

Sermon Title: Be Saved!
Scripture Text: Acts 2:37-47 (Acts #7)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 2-26-23

Come with me, please, to the Book of Acts—where, Lord willing, we will finish Chapter 2 today.

So far in this book, we have seen how Jesus gathered "one hundred and twenty" believers in Jerusalem (1:15), after He had already met with some in Galilee. And before their eyes, He ascended to the Father after He promised again, for the final time, that He was going to send the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn. 14:17). Then that group stayed together in Jerusalem; and in the next several days, they prayerfully anointed a man named Matthias, and appointed him to fill the vacancy among the twelve Apostles that was created by Judas Iscariot having walked away, and then taking his own life.

It was at the Feast of "Pentecost" (2:1), which comes 50 days after Passover—which means it was 50 days after Jesus was crucified—that was when the Holy Spirit arrived, and what an arrival it was! It started out with a sound like a tornado or a hurricane—only there was no air moving; that started to gather a "crowd" (2:6). Then there was this ball of fire that broke apart and distributed itself, and "rested" upon "each" of the hundred and twenty who were there (2:3)—but it wasn't a fire that is hot and consumes (cf. Ex. 3:2); it was a symbol of the power of the Holy Spirit. And then the third miracle that accompanied that arrival was enabling those hundred and twenty people to begin "speaking" and declaring "the mighty deeds of God" *in languages that they did not know* (2:11), so that all the people who had come to Jerusalem for that feast began "hearing them" say these things in their own languages (2:6; cf. 1 Cor. 14:10).

A big crowd gathered—not surprisingly—and Peter stepped forward, along with the other eleven, and preached a marvelous sermon; it's Acts Chapter 2, Verses 14-36. It was the first evangelistic sermon in the Book of Acts. It was the first evangelistic sermon in the "New Covenant" era (Jer. 31:31; Lk. 22:20; Heb. 9:15; 12:24).

Peter did a masterful job with that sermon, the highlights of which are recorded by Luke. He did a faithful exposition of three Old Testament passages: He started with Joel Chapter 2, where he made the point that this arrival of the Holy Spirit was the next step in the kingdom program of God; and the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah meant that the Holy Spirit would now come upon those who believed in Him (Ezek. 36:27; cf. Rom. 8:9). And Peter made the airtight connection from Joel's prophecy, through what had happened that day, to specifically: Jesus of Nazareth.

Next, Peter showed that not only had the prophets like Joel predicted what was happening, but King David had predicted the resurrection of the Messiah. Peter did that with a little exposition from part of Psalm 16. And finally, he showed from Psalm 110 that the Messiah would ascend to the Father.

The conclusion of Peter's sermon was unmistakable. In Acts Chapter 2, Verse 36, he says: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know..." Now, He said that because his audience was a hundred percent Jewish; it extends from there (cf. Is. 49:6; Acts 1:8). "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified." (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted)

Sermon Title: Be Saved!
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To his Jewish audience, that was an *earth-shaking* declaration! Peter was asking his brethren to recognize that they had been *completely wrong* about Jesus! Their leaders had told them, "This man has to die!" (cf. Ps. 118:22; Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:7) And today, we are going to see the aftermath and the impact of Peter's sermon, when he calls them to a whole new direction.

Our text unfolds just as logically as did the sermon itself last week; so again, a long outline—but we will move quickly through it. We are going to see the Compelling Question in Verse 37, and then Compelling Answer #1, and then Compelling Answer #2, then a Colossal Response, Changed Lives, Corporate Testimony, and Continuing Evangelism.

Peter had them! They were absolutely rapt, and they wanted to take the next step; so, Verse 37—"Now when they heard this..." Heard what? "God...made...this Jesus whom you crucified" your Savior and your "Lord"! That's what they "heard." "When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' "

There's a slightly better way that I would translate that question; I would make it "What *should* we do?" The Greek is actually a subjunctive—and for the two of you that have a clue what that means, good on you—but they're saying, "What is the next thing that we really need to do?"

That same Holy Spirit who had produced those miracles of the sound, the fire, and the languages—that Spirit was now working individually in the hearts of thousands in that crowd (Jn. 3:3, 5; 1 Cor. 12:3b); and they wanted to know the right thing to do, now that they knew that "this Jesus" is *not* one who must be killed—He is the Messiah.

Well, they were "pierced to the heart." "Pierced" is a word that occurs only here in the New Testament; it describes something penetrating, something sudden, something unexpected. Peter's words—which, of course, were guided by the Holy Spirit—indicted them for their heinous rejection of the Messiah.

I remember as if it was yesterday, what happened long, long ago—the first time I heard the Gospel: "Pierced to the heart" is a good description of that, and I had never read Acts Chapter 2; I didn't know "Acts" was a book of the Bible!

It *grabs* you. It *pierces* you. And the right thing to ask is: "What should we do?" That shows how the Gospel works. When the truth of a person's guilt before God for their sin, and for not yet yielding to the Savior—that pierces the heart; it brings you to that question: "Now what?" Like Saul when he was knocked to the ground in Acts Chapter 9—"What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:10) That is the right question (cf. Acts 16:14).

And in our passage, the answer comes twice; it comes in different words. So let's look at Compelling Answer #1, the answer to the Compelling Question: Verse 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.' "

Sermon Title: Be Saved!
Scripture Text: Acts 2:37-47 (Acts #7)

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He *did not say*, "Look inside yourselves and follow your hearts." (cf. Prov. 28:26) He did not say, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life!" He said, "Jesus is Lord! And He is the Messiah! And He died, and He was buried, and He rose again, and He ascended to the Father, and he is coming again! *Repent!*" That's the most immediate and specific answer: "Repent."

"Repent" means to turn away from the evil that you had done (e.g., Jb. 28:28; Ps. 34:14; 101:4; Prov. 9:6; 16:17; 28:13 Is. 55:7). Remember when God sent John the Baptist, the first prophet in four hundred years? What was his message? "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). "You need to line yourself up under this King!" So, to "repent" means to "turn away" from the evil you have done (Ezek. 18:30; cf. Acts 3:26; Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9; 1 Pet. 4:2). It means to abhor the sins that you have committed (Ezek. 20:43; 36:31). It means to do a complete turnaround in your life, and to humble yourself under Jesus' teaching (Mk. 1:15; cf. Matt. 11:28-29; Acts 20:21).

Repentance is fundamentally a change of mind which is so complete that it changes your direction (Prov. 8:13; Matt. 3:8; Acts 26:20; 1 Jn. 5:3). The Greek word "repent"—*metanoia* the noun, *metanoēō* the verb—it means "to think after," "to have an afterthought," to change the way that you are thinking (e.g., Lk. 15:17-19).

So, true repentance encompasses, first and foremost, your intellect (Dan. 9:13; Jn. 20:27); it encompasses your will (Jer. 35:15; Hos. 14:1-2); and it encompasses your emotion (Ps. 38:18; 97:10a; Lk. 18:13). Your intellect is affected when you realize the "truth"—that we preach "truth" (2 Tim. 2:25-26). Your emotion is affected when you recognize your guilt for what you have done, and you sense the appropriate remorse for offending God (Ps. 51:4; Ezek. 6:9). Then your will is affected when you make the choice to do the right thing and to "follow" the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 9:9; cf. 1 Thess. 1:9).

The first way that a person who turns to Jesus Christ is to *show* that he or she has truly repented is the next command: "Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." That is the sign, that's the outward demonstration that a person belongs to the group that follows the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Jn. 2:4-5).

There is a false kind of repentance when a person dreads getting in trouble, fearing the consequences of sin (e.g., Acts 8:24; cf. Num. 23:10), but *true* repentance dreads *sin itself* (Rom. 7:21-24). False repentance doesn't want to get in trouble; true repentance realizes that in order to face God, your sin has to be removed and forgiven (Ps. 5:4; Is. 61:10; Rev. 7:14).

Something else Peter did not preach that day was, "You know, He gets us!" Peter did not mince any words! "*God made Jesus Lord!*" "They were pierced to the heart." "What shall we *do?*" "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ."

Peter and the disciples did not leave any room for "secret" disciples. "No, my friends, here we are out in public in the crowd in Jerusalem, right in the shadow of the Temple, right in the headquarters of the leadership of the men who told you to kill Jesus—and I'm calling you: No! *Turn around*, repent, be baptized in His name!" (cf. Mk. 8:38)

Sermon Title: Be Saved!
Scripture Text: Acts 2:37-47 (Acts #7)

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Date: 2-26-23

There is an interesting little nuance there, too. The verb "repent"—that command is plural. "I'm calling *everyone here* to repent!" That's the universal invitation (Acts 17:30). 'Jesus is Lord. He died for our sins. Repent.' Then he says, "and *each of you* be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ," and that is singular. So, yeah, there's the call to everyone—but you, individually, must "repent" and "be baptized."

Now, there's this phrase: "for the forgiveness of your sins"—and that, admittedly, is a battleground. If this was the *only verse we had* on how to be saved, we would think that baptism was required for salvation. This is the proof-text for people who believe that doctrine, called "Baptismal Regeneration": that you hear the Word, yes; you believe, yes; but you're not *saved* until you are baptized. There are other wrinkles of that: You don't receive the Holy Spirit until you are baptized; or, you don't enter the Body of Christ until you submit to water baptism.

And that interpretation, or all the wrinkles of it, ignores the historical context of this passage. *They* understood what it meant to be "baptized in someone's name." It means: "I believe what He says; I'm going to follow Him." Starting with John: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2), and then he introduced them to the King (Jn. 1:29). Jesus came and preached. What did He preach? "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17)—"Because I'm the King; I'm here." Baptism was a *dramatic step* to say: "I am declaring my allegiance." And Peter called them to be openly, publicly identified with Jesus through baptism (Prov. 28:1b).

Now, that was *serious*. I mean, it's a serious step for anyone; but in *their* situation, to be "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" would almost *certainly* result in them being expelled from the synagogue!

Remember the man in John Chapter 9 who was blind, and Jesus healed him—and in his case, He made it a two-step process, so the guy had to go wash to get the mud off of his eyes—so he had never seen Jesus. The Pharisees were after him, and they were saying, "Well, who is the man who gave you your sight?" And he said, "I've never seen Him! I can't pick Him out of a lineup." And they asked his parents, "Who is it that made your son see?" And they said, "Well, we know that's our boy; we know that he was blind; we know that he now sees—but that's all we're saying; you go ask him." And the text explains: because they feared that they would become unsynagogued—no longer welcome in the synagogue (cf. vs. 22).

That was to be expelled from your culture, from your world. And Peter called them to submit to public baptism *in just that same way*. You need to *declare* your allegiance! You can't have your feet in both worlds! It is either/or; it's not both/and (Matt. 12:30).

We can make an analogy: Remember, Jesus called the rich young ruler, if he said he believed it, to *prove* it: Give everything you have "to the poor...and come, follow Me" (Lk. 18:22). I don't know *anyone* who argues from Luke Chapter 18 that in order to become a Christian, you have to *first* liquidate all of your possessions! And yet, people say that "Repent...and be baptized...for the forgiveness of sins" means that you have to be baptized [to be saved].

Sermon Title: Be Saved!
Scripture Text: Acts 2:37-47 (Acts #7)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 2-26-23

I like the way John MacArthur put it in his commentary. He said: "Salvation is not a matter of either water or economics. True repentance, however, will inevitably manifest itself in total submission to the Lord's will." (cf. Matt. 7:21; 1 Cor. 16:22 with 1 Jn. 5:3)

Other passages of Scripture are quite clear: The Philippian jailer—in Acts Chapter 16, he asked Paul and Silas, "What must I do to be saved?" (vs. 30) If *ever* there was a point that you had to be baptized, that would have been the time to say it! And what did they say? "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (vs. 31). And they gave him the Gospel, and he believed, and he repented—and *then* he was "baptized" (vs. 33-34). Peter just mashes that together: "Repent and be baptized."

And we are going to see through the Book of Acts that forgiveness is *always* linked to "repentance" (e.g., 5:31; cf. Prov. 28:13); and we are going to see that people who hear and believe and repent, *then* become "baptized" (e.g., 8:12; 18:8).

That little preposition translated "for" in "for the remission of sins"—that makes some people stumble; but understand: Greek prepositions can have quite a range of meaning. It *can* mean "for the purpose of"—it *could* mean that, if you had other reasons to believe that; but it can also mean "on the occasion of."

Jesus used a similar construction in Matthew 12:41, where He says: "The men of Nineveh...repented *because of* the preaching of Jonah." He worded "*for* [at] the preaching of Jonah" just like "*for* the forgiveness of your sins" (Greek: *eis*). So, "repentance" is "for forgiveness"; baptism *follows* forgiveness (cf. Eph. 2:8-10), but it does not *cause* it (cf. Titus 3:5).

So, Acts 2:38-39; look at them together: "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.' That was the gift that had come that day! The same thing that transformed those hundred and twenty—He will transform *you*! He will come and live in *you*! '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.' "

That *same gift* comes to *everyone* who "believes" (Jn. 6:40). And he says "you and your children," and then those "who are far off..." "You and your children"—who was he speaking to? Jews in Jerusalem on that day that the Holy Spirit arrived. Those "who are far off"—*that's us*! "Far off" in the sense of *centuries later* (Jn. 17:20), "far off" in the sense of miles (Jn. 10:16), "far off" in the sense of *not even close* to having all that God has given to His people "Israel" (Eph. 2:12).

And in every case, the sovereignty of God is at work in who receives salvation. It is for "as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." (cf. Rom. 8:28; 9:24; 1 Cor. 1:24; 7:22; Gal. 1:15; 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 9:15; Jude 1; Rev. 17:14) That day, He called a whole bunch of them! Each day since then, He has continued to "call" people "to Himself."

The Compelling Question is: "What should we do?" Compelling Answer #1: "Repent, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins."

Sermon Title: Be Saved!
Scripture Text: Acts 2:37-47 (Acts #7)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 2-26-23

Now, Compelling Answer #2: Different words in Verse 40—"And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation!' "

We can tell from that verse that Luke recorded for us only an inspired synopsis of Peter's sermon. It surely lasted much longer than the few minutes it would take you or me to read Verses 14 through 36 out loud. We can only imagine how much dialogue went on between individuals in that crowd and the twelve Apostles, but we know it included "many other words"; and they were constantly bearing witness about Jesus, saying what they knew to be true about Him. And the verb form is quite clear: There was *a lot* of "exhorting" that kept on taking place. They were just calling people, calling people, calling people: "Submit to Jesus, your Lord."

There's that rather picturesque command there. This is the second Compelling Answer to the Compelling Question: "Be saved!" "Be saved from this perverse generation!"

Now, he didn't just make that up on the spot. That's an echo of a line from the Song of Moses, which is in Deuteronomy 32; and that was one of the passages that was quoted on a rotating basis in the synagogue, so they would have been familiar with it. There, in Deuteronomy 32—"They have acted corruptly toward Him" (vs. 5)—the "they" referring to the generation that had died; Deuteronomy was just before the next generation was to enter the Promised Land—"They have acted corruptly toward Him, they are not His children, because of their defect; but are a *perverse and crooked generation*."

That word translated "perverse"—that's from a Greek word; it's one of those ones that you almost know, but you have no idea that you know it as a Greek word. Have you ever heard of one diagnosed with "scoliosis"? Scoliosis is a curvature of the spine. If we take an X-ray of you from the side, you'll see that your spine has a curve to it; that's a good thing. If we take your X-ray from the front or the back, your spine *should not* have a curve in it; that's a bad thing—that's scoliosis. The Greek word *skolios* means "bent" or "crooked"; and Jesus used that verse and that imagery several times to describe the "generation" of the Pharisees and the Sadducees who rejected Him—the ones who said that "all the miracles He does, He does them by the power of Satan" (e.g., Matt. 9:34)—He called them "a crooked and perverse generation" (Phil. 2:15; cf. Matt. 17:17).

So Peter and the other Apostles were calling people to do *nothing less* than repudiate what their apostate leaders had taught them: to come to the Lord Jesus Christ, "Jesus of Nazareth." They did not mince words; the only options they gave were: in or out, yes or no, saved or lost, Jesus or anything else (1 Jn. 3:10a).

And *what a response!* It was unprecedented—a Colossal Response! Look at Verse 41—"So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls."

They didn't mince any words. They didn't water down anything. They didn't try to make it palatable and culturally relevant; there was no soft-pedaling the message (cf. Is. 30:10; Jer. 6:14; Gal. 1:10). Peter said, "This is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel.

Sermon Title: Be Saved!
Scripture Text: Acts 2:37-47 (Acts #7)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 2-26-23

This is the kingdom program of God. Jesus is the King! Are you going to come to the King, or not?" And he called them to make a radical, life-changing commitment. He called them to publicly *repudiate* the false teaching that they had been *steeped in*, and to declare allegiance to Jesus Christ. There may even have been—probably *were*—some followers of the Pharisees or some Sadducees in that crowd; maybe they came that day (cf. Acts 15:5).

But he did not say, "Now, we need to be a really inclusive group. There are different ways. People have different views about things." Yeah, they do—right or wrong (Prov. 14:12; 16:25; 30:12; Jer. 7:8; Matt. 7:13; 2 Thess. 2:12). Are you going to be right? Are you going to repent? He called them to the *one way* of salvation (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12); he called them to risk becoming *outcasts* from their culture and from their families (cf. Matt. 10:37). How *dare* he set the bar so high! You would think that would turn a lot of people off. Well, "about three thousand" made the commitment, made the public declaration through baptism.

Some people have said, "Well, that's not realistic! They could not have done that in one day!" Well, there has been a lot of excavation done around the First Century Temple in Jerusalem, and there are a whole bunch of little pools that are called a *mikvah*—plural *mikvim*; they were pools for ritual cleansing for people who would come and prepare themselves for offering sacrifices in the Temple. I kind of imagine each Apostle—maybe even others of the hundred and twenty—taking turns and manning all of those *mikvim* where there was water, with people lining up to be baptized; *what a scene* that had to be!

Would you file for future reference that this is the first time in the Book of Acts that mentions that the early Christians kept track of numbers and identities of people who committed to Christ. We have already seen that they knew there was "one hundred and twenty" (1:15); somebody counted. Now, there is "three thousand," and we are going to see them still counting. Just file that for future reference; we are going to come back to that later in the Book of Acts as we talk about some 21st Century applications.

The Compelling Question led to Compelling Answer #1: "Repent"; Compelling Answer #2—"Be saved"; The Colossal Response; and then, Changed Lives: Verse 42.

Luke seamlessly tells us that this new group of people *immediately* began to live out the commitment that they made on that day. Verse 42 says: "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer."

Who is "they"? The "three thousand" who were radically transformed. "They were continually devoting themselves..." There's a combination of a verb and a participle there; that means they were *relentlessly tenacious* about their new life in Christ and with one another.

They were tenacious about "the apostles' teaching." They didn't have a complete Bible yet; they didn't have a New Testament. "The apostles' teachings" are eventually codified in the rest of the New Testament—Romans through Revelation. But they did not have

Sermon Title: Be Saved!
Scripture Text: Acts 2:37-47 (Acts #7)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 2-26-23

those, so they hung on every word they could get from the mouths of the twelve who had been with Jesus all that time; and who were, by the ministry of "the Holy Spirit," being given "remembrance" of "all" the things that they had been taught (Jn. 14:26), and they were receiving new "revelation" (Rom. 16:25; Gal. 1:12; Eph. 3:3; Rev. 1:1).

They were likewise relentlessly tenacious about their "fellowship." This was a new spiritual partnership of believers who stimulated each other toward holiness and toward faithfulness (cf. Heb. 10:24). It includes encouragement (1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 3:13) and comfort (1 Thess. 4:18) and exhortation (1 Cor. 14:3, 31; 1 Tim. 4:13) and bearing one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2) and the simple joy of friendship among those with like-mindedness sharing "eternal life" (Mk. 10:30).

And they continued steadfastly in "the breaking of bread." That phrase in this verse refers to the Lord's Table (cf. 1 Cor. 11:20, 23-26)—or, "communion" (1 Cor. 10:16, NKJV). It says literally in the Greek "*the* breaking of bread," which denotes a *specific* "breaking of bread" that they had in mind, which they would have learned from "the apostles' teaching." We are going to see that term used a different way in a moment.

And it says they continued steadfastly devoted "to prayer"—more accurately rendered in the LSB as "to the prayers." It describes specific times that they set aside for prayers. And remember: They were devout Jews; they were devout enough that they had made a trek to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost, so these were people who were already serious about their faith; and now, they had repented and put that faith in Christ—but they would have already had the habit of coming and praying at specific times, so that continued.

So they had God's Word, plus fellowship, plus the Lord's Table, plus prayers—those are genuine evidences of genuine conversion following "Repent" and "Be saved."

That was a Compelling Question: "What should we do?" Compelling Answer #1: "Repent." Compelling Answer #2: "Be saved." Colossal Response: "Three thousand" were saved that day, and were baptized. Changed Lives.

And that leads to their Corporate Testimony. Can you *imagine* what this did to the city of Jerusalem? At feasts like Pentecost and Passover and the Feast of Lights, Jerusalem would swell to *many times* its normal population; there were *huge* crowds there!

And look at Verses 43 through 45. What an impact they had! It says: "Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe"—literally: "fear came upon every soul" (LSB), the appropriate reverence for God. They "kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need."

We are not told about what the "many wonders and signs" were. It refers to miracles. They are called "signs of a true apostle" in Second Corinthians 12:12. Maybe for the people who were *not* there—who did not *hear* the sound of the "violent rushing wind,"

Sermon Title: Be Saved!
Scripture Text: Acts 2:37-47 (Acts #7)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 2-26-23

who did not see the ball of "fire," who did not *hear* the different languages—maybe in the next days or so, similar miracles were performed. We don't know. We are going to see, in the next chapter, the Apostles performing a healing, and that is going to be another reason for more evangelism. But we are going to see more and more of that, not only in the next chapter but as we go on through the coming chapters.

This group was *totally* committed to one another. I like that description: they "were together and had all things in common." They looked out for each other. Remember: *Most* of them were far from home. We don't know how long they may have stayed in Jerusalem before they went home. But the description here means they shared generously with each other.

It does *not* mean that they became a commune. It does *not* mean that everyone liquidated their wealth and put it into a common pool (cf. Acts 5:4). It *does* mean that—and notice the qualifying phrase there—"as anyone might have need," others stepped up to meet the need.

And that led to, finally: Continuing Evangelism.

These final two verses are here to let us know that this was just the beginning of something that continued with tremendous power, spectacular impact. Acts 2:46-47—"Day by day"—so this was not a one-time thing—"continuing with one mind in the temple..." Now, that's not a surprise; it's the only place in Jerusalem at that time that you could *get* a crowd that big together. And Jesus had said this is "My Father's house" (Lk. 2:49; Jn. 2:16). Oh, can you *imagine* how that rankled the Pharisees and the Sadducees, when these hundreds and *thousands* of people keep coming to the Temple *every day*? What a testimony!

So, they continued "with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house..." And *that* time when it says "breaking bread," it doesn't say "*the* breaking of bread"—referring to the Lord's Table—they *ate* together; they just shared. "They were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved." (cf. Matt. 16:18)

They just lived their lives out in the open. And remember: A lot of them were far from home. I imagine those who lived around Jerusalem did a *lot* of entertaining, those days!

And what Jesus had said just before the Cross—the night before He went to the Cross—was now being *powerfully* fulfilled. It was that same night that He said: "Remember Me with this bread. Remember me with this cup; this cup is the New Covenant in My blood" (cf. Lk. 22:19-20). He *also* said these words, after He had washed their feet. Remember this, in John 13:34-35—"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Oh, *was that put on display*, right after that sermon on that day of Pentecost!

Sermon Title: Be Saved!
Scripture Text: Acts 2:37-47 (Acts #7)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 2-26-23

And you know what? It is *still* on display. We are those who were "far off"—Gentiles on *another continent*, in *another millennium*, with two millennia in between! And here we are: worshipping the same God, believing and preaching the same Gospel, standing in the same grace, empowered by the same Holy Spirit. And we need to live out the reality of our salvation in Christ.

Now, it *can't* be exactly the same. We don't have, several times a year, gatherings of *thousands* of people from out of town. What we do here on Sunday morning is the tip of the iceberg. Now, *we do* have a temple only about a mile from here, but we're not really welcome there, and we can't go there and do what we do.

But we can be steadfastly "continuing"—making it our *number one priority*—that we come around "the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42, NKJV); that we proclaim the Word: we do exposition of God's Word, just like Peter did on that day (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:2); and we study and we learn and we "grow" (1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18); that we have "fellowship."

Did you notice all those announcements that we made beforehand? We have a gathering after church; we have gatherings in homes; we have Sunday School; we have young people's gatherings. *We're committed to each other!* We are *family!* When I came to Christ, it caused a *rift* in my family—oh, but I had a much better family (Mk. 10:29-30).

The Lord's Table—we will keep doing that "until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). We do it regularly, tenaciously.

Prayers—praying for each other. We do a Prayer Guide every week; we send it out by email; we print it here. We pray every time we get together.

This is the best evangelistic plan of all time! Bearing one another's burdens, sharing; they see that we love each other; they know that we love Christ.

So let's pray:

Oh, Father, thank You for recording this. This is the beginning of our history—the history of the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ after He was raised from the dead and ascended again, at Your right hand. Oh, we yearn for Him to come—"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" May "Your will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven" as we seek to be faithful to You and what You would have for us. Please, our Father, do not let anyone leave here today, not being part of this wonderful spiritual entity: the Body of Christ, through faith in the one and only Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. Put the message of the Gospel in our hearts; make us ready to share it, we pray—and then give us opportunities, we pray, even this week. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.