed by that number.

But considering the potential size of this crowd, 3000 people is not a lot..

But we do see how true believers react to biblical preaching..

Verse 37..

***37 Now when they heard this, they were [aj]pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “[ak]Brethren, [al]what shall we do?”***

For some in that crowd, Peter’s sermon changed their life forever.

And take note of how believers respond to preaching.

***they were pierced to the heart***

This is helpful picture of what is often called conviction.

It is a work of God on the heart on the heart of man that enables him to see his sin.

What was the specific sin that pierced their heart?

The killing of Jesus.

And did the conviction come because Peter yelled or told a sad or played a song over and over until common came forward?

No, not at all.

They were pierced to heart as they saw the truth of Scripture being fulfilled before their eyes.

Peter showed the book of Joel that described an outpouring of God's Spirit, which they had seen with their own eyes as Galileans were speaking all sorts of world languages without training.

Peter had also properly interpreted Psalm 16 for them.

David wasn't predicted his own resurrection in that psalm, he was predicting the resurrection of the Messiah that had been fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus a few weeks earlier.

This is the power of the word of God properly interpreted.

It cuts people to the heart.

My job is not to make you cry or laugh or feel conviction.

My job is to get the word of God into your ears with understanding.

The rest is up to God.

And He uses His word to convict us and bring us to saving faith.

We have no idea how Peter preached this sermon.

He may have been very calm in his presentation.

He may have been fiery.

We just don't know, and it doesn't matter.

The conviction is not in the man, it is in the word of God.

And Peter has used the Word to pierce the hearts of some on the crowd.

And notice what they say to Peter..

***“Brethren, what shall we do?”***

This is a question of desperation.

This is the question that comes when someone realizes their sin.

These Jews now believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

But they also know that He is dead, and they are guilty of supporting his death.

So what can they do?

Is their opportunity gone?

Are they simply to wait for the wrath to come?

Now, let me tell you that you rarely see this in people.

Most folks would rather do anything that admit their sin.

Most people would rather do anything that admit their helplessness.

But the grace of God appears when people are at their end..

Verse 38..

***38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”***

In the 1980s, John MacArthur came under fire for his views of salvation.

MacArthur, like many other preachers in church history, simply taught that repentance is a necessary part of salvation.

Well, some in the church went crazy.

You can't tell people that they must repent in order to be saved.

You can't tell people that salvation is based on repentance.

Yet, Macarthur held his ground by pointing to verses like this one in the book of Acts..

Like pointing to verses like Mark 1:15...

***14 Now after John had been [h]taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, [i]preaching the gospel of God, 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God [j]is at hand; repent and [k]believe in the gospel.”***

Look, Scripture is crystal clear.

If you want to be saved, you must repent and believe in Christ.

Repentance is simply a picture of reversal.

Those who repent literally head their lives in the opposite direction.

Instead of running to sin, they run to obey.

Instead on rejecting Jesus, they believe in Jesus.

Instead of holding on to their life, they love their life.

Repentance and faith are the twos sides of the coin of salvation.

To be saved is to repent.

To repent is to be saved.

There is no other gospel.

There is no other way into the kingdom of God.

We all come in through the act of repentance, and even the ability to repent is a gift of God.

***2 Timothy 2:24-25..***

***24 The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,***

***Acts 11:18..***

***18 When they heard this, they [q]uietened down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."***

So what must the sinner do to be saved?

Repent.

That is the gospel truth.

That is what Jesus preached.

That is what Peter preached.

That is what Paul will preach.

In the case of these listeners, they need to repent of their wrong view of who Jesus was.

They needed to repent of the their sins that led to his death.

As we think of repentance, it is more than just remorse.

A lot of people see tears and think that is true repentance.

Look, biblical repentance would include remorse but that is not all.

There is remorse but there is also a refusal to stay in sin.

There is a rejection of all that you thought was right.

And there is a return to truth found only in the God of the Bible.

There have been plenty of people who cried but stayed in their sin.

Judas was remorseful over what he has done in betraying Jesus.

He even took the money back to the Jewish religious leaders.

But guess what?

He didn't return to the truth of God.

He didn't give up his sin.

Instead, Judas only experienced a worldly sorrow.

He experienced the sorrow of 2 Corinthians 7:10..

***10 For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance [d]without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.***

Godly sorrow produces real repentance.

Godly sorrow leads to salvation.

Those listening to Peter's sermon on this day truly repented and were eternally saved.

But Peter also offers further instruction.

His listeners must repent, but that must be followed by public identification with Jesus.

Look what he says in verse 38.

***38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ***

Nowhere does the Bible teach that baptism is a requirement for salvation.

Salvation occurs as people repent and believe the truth about Christ and put all their trust in Him alone.

We are justified by faith alone in Christ alone apart from any good works, including baptism.

But that does not mean that baptism isn't important.

Baptism is simply an outward act of obedience as a result of an inward change.

Salvation is an invisible miracle, but baptism is a visible display of invisible work.

God has saved us, and now we desire to identify with Him.

For those in Peter's audience, baptism would not be a cause for congratulations.

It would not be a reason for a covered dish fellowship.

Instead, baptism would be a reason for family and friends to leave instead of come.

Jews practiced ceremonial washings all the time.

It was part of their culture and law.

So far a Jew to be publicly baptized in the name of Jesus would be to renounce all their former way of life and declare their faith in Him alone.

It would be a big deal but not for the reasons we see today.

It would be a big deal because it would signal the end of their association with the Jewish religious system.

But look, this is what salvation is.

It is a clean break from our former way of life.

It is renouncement of all that we used to believe and do.

And it is a total commitment to belief in Christ and obedience to Him.

We are spoiled in our country and culture.

It costs us little to identify with Christ.

In fact, most of your family whether they are believers or not will celebrate your salvation.

They will even attend your baptism.

But this has not been the case in church history.

It still isn't the case in many places in the world today.

For some, baptism in the name of Jesus Christ has been followed by death.

But this is the call of the gospel?

Repent and believe in Christ no matter the cost.

And there is reward for that repentance and belief.

You see it in the end of verse 38..

***the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.***

Repentance leads to forgiveness of sin and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

We miss the significance of this because we are so accustomed to it.

But the promise of receiving the Holy Spirit was revolutionary to these Jews.

They knew that David had been given the Spirit for a while in his life.

They knew that the Spirit spoke through the prophets.

But for the Spirit of God to dwell in them as common people was beyond belief.

Yet, they had just witnessed the effect of the Spirit indwelling people as these 120 followers of Jesus spoke in languages that were not their own.

And not they can receive the Spirit at the moment of repentance and belief and salvation..

But that is not all the good news..

Look at verse 39..

***39 For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”***

In other words, this isn't a one time promise.

The sale is not just good until Monday at participating locations.

Salvation by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ is going to be the gracious offer of God to the world in this age.

They can be saved, but so can their Jewish children.

But so can Gentiles who are far off in distance and time and culture.

The promise of full forgiveness and the promise of the Holy Spirit are going to be worldwide offers..

But note that not all will come.

The only to respond with repentance and belief will be the ones that the Lord calls to Himself.

Many will hear the good news and be unaffected by it.

Many will hear the good news and flat out reject it.

Only those called by God will respond in repentance and belief and find forgiveness and the indwelling Holy Spirit.

For those in Peter's audience, 3000 were called by God and repented and believed.

And then verse 40..

***40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “[am]Be saved from this perverse generation!”***

Verse 40 is the preacher's friend.

In this verse, we are reminded that Peter didn't just preach from verse 14 to 36..

He got the point of the sermon in verse 36.

He laid out the ultimatum of the sermon in here 36.

Some the crowd responded in verse 37, but Peter was not done preaching.

All we know is that he used “many other words” to testify of who Jesus was and exhort them to salvation.

This is the role of the preacher.

This is the role of the believer.

We have no clue how many God has called to Himself.

WE have no clue who God has called to Himself.

So we preach and testify and urge people to repent and be saved.

Let's stop right there and make some observations and applications for tonight...

## **Conclusion**

The first outline point of this closing section of chapter 2 is that the church is filled with Christians.

You may say, “well, yeah. we know that.”

But understand that not all who attend church are Christians.

However, among the true church, all Christians have some things in common that we see right here.

### ***#1 - Christians respond to the word of God.***

As I stressed earlier, the focus of this message is not Peter.

He is simply the messenger.

The focus of this sermon.

The thing that pierced the heart of the listeners was the proper interpretation of the word of God.

The passage in the book of Joel helped the listeners make the connection to what they were seeing and hearing.

The explanation of Psalm 16 made it clear that Jesus was the one that David was writing about.

Those two passages along with Psalm 110 that pointed to the ascension of Jesus are what pierced the heart of those who got saved.

I have always said that I don't want get in the way of the Scripture that I seek to explain to God's people.

I know that I have been called to pastoral ministry but I am unable to convict anyone.

I am unable to give anyone the desire to repent and believe.

But when I study to understand the Word myself and when I rightly divide it and bring it to my listeners, it is convicting and life changing.

Christians are not Christians because they really liked the preacher or they really liked the church building or they really liked the people.

Christians are Christians because they heard the Word properly translated and explained and their hearts were pierced by its truth.

I tell people all the time.

Do not choose a church for what it offers in terms of programs and events.

Do not choose a church because the preacher is funny or caring or has a good personality.

Choose a church where the Word is held in high regard and rightly divided and taught the people.

In the end, programs don't save and preachers don't sanctify.

It is the work of the Word that saves and sanctifies, so make sure to choose a church based on that.

## ***#2 - Christians repent of their sins.***

The church has suffered and is suffering over the issue of repentance.

The reason why the church is now embracing practicing homosexuals is because some churches have refused to include repentance in the gospel.

But the issue goes beyond homosexuality.

There have been practicing adulterers join churches because the issue of repentance has been ignored.

There have been people practicing all sorts of sin welcomed into churches because the gospel was simply reduced to see Jesus as Savior and get in.

The gospel is believe and stay in your sin.

The gospel is believe and repent.

There is no salvation if there is no repentance.

There are plenty of false converts calling themselves Christians who have never repented.

But let me assure you...

Every single true Christian has repented of their sin.

That doesn't mean that we are delivered from sin, but it does mean that we fight it each and every day.

True Christians have truly repented.

***#3 - Christian reveal their faith to the world.***

Sadly, the meaning of baptism has been lost in many churches.

Baptism is not the moment of salvation.

Baptism is not the moment of justification.

You aren't saved because you have been baptized.

You are baptized because you have been saved.

Baptism is public identification with Christ.

It is declaring to the world and to the church that you have repented and believed the gospel.

Baptism tells the world that Jesus is your Lord and Savior.

And look, this is important because there are no secret Christians.

There are no Christians who are ashamed to say it publicly.

Christians are those who declare their allegiance to Christ through baptism.

An undercover Christian is a disobedient Christian.

Those who have inwardly repented and believed display that outwardly through baptism.

Let us pray.

II. The Church is Focused on Sanctification (41-42)

III. The Church is Founded on Worship (43-47)