

Following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus came the Jewish feast day of Pentecost. A great number of practicing Jews and non-Jews who had embraced the worship of God were present for the yearly Jerusalem event in A.D. 30.

When the crowd gathered, Peter, one of Jesus' 12 inspired apostles, was the first to preach about Jesus and that he was now Lord because God has raised him from the dead.

Act 2:37 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. - *New King James Version*.

The listeners were convinced (believed) that Jesus is Lord. They would have no other reason to ask "what shall we do?" Peter said to repent and be baptized, steps two and three. Their faith led immediately to immersion in the Jewish baptistries near the temple mount.

Acts 2:41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. - *New King James Version*.

In repentance they changed their mind, in baptism they changed their standing with God and accepted his grace.

Peter did not say "Receive Jesus into your heart." This was never said to

those wanting to become believers during the years following the resurrection.

He did not say "Repent and believe..." They already believed.

He did not say "There's not a thing you can do; it's all been done for you." He was telling these inquirers what they had to do.

He did not lead them in "The Sinner's Prayer." It was not used until recent times and contradicts the Scriptures.

He told these believers to take two more steps and these would lead to the remission (forgiveness) of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. No repentance and baptism, no forgiveness or Holy Spirit.

Someone objects by saying, "But it says in John . . ." Let's stop right there. The Gospel of John wasn't written until 50 years later. The Apostle John was part of this preaching group in Acts 2 and would not be contradicting Peter with another message of salvation when he wrote 50 years later. An entire generation of believers had repented and been immersed for salvation before John wrote. Inspired John would not have been contradicting inspired Peter. The Holy Spirit did not tell Peter to include baptism and John that it was not necessary.

Another objector say, "Paul says in Romans . . ." Let's stop again. Paul wasn't even converted yet and didn't begin writing to churches for many years. Would Paul, the latecomer, be contradicting Peter's preaching by saying that forgiveness of sins came before baptism? Paul connected baptism with his own salvation when he quoted his teacher Ananias:

Acts 22:16 And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord. - *New King James Version*.

Anything Paul wrote must be understood in the light of what he did earlier. He, as a repentant believer, was baptized to have his sins washed away. That is in perfect harmony with Peter's pronouncement in Acts 2:38.

Be aware that Paul can be misunderstood. Peter warned believers in his day about misreading Paul:

2 Peter 3:15 . . . and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation - as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, (16) as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. - *New King James Version*.

Believers must make every effort to not be destroyed by misunderstanding Paul, thinking that he taught salvation before baptism.

The writing of the Old Testament was ended when Malachi penned his book about 400 years before the time of Christ. When Jesus lived and taught, the Old Testament was the only written Scripture. When Peter preached on Pentecost, the Old Testament was the only written word from God. The New Testament Scriptures did not start to be written for at least 17 years after Peter preached that first sermon.

If the message was only a spoken one for the first 17 years or so, wouldn't the Book of Acts have been written later, too? It was. However, the earliest believers obeyed the words of the living apostles and prophets. Acts is the history of what happened and was not the source of what happened.

The only inspired message from God was spoken by Peter and the apostles on Pentecost and following. These 12 spokesmen were unified: repentance and baptism for believers. There was no other gospel making the rounds. This was the sole route to having sins removed and was the message that spread from Jerusalem and around the Roman Empire.

A sophisticated objector may say, "There are English translations of Acts that says, 'be baptized *because* your sins have been remitted.' So not everyone agrees that baptism is for the remission of sins, but some believe that baptism is *because of* the remission of sins." This objector is correct. But wait.

A study was done of English translations of the New Testament by William E. Paul, former editor of *Bible Collector's World*. He found of the 293 translations examined, just three translated Acts 2:38 as "*because of* the remission of sins" or some similar wording. That is a ratio of 3 out of 293 or about 1%. Let me urge readers to go with the 99% who saw *for* the remission of sins or something similar and make whatever social adjustment necessary rather than cross into eternity with a 1% chance of being right.

Some believers substitute their feelings for obedience. They say, "I have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. I can feel it." Salvation has

two parts: the feeling part and the legal part. In that regard, it is like a marriage ceremony. The excitement comes with the personal relationship. But without some essential paperwork, there is no legal marriage.

Forgiveness takes place in the mind of God, not in our minds. Baptism is for forgiveness. It is like the paperwork at a wedding. Satan hates it.

"But what about all of those people who" A question like this was put to Jesus:

Luke 13:23 Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" And He said to them, (24) "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able."

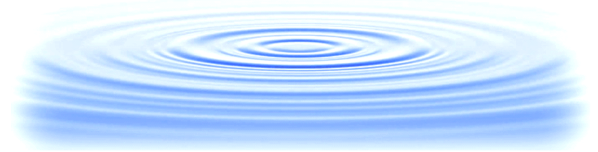
Jesus told the inquirer to be concerned about his own case, and not everyone else. He would not be a part of their judging game. Anyway, with God there is no safety in numbers.

On the other hand, baptism, when it's for the wrong reason may be like depending on an empty fire extinguisher. Some are baptized (sprinkled) when they are babies, others are baptized to join a church and yet others are baptized claiming they were saved by their faith and now want to be baptized. All of these are reasons different than given in the Scriptures.

It was our Lord himself that said in John 14:15, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Saving faith leads to immediate baptism for the remission of sins and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

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God's Word Says Immediate Baptism



Romans 6:3: Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? (4) Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. — *New King James Version*.