

**Text:** Acts 2:14-40

**Title:** The First Preaching of the Church

**Truth:** Call on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved.

**Date/Location:** July 5, 2023 (previously Sunday evening January 1, 2012 at FBC)

## Introduction

It would be hard to criticize Peter's sermon no matter what your philosophy of preaching is. Notice the elements of the sermon and the results that God gave:

1. Use of the Old Testament by means of three extended quotations. This works well for Jewish people who profess adherence to the Hebrew Bible. For secular Jews or Gentiles that don't have any connection to the Bible it is not too effective.
2. Highlighting the fulfillment of OT prophecy. While the very use of OT prophecy would be effective for an observant Jew who assumes the authority of God's Word, the fulfillment of Scripture would be a good challenge to anyone, whether an observant Jew, secular one, or a Gentile with no other connection to the Bible.
3. Use of the name Jesus and preaching Him to the people as Lord (22).
4. No hesitancy to mention sin (23, 36, 38).
5. Emphasis on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.
6. Stresses the importance of hearing and heeding the preacher's words (2:14, 2:22, 2:36). Obviously, Peter considers them a message from God, not originated with himself.
7. Conviction was brought upon many hearts.
8. A call for repentance from sin.
9. God drew 3,000 souls to himself in salvation.
10. Commanded them to be baptized.

11. Extension of the promise of the Holy Spirit to those who respond in faith (which takes us back to the occasion for the sermon).

Peter's sermon starts with an explanation of the activity of the Holy Spirit that has just been observed in 2:1-13, moves to a proclamation of the gospel, and then extends the promise of the Holy Spirit's ministry to all who will respond to Christ in repentant faith.

## **I. Explanation of the Phenomenon Observed on Pentecost,**

### **2:14-21**

- A. This is not what you think it is! It is the third hour of the day – 9 o'clock in the morning. There has been no time to get drunk at this point. From earlier in the text, we can also understand this: the languages they were speaking were real human languages, with real content. This was not the mumbo jumbo of some drunk, or even the so-called "ecstatic" tongues of today.
- B. This is a work of the Spirit of God like that predicted in the Old Testament.
  1. It is like that prophesied by Joel in 2:28-32, other passages (Isaiah 32:15, 44:3, Ezekiel 39:29).
  2. It is not precisely what is promised in Joel, because there is no Scriptural evidence that verses Acts 2:19-20 were fulfilled. There were at that time no wonders in heaven, no signs on the earth, no blood and fire and vapor of smoke (recent Canadian wildfire smoke notwithstanding in June 2023), the sun did not turn dark, the moon was not turned into blood. Those events will occur much more closely to the coming of the Lord. Joel was at most *partially* fulfilled—a new ministry of the Spirit began at the time. Since I believe that the complete fulfillment of Joel will be in the eschaton (see Zech. 12:10 for instance), I also believe that Acts is an analogical use of the Joel passage. Supporting this interpretation:
    1. Acts 10:45 shows that the Gentiles also received the Spirit of God, showing that this is not just an Israelite promise,

even though the context is definitely Israel in Joel 2. But note “all flesh” can be interpreted more widely than “all Israelites.”

2. There are objections to this interpretation. The most serious objection is that the text says this IS what was spoken by Joel. But fulfillment language is much more loosely used by NT authors than we might like. See Matthew 2:15 for example, as proof of this assertion. Or see Luke 4:18-19 where Jesus cuts off His quotation of Isaiah 61:1-2 in the middle of verse 2.
3. No objection against my interpretation is as problematic as trying to suggest that *all* of Joel 2:28-32 was fulfilled at Pentecost. Peter would be charged with folly if that were the case because it obviously was not totally fulfilled.

C. Associated with the Spirit’s work is salvation available for all. This salvation is for whoever calls on the name of the Lord. “Calling on the name of the Lord” obviously means more than just saying the name of Jesus. See Rom. 10:12-13 and context—it means to believe in Him as Lord, His death for sin, His resurrection, etc.

The point of the Spirit being outpoured is not actually the main point of the text! It serves as a connection point between the contemporary context and the ancient prophecy. But the main point is at the end of verse 21: “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” Charismatics focus on the ministry of the Spirit, but the Spirit’s ministry is to point people to Christ and persuade them to call on the name of the Lord Jesus for salvation. This is why that Pentecost and all the days after it are *like* what Joel talked about. Today, anyone can call on the name of the Lord and be saved, regardless of what outpourings of the Spirit are observed in the world. A future age will come in which the same will be true—all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved—but the ministry of the Spirit and strange heavenly phenomenon will be present as well.

**Transition:** The explanation of the first part of Peter’s sermon is this: we have entered a time in history where whoever calls on the name of the Lord can be saved. The phenomenon that you are observing today is evidence of that. Then, the quotation of Joel 2 offers the transition to the

next segment of the sermon, namely that those who call on the name of the LORD will be saved. Who is this Lord?

## **II. The Ministry, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of Christ, 2:22-32**

- A. Miracles attesting = showing the reality of who He is.
- B. Sovereign God works with Responsible Moral Agents to accomplish His purpose in the death of Christ.
- C. The Resurrection is proclaimed and backed up with a quotation from Psalm 16:8-11. Peter speaks “matter of factly” with the audience and says that the Scripture did not apply to David—he is as dead as it gets.
- D. Peter backs up the OT quotation with the 119 other *eyewitnesses* that were there with him at Pentecost who saw the living Jesus for 40 days after the resurrection.
- E. They not only observed Jesus rise from the dead, but observed Him go to heaven. This is buttressed by the quotation of Psalm 110:1.
- F. They also knew of His promise of the Holy Spirit, and now they were experiencing it. Acts 1:5 and 1:8 were fresh on their minds – about 10 days previous.

## **III. The Exaltation of Jesus and the Pouring out of the Spirit, 2:33-36**

- A. Here is a real climax in the sermon. God has made Jesus Lord and Christ. That is, He is the Lord upon whom we must call (2:21) and He is the promised Messiah/Holy One/One sitting at the right hand of God. As a man, Jesus is elevated to those places. As Son of God, He always had that level of authority and beyond.

## **IV. The Response of the Crowd, 2:37**

- A. The exaltation of Jesus intensifies the guilt of the people who put him to death. Maybe there were many in the crowd who had cried out with the Pharisees, “Crucify him!”

B. Now (some of) the people recognize how bad they had been. Once the dots were connected for them through the Old Testament that Jesus was the Messiah and Lord, they knew they were in big trouble. Their sinfulness and the sin of not knowing the Scriptures and not knowing who Jesus was when He ministered to them was inexcusable, so they were in for it.

## V. Peter's Closing Application, 2:38-40

Thankfully, Peter had an answer to their question. Imagine if there were no answer, or worse the answer was "there is nothing you can do, and there is nothing that anyone can do"?

A. Peter calls for two responses:

Repent – conversion – faith+repentance.

Be Baptized – make a public statement of your identification with Jesus in His death and resurrection (the main points of Peter's message about Jesus). Baptism shows the reality of faith.

Real faith then brings two results from God:

Forgiveness of sins.

Gift of the Holy Spirit.

These things are part of the promise that is to all people, Jew and Gentile. Peter is foreshadowing here the Great Commission going out to the entire world. Israel is no longer the focal point of God's program. The world is.

B. **Testified and exhorted.** "Be saved" was the summary of what he was saying. Be saved "from" (separation, out of) this perverse generation. It is crooked, morally twisted, corrupted, dishonest.

C. Issue of baptism with regard to salvation. It is required, but not to obtain salvation. Rather, as a response to salvation that God provides.

Pause and do an entire message on the theology at this point to equip our people to address this issue when it comes up in their discussions with Roman Catholics, Campbellites, etc. See Acts 10:47, for instance.

## Conclusion

This remarkable thing (tongues speaking, filling, baptism of the Spirit etc.) is a work of the Holy Spirit. It has occurred because a work of the Spirit was prophesied in the Old Testament and it was poured out by Jesus Christ after He accomplished his death for sin, resurrection, and ascension. See John 15:26. But all of this is in service to a greater point: call on the Lord to be saved. We know that God has constituted Jesus as Lord and Christ.

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