

# PRAISE FOR SALVATION

**DEVOTIONAL READING:** Acts 2:37-47

**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:** Acts 2:32-33, 37-47

**TODAY'S SCRIPTURE:** Acts 2:32-33, 37-47

## I. A Divine Plan

### Acts 2:32-33, 37-40

**<sup>32</sup> God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. <sup>33</sup> Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.**

**<sup>37</sup> When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”**

**<sup>38</sup> 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. <sup>39</sup> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”**

**<sup>40</sup> With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” <sup>41</sup> Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.**

32. The Jewish people were expecting a king in the likeness of David, not *this Jesus*. The people expected their Messiah to deliver them from Roman rule and “restore

the kingdom to Israel” (Acts 1:6). Instead, Jesus was a humble servant who had no palace. He came to provide forgiveness of sins and a better kingdom (John 18:36).

The people might not have recognized the arrival of the Messiah, but that was all in the plan of *God*. The death of Christ was no accident.

That plan included raising Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:23-35). The apostles were *witnesses* to this event. They had seen Jesus alive again and had watched him ascend to Heaven to sit at God’s right hand.

33a. To be at *the right hand* of someone is to be in the position of honor.

33b. Just before returning to Heaven, Jesus reminded the disciples of his Father’s plan to send them *the promised Holy Spirit*. God began to fulfill this promise as he poured out his Spirit in Acts 2:1-4.

The phrase *what you now see and hear* points back to the evidence of the audible and visual phenomena of Acts 2:2-4. To correct a misinterpretation seen in Acts 2:13, Peter quoted from Joel 2:28-32 in Acts 2:16-21. That prophet had pronounced one of the greatest of all prophecies of Christ’s church. Joel foresaw Judah devastated by a terrifying locust plague (Joel 2:1-11). Yet God promised to remove the plague and pour out his blessings if the people repented. In looking into the distant future, Joel also said that God planned

to do more than restore crops: he also promised to pour out his Spirit (2:28-29).

Peter's message is often called the first complete gospel sermon because it was the first public announcement of the significance of Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.

37. This gospel message penetrated like a sword. Many came to the painful realization that God sent Jesus out of love for them but they had rejected him. Even though they had not personally driven the nails into his hands and feet, they had either agreed with those who did or they had approved of the crucifixion by their silence.

Though we probably think of the reaction of being *cut to the heart* as little more than a gut feeling, certainly many in the crowd had their hearts prepared to receive correction from the Lord. A heart that is willing to ask *what shall we do* is prepared to discover the rich blessings of God.

38a. Throughout history there have been moments of truth in which people were faced with the stark choice of either walking away from God or toward him. A hard-hearted, prideful individual will not admit wrongdoing. But through repentance, that person can find peace with God. Instead of denying, excusing, or justifying sin, people must admit it and turn from it.

38b. Paul explained that to *be baptized* was to be "buried with [Christ Jesus] . . . into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead . . . we too may live a new life" (Romans 6:4). He further noted that "all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:27).

There is nothing magical about the waters of baptism. Baptism is God's chosen time when regeneration and renewal happen. Baptism is not a human work of merit; it is a work of God.

38c. The most important thing anyone

can do when reaching the age of knowing that they have sinned against God is to have those sins forgiven. The wonderful thing is that God is willing to forgive us *and* to help us resist future sin. The former (justification) happens through Christ; the latter (sanctification) happens through the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:11).

38d. With *the gift of the Holy Spirit*, Christians have the power to put off the works of the flesh and to bear the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25). Peter's sermon foreshadows the church's submission to the leading of the Spirit in the book of Acts and beyond.

39. Those who heard this sermon likely understood *all who are far off* to refer to Jews who had left Israel in the diaspora (the dispersion of Jews beyond Israel). That dispersion was not limited to the exiles of 2 Kings 17:6 and 25:21. The reality of the diaspora is a context of the first century AD, with Jews living all over the Roman Empire (Acts 2:9-11; James 1:1).

In Acts 8 and 10, there was questioning about the nature of God's *call*. Christians of Jewish background initially believed that Jesus had come to redeem only Israel. But throughout Acts, the Spirit led messengers to take the gospel to Gentiles as well.

40. The word translated *corrupt* is also translated "crooked" in Luke 3:5. That's the idea in Deuteronomy 32:5, which refers to "a warped and crooked generation." Christians must shine in a sin-darkened world and keep themselves "from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27).

## II. A Divine Change

### Acts 2:41-47

**<sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.**

**<sup>43</sup> Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All the believers were to-**

**gether and had everything in common.** <sup>45</sup> **They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.** <sup>46</sup> **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,** <sup>47</sup> **praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.**

41. Jerusalem's population was 60,000–80,000 at the time. With the annual observance of Pentecost, the number would have been temporarily much higher. The *three thousand* who *accepted* Peter's message were a small fraction of those who could have. Their influence in Jerusalem and their hometowns located in the regions listed in Acts 2:9-11 could be enormous.

42a. Decisions changed lives and eternal destinies. The new Christians *devoted themselves* to things they had not done before. They heeded *the apostles' teaching*. Jesus had promised that the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles "into all the truth" (John 16:13). They passed those truths along as they taught about Jesus. That life-changing message, remains the very center of the Christian faith. True teaching is important!

42b. The new Christians' steadfastness in *fellowship* is still a model for today. We have the privilege of belonging to the greatest family on earth as we work together to spread the good news. When Christians pool their time, talent, and treasure into the gospel task, we can say they are "fellowshipping" in the gospel.

42c. *Breaking of bread* could refer either to a meal or to the Lord's Supper.

42d. Although *prayer* is mentioned fourth, that doesn't mean it's the least important! Whether prayer was offered by an individual (Acts 26:29) or by a group (12:5), these earliest believers realized

how important prayer was to their new relationship with God. And so it is today.

43a. Upon hearing the words of Peter and seeing the transformed lives, many present in the Pentecost crowd seemed to have been *filled with awe*. When the crowd realized they had rejected and killed the Messiah, they may have even been filled with fear, respect, and reverence.

43b. God continued to shake Jerusalem by empowering *the apostles* to do miracles. The miracles were wonders because those who witnessed them were amazed. They were signs because they pointed people to the truth about Jesus.

44-45. One of the most important characteristics of Christians is generosity. These earliest Christians *had everything in common* indicates that they shared their possessions, going so far as to sell property and give as anyone *had need* (Acts 4:32-37). These new Christians seemed to have lingered in town to continue in fellowship. Provisions would have likely run out for some. God helps the needy, and Christians must be like-minded.

46. These Christians found strength in getting together *every day*. Meeting in one another's homes was more conducive to sharing meals and personal interactions. The *sincere hearts* that led to or resulted from such gatherings set them apart from the rest of the world. This happened as a natural outflowing of love, helping bind together those of "faith as precious as ours" (2 Peter 1:1).

47. Public meetings in the temple meant that these Christians were not huddling together in secret. Their public witness gained them *favor of all the people*. To have a good reputation with outsiders is important for attracting them to Jesus. *Their number* continued to grow *daily*. As the Christians succeeded in being a strong, loving witness to the community, they also had God's approval.

# INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

## PRAISE FOR SALVATION

### Into the Lesson

Complete one of the following statements:

*A church service I'll always remember was . . .*

*The most exciting crowd I was ever in was . . .*

*A surprising experience I can't forget was . . .*

*The best concert I ever attended was . . .*

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Today we're going to look at an unprecedented experience. How people reacted is informative some 2,000 years later.

### Into the Word

Each statement below concerns one facet regarding the birth of the church as recorded in Acts 2:32-33, 37-47, but they're in the wrong order of occurrence.

- Concerned about the needs in their group.
- Claimed favor with everyone around them.
- Committed to what the apostles taught
- Connected with new members daily
- Convicted by God's presence among them
- Constant in fellowship with one another
- Continued daily to meet with each other.

Read the following statements and summarize each statement to reinforce the lesson text and what has been learned:

1—Why the Jews were in Jerusalem:

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2—What happened to get their attention:

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3—What Peter told his Jewish audience:

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### Into Life

Look again at the seven statements in **Into the Word** section. Compare and contrast the experience of the church initially established with the experiences of your congregation. What conclusions can you draw?

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What practices should be continued today and how might they be enhanced?

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### THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

God can transform those who have ready hearts.