

## A Difference In Attitude

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by Ferrell Jenkins

Peter, guided by the Holy Spirit, preached the first gospel sermon (Acts 2) to Jews assembled in Jerusalem. These people were believers in God. It was necessary to convince them that Jesus, whom they had crucified, was the Son of God and the Messiah foretold in the Jewish scriptures. In order to do this Peter used three lines of evidence. First: the prophets had foretold the resurrection. Second: We (the apostles) are eyewitnesses to the resurrection. Third: the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Remember that the Spirit could not come until after Jesus ascended to the Father. (John 16:7). This necessitated a resurrection. The conclusion to this preaching was that Jesus was both Lord and Christ. The Book of God says, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

The verb translated "pricked" means "primarily to strike or prick violently, to stun, is used of strong emotion." (W. E. Vine, Expository Dictionary of N. T. Words). When this group of Jews, from every nation under heaven, heard the gospel of Christ, they were pricked in their heart. They were sinners, guilty of putting the Son of God to death. The effect that this preaching had on their heart is quite impressive. It is evident from the context and question that they knew they were guilty of the charge Peter made. They wanted to know what they could do. Notice the answer: "And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins ...." (Acts 2:38).

The Bible records that about three thousand who gladly received the word spoken were baptized that day (Acts 2:41).

As the church began to grow daily we read of a few of the sermons preached. In Acts 7 we have Stephen's sermon. Stephen was a man of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom and full of faith (Acts 6:3, 5), and one of the seven chosen to "serve tables."

Stephen did some debating with various false teachers, "and they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake" (Acts 6:8-10). False witnesses made charges against him. When given an opportunity to speak Stephen briefly traced the history of the Jews and God's dealing with them. We suggest that you read the sermon. Stephen was concluding with the fact that the Jews had rejected and even killed the prophets that foretold the coming of the Christ. He charged that the present generation was no better. "Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth ... But they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord: and they cast him out of the city, and stoned him" (Acts 7:54, 57-58).

The word translated "cut" in verse 54 is a different one from that used in Acts 2:37. This word "signifies to saw asunder, to divide by a saw, hence, metaphorically, to be rent with vexation, to be cut to the heart." (Vine).

Our contrast in Acts 2 and 7 is not in the preachers, nor in the message preached, but rather in the attitude of the people addressed. One group recognized their sin and sought remission; the other heard the truth, but because of their disposition were angered to the extent that they even took the life of him who preached it.

How is it with you, dear friend? When you hear or read the Word of God, do you inquire earnestly as to how you may obey it, or do you become angry at the messenger? Emulate those of Acts 2 who gladly received the word and obeyed it.

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