

Essential Christianity
studies in what we believe and who we are as Christians

Study 3: Repent (we all need to)

Discuss: Do you find it hard to say “sorry,” or “I was wrong”? If so, why?

READ Acts 2:1-41

A note on Pentecost

When we hear “Pentecost” today, we tend to think of the day the Holy Spirit came on the disciples with power, as recorded in Acts chapter 2. We have churches that focus on the Spirit and its gifts that call themselves “Pentecostal.”

However, Pentecost was actually an old Jewish festival. It was the time to bring an offering of the “firstfruits” of the wheat harvest as an offering to God. It was also called the feast of harvest (Exodus 23:16), and the day of first fruits (Numbers 28:26). The name “Pentecost,” means “fiftieth,” since it falls on the Sunday fifty days after the first Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Deuteronomy 16:9). Since it fell when a “week of weeks” (7x7=49 days) had expired after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it was also called the Festival of Weeks.

The fact that it was Pentecost explains why there were so many in Jerusalem that day – they had come from all over the world for the feast. That also explains why it was so important that the Spirit helped the disciples speak in “other tongues” (verses 6-11) – it was to help them communicate with people from so many backgrounds.

It is sometimes suggested that the significance of the Spirit coming at Pentecost is that it is the “firstfruits” of our redemption (Romans 8:23), or the beginning of the harvest (Luke 10:2).

1. In verses 16-21, Peter quotes from the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-32) to explain what is happening. He refers to this being “the last days” (v. 17), and the sign that “the day of the Lord” is coming (v. 20). What do you understand these two terms to refer to? What will happen on the “day of the Lord,” according to verse 21?
2. Peter then quotes from David in verses 25-28 (Psalm 16:8-11) and 34-35 (Psalm 110:1) to explain that Jesus, as David’s descendent, has fulfilled what David prophesied. What has Jesus done that fulfils David’s words, and what conclusion does Peter draw about who Jesus is (v. 36)?
3. The crowds were “cut to the heart” (v. 37). Have you ever felt that way when reading or hearing God’s word (see Hebrews 4:12)? Share, if you would like ...
4. What does Peter tell them to do, in verse 38? Do forgiveness and the Holy Spirit come as a result of being baptised, or repenting [see also Luke 24:47; Acts 10:47; Romans 10:9]? What is the relationship between repentance and baptism [see also Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:4; 16:16; Acts 22:16]?
5. What does it mean to “repent”?
6. Who needs to repent, according to Acts 17:30? How does this fit with the common view that some people are more sinful than others?

7. It is sometimes suggested that we should not be judgmental but affirm everyone as being equally important, valuable, and loved by God just as they are. How does this fit with the call to repent [see Luke 13:1-9]?
8. What flows from repentance, according to Acts 3:19 [and doesn't happen if we don't repent, according to Psalm 32:3-4]? Has this been your experience?
9. Is repentance something we only need to do once, or repeatedly? What would you say to someone who suggested that having once been forgiven and restored as a child of God, it's not necessary to keep begging for forgiveness?