

3,000 Conversions!

On the day of Pentecost the apostles, clothed with the Spirit of God, preached the first gospel sermon to the multitude that had gathered together at Jerusalem. The record of this sermon is found in Acts 2:22-36. About the sermon and the results that followed, we now observe several important items.

1. The apostles preached the gospel. We know this is so, because they were obeying the Lord's previous injunction to "*preach the **gospel** to every creature,*" Mark 16:15.

2. The fundamental facts of the gospel preached consisted of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Acts 2:23-33. This harmonizes with Paul's description of the "*gospel*" in his letter to the saints at Corinth,. Cf. I Cor. 15:1-4. Note: They did not preach opinions, relate personal experience, or tell death-bed stories.

3. As a result of the message proclaimed, the hearers were "*pricked in their hearts*" and they asked "*what shall we do,*" v. 36. Please note that the fact that they were "*pricked in their hearts*" necessarily infers that they **believed** the message they had heard about Jesus Christ. They would not have been "*pricked*" if they had not believed. Hence, they had faith, but faith only, and they sincerely asked "*what shall we do*" (meaning, what shall we do to be forgiven of our terrible sins in crucifying Jesus). Obviously, to them, in contrast to the "faith only" advocates of today, the belief in salvation by faith alone was not "a wholesome" doctrine, nor was it "very full of comfort!"

4. In answer to their question, Peter did not say "come to the altar and pray through," or "relate your experience of grace and let us vote upon your candidacy," or "sign a card," or "hold up your hands," or "walk down to the front and show that you have accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior," nor did he say "you believe, so you are already saved." Peter did say "*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,*" Acts 2:38. They were not baptized because "God for Christ's sake had pardoned their sins." Their sins were not pardoned, so they were commanded to be "*baptized for the remission of sins...*"

5. "*Three thousand souls*" who "*gladly received his word were baptized,*" Acts 2:41.

6. "*...the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved,*" Acts 2:47. Note: (a) Baptism is "*for the remission of sins,*" v. 38. (b) Being "*saved*" is tantamount to receiving "*the remission of sins.*" Therefore baptism **is** essential to salvation.

7. "*...the Lord added*" the "*saved*" to "*the church,*" Acts 2:47. They didn't "join a church;" they simply obeyed the gospel, and the Lord "*added*" them to His church.

8. Briefly, we point out that they **heard** the gospel preached; they **believed**, **repented** of their sins, were **baptized**, and were "*added*" to the church. They

constituted *“the saved.”*

Conclusion: Any preacher who preaches a different message, and give a different answer to that all-important, “what-shall-we-do” question is not a gospel preacher. Moreover, if you did something different in order to be saved than what they did then, your sins were not remitted, the Lord did not add you to His church, and you are not saved! You can only be today what they were then by obeying the same gospel they obeyed and in the same way. -B. Witherington

A Preacher of “Strange Things”

A certain preacher in approximately 53 A.D left a prison in Philippi, *“passed through Amphipolis”* enroute to Thessalonica, Acts 16:36-17:1. At Thessalonica, he went into a Synagogue of the Jews, *“reasoned with them out of the Scriptures,”* Acts 17:2, preached doctrines contrary to the people’s practice, was accused of having *“turned the world upside down,”* Acts 17:6, and escaped *“by night unto Berea,”* Acts 17:10, where he preached the same doctrines which he preached elsewhere, and had to flee that city also. He then went to Athens, Acts 17:15.

At Athens, he *“disputed...in the Synagogue”* with Jews, with *“devout persons,”* and *“in the market daily”* with whoever *“met with him,”* Acts 17:17. The learned men (i.e., *“certain philosophers”*) said *“he seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods,”* referred to his teaching as a *“new doctrine,”* and accused him of teaching *“strange things,”* Acts 17:18-20.

The *“doctrine”* this man preached was regarded as *“strange”* to many of the Athenians. This same *“doctrine”* is often considered *“strange”* today. Let us notice some *“strange things”* he preached.

1. He called the church *“the body”* (Col 1:18) and said that there was *“but one,”* I Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:4. He would not be popular today among those who say *“one church is as good as another.”*

2. He considered himself on an equality with Peter and the other apostles, 2 Cor. 11:5. On one occasion he mentioned Peter’s wife, I Cor. 9:5, apparently not knowing that Peter wasn’t even supposed to be married. He once wrote a letter to the members of the church at Rome, in which he mentioned many brethren by name, but said nothing about Peter! In fact, if Peter ever went to Rome, this preacher was seemingly unaware of it. And on one occasion he even withstood Peter *“to the face,”* and spoke of his hypocrisy regarding a certain incident, Gal. 2:11-14. He must not have known that Peter was Pope!

3. He was scathing in his denunciation of human creeds (*“other”* gospels), and even stated that preachers of *“other”* gospels would be *“accursed,”* Gal. 1:6-8. It was his conviction that the word of God was sufficient *“for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness,”* 2 Tim. 3:16. He wouldn’t fit well in our modern society!

4. He wrote much, and in his writings he referred to the music of the church as *“singing,”* Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19; I Cor. 14:15; Heb. 2:12; Heb. 13:15. He didn’t go in for instrumental music

in worship. “*Strange*” indeed!

5. He considered baptism a burial — not sprinkling or pouring, Rom. 6:1-5; Col, 2:12. Many churches today would not desire his services!

6. He even taught that some would fall “*from grace*,” Gal. 5:4. Perhaps he had never learned of the Calvinistic “once in grace always in grace” theory!

But in spite of all the “*strange things*” he preached, he loved the Lord, loved the truth, loved the church, loved the souls of men and women, and even gave his life for the cause of Christ. Who was he? This man was the apostle Paul — a member of the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). You can read about him in your Bible.

*** —B. Witherington

Tell Me Why!

If a lawyer finds a flaw in a title to property, and does not warn about it, he has not done his duty!

If a sanitary engineer discovers conditions dangerous to health, and fails to report them, he has failed his job!

If a doctor learns of a dangerous condition in our bodies, and does not properly diagnose it, we think he is a quack!

If a bank examiner knows of discrepancies in the accounts of the bank, and does not report them, he loses his position!

But if a preacher sees a flaw in our title to a home in heaven and warns about it; if he discovers conditions dangerous to our spiritual welfare and reports it; if he finds a diseased condition in our spiritual body and tells his diagnosis; if he finds a discrepancy in our spiritual account and reports it —many think that **he is just meddling and trying to find fault.**
—by F.L. Ramsey