

Good morning! As we continue our study in Acts, today we will see how the crowd responded to Peter's message in Acts 2. At the beginning of this chapter, the Holy Spirit came with power on all of the disciples while they were gathered in prayer. When that happened, it tells us in **Acts 2:4, "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."**



At that time, Peter stood up and gave a powerful message. Peter's argument was concise, powerful, and personal. Peter reviewed the basic facts of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and explained that all that had happened was necessary for the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. Peter further explained that the coming of the Holy Spirit was also a fulfillment of prophecy. And, after giving clear proofs that Jesus is Lord and Christ, Peter made sure that every person in the crowd knew that the message was for them personally by emphasizing that, "you," killed Jesus. **Acts 2:36, "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."**



How did the crowd respond to Peter's message? Let's read Acts 2:37-47 and find out.

#### I. Scripture Reading Acts 2:37-47, NIV 1984

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." 40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

#### II. Teaching

Peter's message had a huge impact on the crowd. In **Acts 2:37**, we read, "**When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'**" They were cut to the heart. Why? Because they were convicted of their sin by the Holy Spirit. Suddenly, they realized that they were sinners who desperately needed a Savior and they cried out for help, saying "**Brothers, what shall we do?'**"



The Holy Spirit is a peacemaker, bringing peace between God and men. But before we can receive that peace, we have to realize our need and repent of our sins. Do you remember what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit in **John 16:8**? Jesus said, "**When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.**" Bringing hard-hearted and proud people to repentance is one of the

greatest works of the Holy Spirit.

The crowd was convicted of their sin and they asked Peter what they should do. In **Acts 2:38** we read, **“Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”** The Holy Spirit is a peacemaker, but we need to receive this peace through confession of our sins, repentance, and obedience to all that God has commanded.



Usually, the decision to be baptized is one of the first steps of obedience for a new Christian, but it is not the ceremony of baptism that saves us. Rather, we are saved when we turn away from sin and turn to Jesus Christ and invite Him to be Lord of our lives. When we trust in Jesus as our Lord and call His Name asking for forgiveness of sins and salvation, then we are saved and we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Salvation is freely given to all who call upon the Name of the Lord. In the first part of his message, Peter quoted Joel 2:32 in **Acts 2:21**, saying, **“And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”** Now Peter continues his message saying (**Acts 2:39**), **“The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”** Clearly, Peter’s message is also for us today and for all people everywhere. We all need the gift of salvation and, praise the Lord, the Lord freely offers the gift to all. Paul emphasized these same things in **Romans 3:22-24**, **“This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”**

On that first Pentecost day, Peter’s strong message and continued exhortations brought many to repentance and to faith in Jesus Christ. **Acts 2:41** tells us, **“Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.”** Wow! Praise the Lord! In July, we had the joy of celebrating four baptisms at the beach and that was wonderful, but three thousand baptisms in one day would be a really big celebration. Of course, whether it is one person or a thousand, we rejoice whenever people come to faith and receive baptism in obedience to the Lord’s command.



I think it is very interesting that the first church in history was a mega-church. They started with about 120 disciples, but the Holy Spirit came upon them and on that first day of public preaching, about three thousand new believers were added to their number. We have about 120 adults here at OIC on a typical Sunday, can you imagine what it would be like to add 3,000 new believers in one day? That would be very exciting, but it would also be overwhelming. How would that work? Well, let’s look at what they did.

**Acts 2:46** says, **“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.”** Notice, first of all, that they had large meetings every day in the temple courts. These large meetings were held in a public place where anyone passing by could join in, and probably consisted mainly of preaching and teaching and the singing of Psalms. Second, notice that they also met in homes and ate together, enjoying fellowship and a shared life. This dual format of large meetings and small meetings allowed them to have quality teaching and preaching and a strong public witness through the large meetings, while close friendships and personal ministry were maintained through the home meetings.

Although our church is small, this is actually similar to what we do here at OIC. Our large meeting is on Sunday morning, but we also have small group meetings nearly every day. Now, I know we are all very busy. But I want to challenge you with a thought. If you are not participating in a small group, you are missing out on half of our OIC church life. It is mostly in the small groups and on the Alpha Courses that close friendships



are made and that people learn to pray for one another and encourage one another. We will talk more about these things next week, but if you are not already in a small group, then I want to encourage you to start praying about joining one so that you can experience more of the Christian life.

Let's read Acts 2:42-45 one more time and think about what the lives of the new believers were like. What kind of changes had come into their lives? **Acts 2:42-45, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need."**

We are not told a lot about the lives of these people before they believed in Jesus and received the Holy Spirit. But I think we can say for sure that their new lives as Christians were very different than their old lives. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the new believers in Acts 2 experienced a changed life, they were born again. Their values changed. Their priorities changed. They had new friends; actually, I should say new family – brothers and sisters in the faith. They had a hunger for the Word of God and their hearts were moved to be generous in the extreme, sharing all things.

If I can share a little of my personal experience, I would say that although I still struggle in many ways, I am easily able to identify major changes that came into my life after I believed in Jesus. First of all, my values and priorities changed dramatically. Reading the Bible became a top priority, I was thirsty for the Word of God. Attending church and spending time with other believers became very important to me. I experienced miracles in my personal life. One of those miracles was receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit and another was being miraculously cured of alcoholism. Another change was that I developed a strong desire to be generous, and Karen and I began to give regularly to the church and to friends and family also.

I remember that one day a friend mentioned that he and his wife needed a computer so that she could work at home. So Karen and I prayed about it and then went to the store and bought a computer and gave it to them. On another occasion, a church we were attending for the first time was raising money to get a new meeting place and Karen and I prayed and wrote out a check on the spot, even though we had never been to that church before. Then, years before we knew we were coming to Japan, the Lord began to prepare our hearts and our lifestyles for ministry. We made it a goal to get out of debt and to be generous in giving and to become dedicated savers as well.

One day I drew a little diagram like this on a piece of paper and made it our goal. This diagram set a budget goal for our use of our income, 25% giving, 25% saving, and 50% left over for our living expenses. This wasn't the result of deep thought. It was more like the diagram came from a simple prayer of, "Lord, what do you want us to do?" We prayed and then the Lord put this on my heart as the goal we should work toward.



Please understand that these are things the Lord did in our lives. God is really the One who did it, not us, so please don't try to give us any credit for it. But I wanted to share it with you as a concrete example of how God changed our lives. Before I became a Christian, I would never have imagined setting a goal like this. But after I became a Christian, it was like, "Hey, I think this is what the Lord wants us to do," so we made it a goal. Then, after some transition time of simplifying our lifestyles, the goal became a reality and we did this for some years. When we came to Japan as missionaries, we were not able to continue this budget and we needed to start spending the savings, but I think it is okay, because I think this was all part of the Lord preparing us to serve Him.

Please don't get the wrong idea. I am not saying that you can or should make your budget look like this. But what I am saying is that when you really believe in Jesus, your lifestyle and values change. May I ask you, are you a follower of Jesus Christ? If so, how has knowing Jesus changed your life? The Christian life is a new life, a born again life. If we have truly come to know Jesus, then we should be able to identify changes in our lifestyle, attitudes, and values. Now, if you came to faith when you were a young child, perhaps you cannot remember what your life was like before you trusted in Jesus. But if you came to faith in

Jesus as an adult, I think you should be able to see many changes in your life.

In John Chapter 3, Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. Take a look at what Nicodemus said in **John 3:2**. **“He came to Jesus at night and said, ‘Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.’”** Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish ruling council. He was a religious and political leader. He had status and he was probably wealthy. Nicodemus even believed that the miracles of Jesus were real and that Jesus was a teacher sent by God. But none of that was enough to bring salvation to Nicodemus. Do you remember what Jesus told him? **John 3:3**, **“In reply Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.’”**



Nicodemus had grown up believing in God and he even believed in Jesus as a teacher and a miracle worker. But Nicodemus was still not saved. Why? Because believing in Jesus as a great teacher or religious leader is not enough. Believing that Jesus is a messenger sent from God is not enough.

Let’s think about Nicodemus for a moment. Nicodemus was a Pharisee; he knew the prophecies about the coming Messiah. Nicodemus also knew about Jesus’ miracles and he accepted the miracles as evidence that Jesus had been sent by God. So, Nicodemus wanted to meet Jesus. But he was unwilling to risk being criticized by others, so he came to Jesus at night. He didn’t want anyone to see him visiting Jesus. Nicodemus is curious about Jesus, but he does not come to confess his sins and repent. And Nicodemus does not call Jesus Lord or Savior. Nicodemus did not have a changed life.

Now, you don’t need to raise your hands or anything. But I do want to challenge you with a question, “Are you a Nicodemus?” I am not trying to criticize anyone or scare anyone. But I am deeply concerned for many of you, because I fear that there are many people like Nicodemus in most churches around the world and more than a few right here at OIC.

If the people you work with do not know you are a Christian, then you might be a Nicodemus, coming to Jesus secretly because you do not want to be criticized by others. If you think of Jesus as a great teacher that you enjoy learning from, but you do not think of Jesus as Lord of your life, then you might be a Nicodemus. If you think of Jesus as a wise, religious leader, but you do not feel the need to confess your sins to Him and cry out for mercy, then you might be a Nicodemus. If you grew up in a religious home and have trouble admitting that you are a sinner who needs God’s grace and mercy, then you might be a Nicodemus. If you said you believe and got baptized, but your life has not really changed, then you might be a Nicodemus.

If you are a Nicodemus, then you are in a dangerous place, because Nicodemus was not yet saved. However, I say, “Nicodemus was not yet saved,” because I believe that Nicodemus was saved after this. I think the day came when Nicodemus was ready to stand in the light and shout out in the street, “Jesus is Lord!” But until that day came, Nicodemus was still lost in his sins.

### III. Conclusion

This morning, I want to encourage you to examine your own heart. Are you a Nicodemus? Only you and God know for sure. But if you think you might be a Nicodemus, then it is time to change. **Romans 10:9** says, **“That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”** To be saved, we need to recognize that Jesus is far more than a great teacher or religious leader, Jesus is our Lord and our God. To be saved, we need to believe that Jesus has power and authority over sin and death – and this is exactly what the resurrection of Jesus proves so clearly. Trust in Jesus as Lord of your life and confess to everyone around you that He is your Lord and Savior, confess your sins, repent, and trust Jesus to forgive your sins, believe in the resurrection and you will be saved.

By placing your faith in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you can experience a changed life, or a

better way to say it, is you can experience an exchanged life, because the old life is gone and a new life comes. You can be born again and you can be certain of your salvation. Christians are not perfect; we fall short and sin in many ways. I am embarrassed to admit it, but personally, I blow it all the time. Every day there is something that I say or do that causes me to cry out again, "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner." Pray for me, that I might really learn to live a holy life before the Lord. Christians need prayer, because we struggle in many spiritual battles. But, although we may struggle in many ways, if we have really committed our lives to Jesus, then we should be able to see how our relationship with Jesus has changed our lives.

If you are cannot say how knowing Jesus has changed your life, then maybe you need to ask yourself whether you are really sure that you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior. That is not for me to judge, it is between you and the Lord. But if you have any doubt about the reality of your relationship with Jesus, or if you do not have assurance of your salvation and the evidence of a changed life, then I want to encourage you to renew and deepen your decision and make sure it is real. Jesus Is Lord. Say it. Believe it. And be saved. Let's pray.

#### IV. Prayer

Dear heavenly Father, Creator God,

Thank you for the privilege of coming together for worship on this day. Thank you for the Holy Scriptures that teach us the way of life and lead us to Jesus, the author of our salvation. Thank you above all for the cross of Jesus and the salvation that you have prepared for all who trust in Jesus as Lord and God. We praise the Name of Jesus, Son of God and God the Son, our Lord and Savior. Lord, come now and help each of us to examine our own heart. If we are not truly in the faith, if we are not saved, reveal that to us by your Holy Spirit and move upon our hearts that we might fully trust in Jesus and proclaim Him as our Lord. Forgive our sins and wash us clean. Draw us near to you and help us to walk with Jesus always. Fill us with your Holy Spirit and transform our lives so that we bring glory to your Name in all that we say and do. Bless each and every one with your grace and mercy. Fill our hearts with your love. In the Name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.