



“What Shall We Do?”

**Kevin Presley
Jesus Saves Series
Sermon 1**

We concluded a series of lessons last week entitled *Preaching Jesus*. Who was Jesus? What did He come to do? Who did He claim to be? We learned that His disciples preached Him as the Son of God, the promised Christ, Lord over all, and King of all kings. In describing Jesus as all of these things, they presented Him as the Savior of the world. When His impending birth was announced to Joseph, the angel said His name would be Jesus.

Matthew 1:21 “And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”

Before Jesus began His ministry, John the baptizer said He was *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world* (**John 1:29**). When Jesus Himself began to preach and prepare the world for the coming of His kingdom, He described His mission to this earth in this way:

Luke 19:10 “for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

He made salvation possible through His vicarious death on the cross—that is, offering Himself as a sacrifice to atone for sin—through His burial and His resurrection, triumphing over sin and its greatest curse, death. He then returned to heaven and began reigning over the kingdom that God the Father gave to Him, and told the apostles that He had chosen them to go and preach or announce to the world the good news that all of these things had come to pass.

Mark 16:15 “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”

Matthew 28:19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,”

The long promised and long-awaited salvation of fallen humanity could now be realized fully, in and through Him. Just a few days later, the apostles—now filled with the Holy Spirit—began to proclaim the crucified, risen, and exalted Christ to the world, beginning with the Jewish nation and, ultimately, to every other nation under heaven. This is what **the book of Acts** describes for us: the beginning and ever-expanding reign of Jesus Christ as King. The establishment of the church of Christ here on this earth in AD 30 and its development and its rapid growth. As the gospel accounts describe the work of Christ on this earth, **the book of Acts** describes what happened when Christ and His work was preached to a lost world. The message of those men was that Jesus reigns and Jesus saves.

This new series we’re starting today will be entitled *Jesus Saves!* We will spend several weeks, if the Lord wills, studying **the book of Acts**. We could spend months or years in the book discovering so many things about the Lord, His apostles, and His church, but we’re going to focus on the activity of the apostles and evangelists of those beginning years. What happened as they began in Jerusalem and eventually spread throughout the Roman Empire and the world preaching the saving message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified and risen again. As they fulfilled the great commission and went throughout the world making disciples of people from every nation, what did that involve? In particular, how did people respond to their preaching? How were they made disciples? Does the model they followed match the model that many preachers and churches follow today? Seriously think about that question as we go through our study. As the apostles preached, they were often met with the question, *What shall we do? What must we do in order to be saved?* We’ll begin our series with a look at that question. It was first asked on the Day of Pentecost when Peter preached the first sermon after the resurrection and ascension of Christ.

Acts 2:36-37 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” 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?””

It was not enough that they were told who Jesus was. How were they to respond to that preaching? How did the apostles answer their question? How does your preacher answer that question? I think we’ll discover that how Peter answers the question here is how the apostles answered it everywhere else they went. That question is vital.

When the disciples preached Jesus, it generally elicited some kind of response. Their preaching was powerfully convicting, so that it would’ve been difficult to be indifferent to it. That doesn’t mean that everyone accepted their message, but they did meet with strong reaction when they preached the salvation and lordship of Jesus Christ to the world. Many of the religious leaders strongly rejected their preaching and tried to silence them. Many in the Greek world laughed at their message, dismissing it as foolish talk. But thousands upon multiplied thousands of people believed what they were preaching and became disciples of Christ and followers of the way. What happened when people received the message the apostles were preaching? How did they become Christians? What did the apostles tell those who were pricked in their hearts upon hearing of the crucified and risen Lord? What were they told to do to act upon that teaching to accept the saving message of Christ? We don’t have to wonder about that. Luke gives us a detailed record of what happened when the apostles went from place to place and preached. We have it all throughout **the book of Acts**.

We should point out that what the apostles led people to do in response to their preaching should very much matter to us because the apostles were the inspired ambassadors or representatives of Christ the King (**II Corinthians 5:20**). He gave to those men the ministry of reconciling sinners to God through Christ by the things they preached, which are now recorded for us in preserved holy scripture. That means that today, we are saved and reconciled to God when we receive and follow the teaching of the apostles as well. In other words, the accounts we read in **the book of Acts** of how people were converted to Christ and saved through Him serve as our pattern in faith and gospel obedience today. Doesn't it stand to reason that if we heed the same truths that the people heeded when they heard the apostles preach about Jesus, if we believe the same things they believed about Jesus, if we place the same kind of faith in Jesus, and we act upon that faith in the same way doing the same things they did, that we'll become the same thing they became?

So, it's very important to notice how the apostles answered this question here and every other time it was asked. The very idea that this question was asked of the apostles tells us that a human response of some kind is necessary upon hearing the gospel. Some believe that salvation is the result of a spontaneous experience of some kind. Seeing a light, hearing a voice, having a feeling. Or that the Holy Spirit came upon them in some inexplicable way and when the experience was over, they felt the peace of salvation. But these people we will learn about were not saved by better-felt-than-told experiences. There were indeed some extraordinary experiences that took place in **the book of Acts** and we'll see that in our series, but the experiences always led them to hearing someone preach the gospel to them, which then led to the question, *What shall we do? What do I do about what I've heard?* The Bible says that **faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17)**. That was true then and it is true now when the gospel is preached. A person must hear the gospel preached before they can be saved. Not only that, they must believe what they hear and act upon what they hear.

When this question was asked, there is no record in the New Testament of any apostle or preacher rebuking anyone for asking it. Some today nearly suggest that it's wrong to ask such a question, that asking it implies that a person must DO something before they will be saved, and since salvation is by grace through faith, that must mean that salvation is unconditional and that obedience has no part in one's salvation. But the apostles never rebuked anyone for asking the question. They could have, but they didn't. In their later teaching in epistles, Paul for one made it clear that salvation is something that no person can merit through works.

Ephesians 2:8 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,"

Nobody can earn salvation. It comes by grace (that is, unmerited favor) through faith (that is, a trust in Jesus Christ). But does that preclude any kind of obedience or submission to the will of Christ as a condition of forgiveness? It doesn't matter what I or any other preacher today says, no matter his qualifications. What matters is what the apostles said. Today when people ask that question, they'll receive a few different responses: *You must keep certain sacraments in order to be saved...or Just believe in your heart that Jesus died for your sins. That's all you need to do.* Some would go a little further: *Trust Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.* But what does that mean? Is that what you were told to do? Of course, we are to trust Christ as our Lord and Savior, but how do you do that? Some are told to *pray a simple prayer to receive Jesus into your heart.* Were you at one time told by a preacher or friend who was trying to lead you to Christ to just bow your head and pray the sinner's prayer: *Lord Jesus, I'm a sinner. I believe you died to save me. Come into my heart now. Cleanse me and make me your child,* so the prayer usually goes. Did you pray a prayer like that? Millions upon millions of people

have. But what millions of people have done in modern times is not what we should be interested in. Rather, what did the apostles lead people to do when they fulfilled the commission of Christ and preached Jesus to the lost world of their day?

Let's quickly survey **the book of Acts**. Today, let's look at the nine specific accounts in this book that tell us in any detail what the apostles said when the people heard them preach and responded to it, wanting to be saved. Let's see if we can come away with a consistent picture. All of these people began at different points of understanding, but they were all lost. You might say they were beginning on the journey to salvation from different coordinates, so that will have some bearing on how these scenes unfold, but I think we'll see a fairly consistent picture.

We begin on Pentecost in **Acts 2**. Again, this is the first sermon that the apostles preached after being given the great commission. Peter preached Jesus as Lord and Christ, convincing them that He is the Son of God, the promised Messiah. They were so moved and pricked in their hearts by what Peter said that they asked, *What shall we do?* They realized they were in a sinful state. They wanted to be saved.

Acts 2:38 "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."

The religious world today sometimes talks about an 'altar call' and I wonder how many of these include a preacher telling people if they want to be saved they need to repent of their sins and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. I daresay not very many. That would be a very rare occurrence in our world today, but I believe it was a common occurrence in the first century when the apostles preached, and it began right here on the Day of Pentecost. Peter didn't say, *just open up your heart and let Jesus come in*. Look at **verse 41**.

Acts 2:41 "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them."

Not a week later. Not on 'baptism Sunday.' **That day**.

Let's look at **Acts 8** where the gospel goes to Samaria. A preacher named Philip preaches Christ and the kingdom to the people there. What happened tells us not only how they responded to the gospel, but also tells us something about what Philip must've preached to them. He preached Christ and the kingdom and here was the response.

Acts 8:12-13 "But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done."

Did we read anything about the sinner's prayer or just letting Jesus come into their hearts? No. Later in the chapter, Philip is sent down a desert road to meet a government nobleman from Ethiopia who wanted to hear about Christ.

Acts 8:35 "Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him."

That would've been a great and interesting sermon to hear. I wonder what all it included. Well, we know that it was based in **Isaiah 53**, so he told him about the death of Jesus, that Jesus was the Son of God, the promised Messiah, and the fulfillment of all of the Messianic expectations of the Old Testament. He paralleled the life of Jesus with the prophecies of Isaiah. What all do you suppose was included in that?

Acts 8:36-38 "Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him."

He believes in his heart and he is confessing with his mouth. That is necessary for salvation according to **Romans 10:10**. So far as we read, they didn't get down on the side of the road and pray a prayer with him so that he might be saved. No, he heard him preach, he understood and believed, and he wanted to be baptized. They stopped right there, and Philip baptized him in that oasis of water.

Maybe someone says, *Wait, I found the sinner's prayer in the next chapter*. In **Acts 9**, we read about the conversion of Saul. After he met Jesus on the road to Damascus and was blinded and sent into the city, the Bible says that while he was there for some days, he was praying. Well, was he praying for salvation?

Acts 9:6 "So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

Ananias had not arrived yet. Saul was waiting for him to come. He may have been praying, but his sins were not washed away as a result, because after Ananias did come and restore his blinded eyes, Paul himself later recalled that Ananias said this to him:

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."

His sins were not washed away until he followed the instructions of Ananias. So, no sinner's prayer for salvation there either. Now let's look at Cornelius and his believing household.

Acts 10:48 "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days."

Then when Paul met and preached to Lydia.

Acts 16:15 "And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us."

Later in that same chapter, there was a Philippian prison keeper and his household.

Acts 16:30-33 "And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized."

Immediately. Not the next Sunday or the next month. **That same hour of the night**, he and his family were baptized. If baptism has nothing whatsoever to do with saving faith and being saved, why was it so urgent that his family be baptized that same hour of the night?

The people in Corinth were taught the gospel by Paul and they were baptized.

Acts 18:8 "Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized."

Then, some disciples of Apollos who had not properly been taught about Jesus were commanded to be baptized in the name of (or by the authority of) Jesus.

Acts 19:5 "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Why do you suppose every example we have here ends with the person/people being immediately baptized? Not days or weeks later, but immediately? Well, what did Jesus tell the apostles when He issued the great commission?

Mark 16:14-16 "Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

The book of Acts is a record of the apostles carrying out this great commission. It tells us how the apostles went forth and did what Jesus ordered them to do. Go preach the gospel, the good news of the crucified and risen Christ. You can be saved through His death, burial, and resurrection. Go preach that. And what of those who received this message?

Mark 16:16 ""He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

Why isn't baptism included in the negative statement? Why does it not say *he who does not believe and is not baptized will be condemned*? Because if you understand the design and purpose of baptism, one who doesn't believe would have no need for baptism. It would be redundant. It's like saying he who goes to the airport and gets aboard the plane will fly to Dallas. If a person doesn't go to the airport, why would he need to be warned about not getting on the plane? You can't get on the plane until you go to the airport.

So, Jesus says when they preach, here will be the result. Those who believe what is preached and are baptized will be saved. Friend, that is as plain as plain can be. It's so plain and simple, it takes a Bible PhD. to mess it up and convolute it. How does Matthew record it?

Matthew 28:18-20 "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen."

Notice the order. *Go make disciples, baptizing them, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded.* That's exactly what you read in **the book of Acts**: the apostles went, they preached Jesus to the lost world, those who favorably received their message and were willing to accept their message were baptized upon their belief of what was preached, then those people were organized into churches that then carried out the will of God in those places and in their lives. That's the fulfillment of the great commission.

©2020 BibleWay Media. All rights reserved.

BibleWay Media grants permission to copy this material for personal use. Permission is also granted to distribute this transcript as long as it is reproduced in its entirety, used solely for its original purpose of spreading the gospel, and attribution is given to the author and Let the Bible Speak.