

Fact Check: Reconsidering Popularly Misinterpreted Scriptures

Sermon #4: Acts 2:38 | Are Repentance and Baptism Required?

What is the Gospel?

- 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 gives us the saving gospel.
- Paul said, **I declare**, using a *knowledge-based* word, *ginosko*. That is, the Gospel is based on *facts* which Paul declares in these verses.
- This Gospel (good news) was **preached**. In conjunction with **declare**, Paul says that the Gospel is, “made known through words.” (Compare Romans 10:17).
- The Corinthians **received** the Gospel and therefore they **stand** in the Gospel (v. 1) and are **saved** (v. 2) because they did not **believe in vain** (i.e.: in emptiness), but rather had an object of their faith.
- The Gospel in which they (and I) stand is that-
 - **Christ died for our sins** (v. 3) - There is no Gospel without the propitiatory death of Jesus Christ. Either **Christ died for our sins** or we must die for our sins. Christ's death was not an example or a token, but a substitution.
 - **And that he was buried** – The Scripture gives a great amount of detail about Christ's burial, almost inordinately so. This is to show that *He was really dead*.
 - **And that he rose again** – He rose with ample evidence for any skeptic, and in doing so verified His role as **Lord both of the dead and the living** (Rom. 14:9).
- Anyone who will **confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved** (Rom. 10:9).

Does Acts 2:38 align with the Gospel?

- Acts 2:38 has clear requirements that *are outside the realm of faith*.
 - **Repent...for the remission of sins.**
 - **Be baptized every one of you.**
- Even if “word gymnastics” are done to make **for the remission of sins** be *because of the remission of sins*, two problems remain:
 - Peter never spoke of faith in the completed work of Jesus Christ.
 - Other Scriptures that call for repentance and baptism for the remission of sins are equally plain.
 - Does Matthew 26:28 mean “*because of the remission of sins*?”
 - What was John the Baptist preaching in Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3? –He was *not* preaching *faith alone*.
 - Jesus Himself spoke of the requirement of baptism in Mark 16:16.

- Acts 3:19 clearly ties repentance (though not baptism) with forgiveness.
- Ananias (a **devout man according to the law, having a good report with all the Jews** – Acts 22:12) instructed Paul to **arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins** in Acts 22:16

How theologians twist Acts 2:38 to make it fit the Gospel

Theologians force-fit Acts 2:38 into the Gospel in one of the following ways:

- They make baptism a necessary aspect of the forgiveness of sins.
- They make **for the remission of sins** mean *because of the remission of sins*.
- They make the baptism clause to be parenthetical, with a focus on repentance (which they require).
 - “*The dominant idea in 2:38 thus seems to be repentance, with the other elements following. Repentance leads to baptism, the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Spirit.*” –New American Commentary.
 - NOTE that, even with repentance being the dominant theme, it does not solve the problem that *faith* is NOT the dominant theme.
- They make repentance, baptism, forgiveness of sins, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, etc. to be synonymous terms with faith.
 - “In Acts, Luke presents saving faith, repentance, forgiveness, baptism, and the gift of the Spirit as interrelated aspects of embracing Jesus and coming to belong to the people of God in Christ.” –Faithlife Study Bible
- They make the hearers into those who have already placed their faith in Christ Jesus and are looking for the next steps.
- They talk about something else, typically with eloquence.

What Peter's sermon and Acts 2:38 are all about

- The word *repent* is used 34 times in the New Testament, but only three times in connection with Paul's teaching (and then easily connected to a post-Christian experience).
- The presentation of the Kingdom to Israel required national *repentance* displayed in Jewish *baptism*. This (and not the saving Gospel) is what the sermon in Acts 2 is about.
 - **Repent** is used in the *plural*, while **be baptized** is in the singular.
 - The *nation* was promised that **ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost**
- The problem goes away entirely when one *rightly divides the word of truth* (2 Tim. 2:15).