

ACTS
Jesus Is Lord And Christ
Acts 2:22-39

Acts 2:14-39 gives the record of the first Christian sermon ever preached. The Apostle Peter stood before thousands of unbelieving Jews on the Day of Pentecost to explain to them the supernatural phenomena which occurred at Pentecost, especially, the gift of tongues (speaking in a foreign language). We probably do not have all the sermon Peter preached that day for it only takes about three minutes to read through it, and I cannot imagine any preacher giving a three minute sermon. Dr. Luke, under the guiding of the Holy Spirit, probably edited the sermon so that we would have the essentials of the message. God used Peter's sermon to convert three thousand souls, and, while we may never again see a single message used as this one was used, we can use this message as an example of the type of sermon God uses to convert sinners.

Peter's sermon was plain, pertinent, personal, persuasive and positive. The message was simple and not a word was uttered that a child could not understand. Peter was not trying to impress anyone with his brilliance, using a vocabulary that only hearers with a dictionary could understand. Peter's message was also sound because it was filled with quotes from the Old Testament. In fact, one-half of this recorded sermon is made up of scriptural quotations from the Old Testament, the Jewish Bible. All preaching should be Bible centered for the Bible is alive and God has promised to bless His Word.

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two- edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

“So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it” (Isa. 55:11).

It is the Bible which God uses to convert sinners and move the saints and not the preachers personality, philosophy, intelligence or opinions. Peter's sermon was also centered on the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, for Christianity is Christ. It is possible to take Buddha out of Buddhism and still have a religious system. It is possible to take Mohammed out of Mohammedanism and still have an ethical system, but it is impossible to take Christ out of Christianity and still have Christianity. Jesus Christ is not just some great historical person like Napoleon, Alexander the Great or Caesar. Christ is the resurrected Lord. He is a living person. He claims to be the only way to God. “Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me'”(Jn.14:6). Jesus Christ is not a historical memory but He is a living presence. Memories fade but Jesus Christ never fades. This is why Christ must be preached, for it is the goal of all evangelistic preaching to connect men with the Living Christ. A true Christian is not a person who knows about Christ, but who knows Christ, for Paul could say, “For I know whom I have believed” (II Tim. 1:12).

The Apostle Peter preached for three basic reasons to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost. First, he preached to explain that the supernatural phenomena on the Day of Pentecost was due to an outpouring of the Holy Spirit by Jesus Christ Himself. “Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear” (Acts 2:33). Second, he preached that this Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah and He is both Lord and Christ. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36). Third, he preached to the Jews who were under God's wrath for their sins and they must repent and accept the Messiah their only hope for salvation. “And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38). Fortunately, for us, we get to see the end of the message, getting a sneak preview, so we know how the crowd reacted to Peter's sermon. Seminary students are taught there are three basic rules for preaching a sermon: stand up, speak up and shut up. Peter never went to seminary so he did not know these rules. Peter never got to

the “shut up“. The crowd broke in and asked him “what shall we do?” before he ever finished his sermon or had a chance to give an altar call. When a crowd reacts in this manner, we know the Holy Spirit is mightily at work. What did Peter do to get this kind of reaction? He merely presented the truth about Jesus Christ. He did not argue. He did not get into abstract theology. He told the truth and God blessed the truth.

Peter's sermon had three basic parts: (1) an explanation concerning the phenomena of tongues (2:14-21); (2) a declaration concerning Christ (2:22-36); and (3) an application to the hearers (2:37-39). This was a simple message but it was packed with power. Perhaps Peter said more in this one message than many preachers say in a lifetime.

REVEALED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (Acts 2:14-21)

“But Peter taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: ‘Men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give heed to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: ‘AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAY, GOD SAYS, THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT UPON ALL MANKIND: AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS: EVEN UPON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT AND THEY SHALL PROPHECY. AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE, AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BENEATH, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. THE SUN SHALL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS, AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. AND IT SHALL BE, THAT EVERY ONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED.’”

As we saw last week, the first part of Peter's sermon was an explanation of the Pentecostal phenomena according to Old Testament scripture. Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32 to show that Joel predicted a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit and this was literally fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. This outpouring of the Holy Spirit should have been expected and welcomed by these Jews.

Peter stopped the Joel 2 quotation with the words “and it shall be, that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.“ In Joel 2, the word “LORD” is really Jehovah. Peter applied the word “Jehovah” to the Lord Jesus Christ. This was like dropping a bomb on these Jews. For “that Lord upon which men must call” for salvation was none other than the prophet who was crucified fifty days before in the city of Jerusalem, Jesus of Nazareth. Furthermore, Peter called Jesus “Lord,” making Him equal to Jehovah, which to the Jews was blasphemy.

The words must have angered many of the Jews listening to Peter, but Peter did not back down from the crowd. This crowd was not friendly to Christ or any of His followers. They were hostile and antagonistic to Peter because he called Jesus “Lord” and claimed that salvation was only in Christ Jesus the Lord.

REFERENCE TO CHRIST (Acts 2:22-36)

Jesus Is the Christ (2:22-32). Every good Jew knew that Messiah would come and sit upon the throne of David and rule as a glorious King over His earthly kingdom. The Jewish concept of Messiah was that of a political leader who would free the Jews from the yoke of Rome. Jesus of Nazareth did not meet their qualifications for Messiah and they rejected Him. Peter's point in this portion of his sermon was to prove that Jesus is the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament and He does qualify for the office of Messiah. The word “Christ” means “Anointed One” and is the New Testament equivalent to the Old Testament “Messiah“. Peter's whole point is that the ultimate, underlying cause of the coming of the Spirit was the direct result of the Messianic ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(1) His Life Proves He Is Messiah (2: 22)

“Men of Israel, listen to these words,” -- Peter exhorted these Jews to listen to what he had to say. Why?

Because Peter was speaking God's holy Word and men are to listen intently. Peter in the first part of this sermon said, "Give heed to my words" (2:14).

Hearers of a sermon are just as accountable to God to be good listeners as the preacher is accountable to God to be a good preparer. All Christians must develop the art of being a good listener.

"Jesus, the Nazarene, a man" -- Jesus was a man. He was a human being like everyone else yet He was without sin. Christ was not a specter, not a phantom and not a superman. He was a man, a normal man, and He had to be a man to qualify to be the Messiah of the Old Testament.

Peter was a good preacher because he started out his message where the Jews were. They saw Christ was a man and that was all.

"Attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst," -- God authenticated, accredited and approved Jesus Christ by the many miracles, signs and wonders that He did on this earth. Jesus healed the sick, calmed the sea, changed the water to wine, cast out demons, multiplied the loaves and fishes, and raised the dead. His miracles proved He was the Messiah of the Old Testament. This was the One of whom the prophets spoke and the psalmist sang. Miracles were part of the Messianic activity of Messiah. Even Nicodemus, a Pharisee, said of Jesus, "No one can do these signs that you do unless God is with Him" (Jn.3:2).

"Just as you yourselves know . . ." -- Many of the Jews saw Christ perform miracles, and very few of them really questioned He had supernatural powers but they said His power was from the Devil. In their minds, at best He was no more than a prophet but not the Messiah. They rejected Him as the Messiah and screamed out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

(2) His Death Proves He Is Messiah (2:23)

"This man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God," -- Peter clearly stated that the death of Christ and all the events surrounding His death were part of the plan of a sovereign God. His death was no accident; it was no fluke. Christ's death did not take God by surprise nor was it an afterthought in His mind because of man's sin. It was a definite part of God's plan. "For He (Christ) was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you" (1 Pet. 1:20). The counsels of eternity determined that Jesus Christ should suffer and die for sin and sinners.

Jesus Christ was no victim of circumstances in that He could not help the fact that He was put to death by His enemies. Who put Christ to death? Was it the Jews, or the Romans, or the Gentiles, or every member of the human race? Humans were just the instruments in Christ's death. Ultimately it was God who put Jesus Christ to death. Only God had the right to determine when and how Christ should die.

Why did God the Father put His own Son to death? This was the only way God could deal with the sin problem. Only God had the right to plan when and how the sin-debt should be paid and it was to be paid through Christ Jesus the Lord. God Himself has provided a way through His Son, Jesus Christ, whereby a man's guilt and sin may be borne by God Himself, and now those who are called by the Holy Spirit are free to come by faith and receive the forgiveness which is in Christ.

It was not only foreordained in the counsels that Christ should suffer and die, it was also predicted in the Old Testament that the Messiah should suffer as well as reign. Christ's death proves He is the Messiah. However, the Jews could not see how Christ could both suffer and reign so they just eliminated in their thinking any concept of a suffering Messiah.

"You nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death." -- Can you imagine the electrifying tension that must have come over that hostile Jewish crowd as Peter, with flashing eyes, emotion in his voice and pointing his finger said, "You nailed Messiah to the cross and put Him to death!" Even while Christ's death was

planned by God, the Jews were still responsible for their actions. Never read this passage as though the people who put Christ to death were robots, automatons and puppets who could not help themselves, who had no choice in the matter. No, they deliberately chose against Christ and because of their sin they became the instruments in the carrying out of Christ's death.

In Acts 2:23, we have a perfect example of the mystery of the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man placed side by side, taught as two truths and both in operation at once. As humans we have a hard time understanding how this all works out and we logically want to harmonize the sovereignty of God and the free agency of man but we cannot and we must not. God is sovereign and will do all His good pleasure and man is responsible for every choice and decision he makes. No person will ever stand at the final judgment and say, "I rejected Christ because You made me reject Him since I am not one of the elect." No, sinners will say, "I am a sinner; I chose against Christ; I am totally responsible for my sin and my decisions. I did not deserve election."

The words, "You nailed to a cross and put Him to death" must have got under the skin of these Jews but gospel preaching always does.

John Wesley would ask those returning from evangelistic meetings: "Were any saved?" If the answer was negative, he would then ask, "Did you make anyone mad?"

(3) His Resurrection Proves He Is Messiah (2:24-32)

"And God raised Him up again," -- This was the very first Christian sermon and the resurrection of Christ played a big part in it. The resurrection of Christ is not just an Easter Sunday theme. The resurrection should be a major part of all preaching.

Peter mentioned the resurrection because He had just explained how the life and death of Jesus Christ proves He is Messiah, and now~, because of the resurrection, it is absolute proof that all Christ said and did was approved by God. The resurrection attests to Christ's Messiahship.

"Putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power." -- Jesus Christ put an end to the agony of death by suffering that agony Himself. It was impossible for Christ to escape His death if He was to conquer death. Christ suffered the most horrible agony ever suffered, or ever to be suffered, to pay the sin debt and take away the agony of death for those who believe in Him. Christ, the Messiah, could not be held by the power of death because He rose victorious over sin and death. Christ has the key to death. "I am . . . the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (Rev. 1:18). He also sets men free from the fear of death.

"Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who has the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives" (Heb. 2: 14,15).

"For David says of Him, I WAS ALWAYS BEHOLDING THE LORD IN MY PRESENCE: FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, THAT I MAY NOT BE SHAKEN. THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXALTED: MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL ABIDE IN HOPE: BECAUSE THOU WILT NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES; NOR ALLOW THY HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. THOU HAST MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE: THOU WILT MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS, WITH THY PRESENCE" (Psa. 16:8-10).

Peter quoted from Psalms 16:8-10 in order to show that Psalms 16, while it appears to refer to King David, is really a reference to Jesus Christ. King David's soul did go to Hades (the grave or the place of death) and his body did undergo corruption or decay, so David's prophecy looked forward to Messiah of whom these things are true.

"Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us today. And so because he was a prophet, and knew ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the

Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay.” -- Peter explained the Psalms 16 quote. Psalms 16 did not refer to David but to Christ. David has not been resurrected but David was a prophet and God had given to him the great promise that He would raise up One to occupy his David’s throne forever (II Sam. 7:16).

It is possible to see the bones of Mohammed or Buddha or Abraham or Joseph Smith but it is impossible to see the bones of Jesus Christ because He has been raised from the dead and has ascended bodily into heaven.

“This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.” -- Peter claimed that all the disciples (probably referring to the one hundred twenty) actually saw the resurrected Christ. Right here in this verse is one of the greatest proofs of the resurrection. Apparently by this point in Peter's sermon, the crowd was stunned and in deep contemplation. No one apparently in the whole crowd lifted up a voice of protest to Peter's claim that the one hundred twenty saw the resurrected Christ. Peter stood up in Jerusalem where Christ had been put to death and was resurrected, a little more than a month earlier, and claimed that Christ had risen and not one voice challenged him. The Jews had not seen the resurrected Christ - He appeared only to His disciples - but they had known that the body was not in the tomb. They could go to the tomb and see for themselves. They knew the authorities could not produce the body of Jesus. These Jews had also heard the rumor that Christ had risen from the dead. Therefore based on the evidence, no one challenged Peter's claim to Christ's resurrection. Instead the people were mute and stunned as Peter drove home with force the truth of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Indeed, these unbelieving Jews were beginning to see that Jesus Christ was the Messiah.

Jesus Is Lord (2:33-35). The greatest of all blasphemies in a Jew's mind was for a man to claim to be God, but this is the claim that Peter made about Jesus. Jesus is Lord; that is, He is God; the embodiment of Jehovah of the Old Testament.

(1) His Exaltation Proves He Is God (2: 33a).

“Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God . . .” -- Jesus the Messiah ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven. Therefore, Christ has equal power, dominion and authority with the Father. Jesus has been given a name above all names as the second person of the Trinity. His name is Jehovah-God.

“Therefore also God highly exalted Him (Christ), and, bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth . . . (Philip. 2:9, 10).

(2) His Sending of the Holy Spirit Proves He Is God (2: 33 b)

“And having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.” -- As a reward for His faithful Messianic ministry, Christ received the Holy Spirit which He gave as a gift to the Apostles, the one hundred twenty and ultimately to all true believers in Christ. Christ shed forth “this“, the Holy Spirit. Ultimately what happened on the Day of Pentecost was due to the saving ministry of the death and resurrection and ascension of Messiah. Christ sent the Holy Spirit to His church. No mere man had the power to send the Holy Spirit; therefore, Christ is God.

(3) His Inferior, King David, Said He Is God (2:34, 35).

“For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but He Himself says: THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE THINE ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR THY FEET.” -- Peter cited Psalms 110:1 where David had envisioned the Lord (Jehovah) as bidding his Lord (Messiah) to be seated at His right hand. David himself had written this Psalm, and was talking about God and His Messiah. Whatever, King David called Jesus “Lord“, indicating He was truly God come in the flesh.

With these words “until I make Thine enemies a footstool“, Peter drives home to these Jews that they are enemies of Christ, and ultimately they will be defeated by Christ. Those who crucified the Messiah are the foes of God;

therefore, those who object to the ministry of the Apostles are also the enemies of God.

Are you an enemy of Christ? Are you guilty of modern day blasphemy? Do you reject Christ? Do you mock His death for sin and sinners? Do you deny His resurrection? Perhaps you accept Christ as a great teacher but not as the Lord-God. Perhaps you like Him as a moral guide but do not fall before Him as Lord and Savior. Perhaps you are an indifferent church member. You like the preacher if he tells good jokes or sad stories, but as far as paying attention to the Word the preacher gives, you pay little heed, seeing it as totally irrelevant to you. Perhaps you at one time came under a common work of grace from God and were at one time attracted to Christ, impressed with His moral teachings, awed by the Bible, impressed by the ethics of Christ but there came a time when you realized that to truly respond to Jesus Christ the Lord would demand a dramatic change in your life, therefore, you felt the price was too high and stayed in your old life style. Instead of being responsive, you turned cold and indifferent, hardening your heart to the Lord Christ. Christ will have the last word and will defeat every enemy who opposes Him!

Jesus Is Both Lord and Christ (2:36). “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified.” -- With these words Peter hits home to the crowd. This One whom He had proven to be Lord (God) and Christ (Messiah) was the One they crucified fifty days earlier. They undoubtedly felt guilty and understood that they were under God's wrath for this great sin of crucifixion of the Messiah.

Here is the first Apostolic creed - Jesus is both Lord and Christ (God and Messiah). Jesus Christ is the Eternal One who is sovereign over all, ruling in the affairs of men and the One who holds the key to life and death, heaven and hell. Jesus is also the promised Messiah who will deliver all men who accept Him from the guilt and penalty of sin, and He will take them into His yet future kingdom.

In this sermon, Peter just drives home the point that Jesus is Lord and Christ. Notice carefully there is no pleading, begging, no urging to take a stand, sign a card, or come down front, no sentimentality or playing on emotions. He only declared that Jesus is Lord and Christ and this is pressure enough on an unsaved man's soul.

As soon as it is stated that Jesus is Lord and Christ, every man must deal with Him who is truly God. Jesus is Lord whether men know it or not. No angel in heaven or demon in hell would deny this. All men presently in heaven or hell would dogmatically claim Jesus is God and Messiah. Because Jesus is Lord-God, the very forces which control men's lives today are dependent upon Him. Whether we know it or not, Jesus is Lord. The very forces which hold things together, the very forces which enable us to breathe and to think and to eat and to plan to live, are the forces held in His hand. Jesus Christ is the Inescapable One. All human beings born into this world will one day deal with Jesus as Lord. Whether one believes in Jesus Christ is really not an option at all, for all men will one day acknowledge Jesus whether they believe in Him in this world or not. Every human will one day face Christ at the judgment. Those who in this life acknowledge Christ as Lord and Christ, shall go into His eternal kingdom, and those who reject Jesus in this life will be cast into the eternal kingdom of hell, fully acknowledging at that time that Jesus is Lord and Christ but it will be too late!

REACTION OF THE CROWD (Acts 2:37)

Conviction (2:37.a). “Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart,” -- The word translated “pierced” means “to sting sharply, stun or smite.” Perhaps a good translation would be “stabbed“. The Holy Spirit put many in this crowd under conviction.

The ultimate success of Peter's preaching did not depend upon Peter's brilliance or his rhetoric but upon the work of the Holy Spirit. His success did not depend on the fact he preached the Word (although he did preach the Word) nor that he was filled with the Spirit (although he was filled with the Spirit), but upon the fact that the Holy Spirit touched men's hearts with the conviction of sin. Before there can ever be true conversion, a person must come under Holy Spirit conviction.

Concern (2:31b). “And said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren what shall we do?’” -- The crowd

under conviction and moved by the Holy Spirit, gave their own invitation. When men come under the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, they almost invariably cry out, “What must we do?” They realize they are sinners, separated from God, lost souls who are headed for the eternal wrath of God. The Holy Spirit tells them they must receive Christ or they shall perish because of their sins.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer was holding an evangelistic meeting when he first began preaching. About halfway through the sermon, a man stood up and said, “I’m saved. I just trusted Christ! I am a Christian!” Dr. Chafer said he panicked because the man was not supposed to get saved until after the message when he gave the altar call. This incident taught Dr. Chafer about the sovereign convicting, drawing and regenerating ministries of the Holy Spirit, and he stopped using the altar call soon after this incident.

RESPONSE FROM THE HEARERS (Acts 2:38, 39)

Change of Mind (2:38a). “And Peter said to them, ‘Repent’ . . .” -- The very first thing these Jews were to do to be saved (and man does do something) was to “repent“. Now do not let the word “repent” scare you. This word does not mean to feel sorry or cry or weep, but to change the mind, to change one’s thinking. Repentance is the first phase of truly believing in Jesus Christ. These Jews may have thought of Jesus as a great teacher, a profound prophet and even an exceptional man but they were to change their minds about Jesus and accept Him as Lord and Christ. They had deluded themselves about Jesus as Messiah and they were to stop rationalizing and accept Him as Messiah, God and Savior.

Peter did not say, “Give up sin, turn over a new leaf, do penitence, crawl on your belly to Lynchburg.” He said, “Repent,” that is, change your thinking about Jesus Christ. Accept Him as your Lord and Savior.

Friend, have you truly repented? Change your mind about Christ if you see Him only as a good man or a great teacher. Repent and make Him your Lord, Christ and Savior.

Change of Association (2:38b). “And let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins,” -- The second thing Peter told these Jews to do was to be water baptized. Water baptism is a public testimony of the inward reality of salvation. The word baptism in its secondary meaning is “identification” or “association.” They were to publicly associate themselves with Jesus Christ through baptism. For these Jews this meant they were severing their ties with traditional Judaism and associating themselves with Jesus Christ and His people. Baptism was the line of demarcation for it was the public testimony of commitment to Jesus as Lord, Christ and Deliverer.

At first glance, Acts 2:38 seems to indicate that repentance and water baptism are both necessary for the forgiveness of sins. The Greek can help us out a little, for it is possible to take the preposition “for” (heis) and translate it “because” (cf. 12:41). This could then be translated “be baptized because of the forgiveness of sins.” Repentance was the means to forgiveness and baptism was the outward evidence of true repentance. Furthermore, in Acts 10:43 it says, “Everyone who believes in Him has received the forgiveness of sins.” There is no mention of water baptism as a cause of salvation in Acts 10. Furthermore, if water baptism was necessary for salvation, this would be a work and the Bible is dogmatic on the fact that men are saved by grace and not by works. “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works that no one should boast” (Eph.2:8, 9).

There is a radical group today who are called “Jesus Only Group” who believe that unless a person is baptized in the name of Christ only he is lost. Such a doctrine, of course, is heresy. The Jews believed in Jehovah (God the Father) and accepted the Holy Spirit (God the Spirit) but they rejected Jesus Christ (God the Son). They thought Christ was an imposter and a false prophet. When they were baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ,” they were acknowledging He was God, the second Person of the Trinity. It is impossible to be saved unless one acknowledges Christ as the Lord-God.

“That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses,

resulting in salvation” (Rom. 10:9, 10).

Acts 2:38 does not teach baptismal regeneration but it does teach the importance of water baptism. Baptism is the New Testament way to express faith in Christ. The public confession of one's faith in Christ was not walking an aisle, raising the hand, standing to one's feet but water baptism.

Coming of the Spirit (Acts 2:38c). “And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” -- When a person repents and truly believes in Jesus as Lord, Christ and Savior (God, Messiah and Deliverer) he is saved, and at that moment he receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not come through weeping, wailing, begging, tarrying but through changing one's attitude about Christ and believing that He is Lord, Messiah and Savior. The Holy Spirit comes to make Christ real, living and dynamic to the Christian. Notice this says nothing about tongues but only promises the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit to all who accept Christ.

Call of the Lord (2:39). “For the promise is to you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself.” -- Peter told them that the promise of the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit was to all Jews and their children who truly believe in Christ. But the Holy Spirit is not only for Jews but to those “far off”; that is, to Gentiles and their children who truly believe in Christ.

“But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. . . So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and are of God's household” (Eph. 2:13, 19).

Notice carefully that the forgiveness of sins and the promise of the Holy Spirit are not the possession of everyone but only those who are sovereignly called by God to salvation. This verse tells us very plainly that we do not find God but that He finds us. If you are a believer in Christ today, you can rest assured your relationship with Him was not started by you but by God Himself. He convicted you, drew you and called you to salvation.

CONCLUSION

While it is true that the Lord Jesus does sovereignly call men to Himself, it is also true that “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” We cannot divorce the call of the Lord to salvation from the decision of the will to call upon the Lord for salvation.

At this very moment, unbeliever, do you feel Christ drawing, tugging and pulling at your heart? If you do, He is calling you, but you will never be saved until you call upon Christ to save you. You have to make a decision. You have to act, to decide to change your mind and identify yourself with the person of Jesus Christ by faith. The moment you receive Jesus as Lord, Messiah and Savior, God will give you the gift of the Holy Spirit. Quietly, silently and without demonstration, the Holy Spirit will come to live in you to give you the life of the Son of God and the power to live the Christian life.