

The Body of Christ

Lesson 2: Added to the Body: How One Enters -- Acts 2:36-47

Imagine the noise of it. Jerusalem at Pentecost was packed with pilgrims from every corner of the known world, and suddenly a sound like a rushing wind filled a house, and a band of Galileans spilled into the streets praising God in languages they had never learned. A crowd gathered, confused and amazed, some of them sneering that the men must be drunk. Into that swirl of wonder and mockery, a fisherman stood up. The same Peter who had denied his Lord with curses a few weeks before now lifted his voice and preached the first gospel sermon the world had ever heard.

He told them the truth about Jesus, the man they had handed over and crucified, the man God had raised from the dead and seated at His right hand. And then he drove the nail home: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." It was not a gentle word. It was a scalpel. And it found its mark. Luke says the crowd was "cut to the heart." These were not bad people looking for permission to feel better. They were ordinary people who suddenly saw what they had done, and the sight of it pierced them.

So they asked the only question that matters once the truth has landed: "Brothers, what shall we do?" Not what shall we feel, not what shall we believe in the abstract, but what shall we do. And Peter did not tell them to pray a prayer or simply to accept Jesus into their hearts. He told them to repent and be baptized, every one of them, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. Three thousand of them did exactly that, on that very day. And something happened that no human being arranged.

Luke records it almost in passing, but it is one of the most important sentences in the whole Bible: "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." They did not vote themselves into a club or pick a congregation that suited their taste. The Lord added them. The saved were added by God Himself to the one body of Christ. This lesson is about that doorway, how a person actually passes from the crowd into the church, and how the Lord, not we, does the adding.

Group Discussion: If you asked ten people on the street, "What must a person do to be saved?", you would probably get ten different answers. Why do you think there is so much confusion on this question today, and where do most people seem to get their answer from?

Personal Reflection: Peter's hearers were "cut to the heart" when they saw the truth about Jesus and about themselves. When was a time the truth of the gospel pierced you rather than merely informed you, and what did you do in response?

Read Acts 2:36-47

Study Questions

1. Peter's sermon reaches its climax in verse 36: "God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." Why does Peter ground his entire call to action on the lordship and resurrection of Jesus, and how does the truth of who Jesus is create the urgency the crowd suddenly feels?
2. Luke says the crowd was "cut to the heart" when they understood what they had done. When the gospel confronts you honestly, do you tend to let it pierce you, or do you find ways to soften the blow? What does a heart truly "cut" by the gospel look like?
3. When the convicted crowd asked, "What shall we do?", Peter answered, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (v. 38). Walk through what Peter actually commands here, and explain why he ties baptism directly to the forgiveness of sins rather than treating it as an optional afterward.
4. Peter called for repentance, a real turning from sin. What is one area of your life where the call to repent is not a one-time event from your past but a turning Christ is asking of you now?
5. Across the New Testament, entrance into Christ follows a consistent pattern: hearing the gospel, believing in Jesus as Lord and Christ, repenting of sin, confessing Him, and being baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:36-38; Romans 10:9-10; Romans 6:3-4). Why does it matter that salvation is described this way, rather than as accepting Christ by "faith only"?

6. Three thousand people obeyed the gospel that very day, without delay (v. 41). Is there any step of obedience to Christ that you have understood but kept putting off? What do you think holds you back, and what would obedience look like now?
7. Verse 47 says, "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." Who does the adding in this verse, and what does it teach us about how a person becomes part of the church, compared with the common idea of "joining the church of your choice"?
8. The new believers did not drift off alone after their baptism; they immediately devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers (v. 42). How devoted are you to the shared life of the church, and where might the Lord be calling you deeper into it?
9. This passage describes both how one enters the body and what the body looks like once gathered (vv. 38–47): saved people, added by the Lord, devoted to apostolic teaching, sharing life, worshiping, and growing daily. Why is it significant that entrance into salvation and entrance into the church are not two separate events here, but one? What does that say about anyone who claims to be saved while remaining apart from the Lord's church?
10. Look back across Acts 2:36–47. Whether you are examining your own entrance into Christ or your life in His body since, name one specific way this passage is calling you to respond, and what is the first step you will take?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Acts 2:38, repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins; Romans 6:3-4, baptized into Christ's death and raised to walk in newness of life; Galatians 3:26-27, baptized into Christ, having put on Christ; Mark 16:16, he who believes and is baptized will be saved; Acts 22:16, arise and be baptized and wash away your sins.