

Day 7 : Acts 2:36-39

Prayerfully read: Acts 2:1-39

Understanding

Peter brings his sermon to a climax by highlighting the crowd's wickedness, God's over-ruling of what they had done, and Jesus' appointment as Lord and Christ.

Peter had preached not to amuse them, not to inform them, but had preached to their consciences, to convict and change them. And by God's blessing, the message hit home - "they were cut to the heart". It is only when peoples' consciences are moved that they will ask the question, "What shall we do?"

In different places the apostles mention faith, or repentance, or both, and sometimes mention baptism. But the meaning is the same. All who truly turn to God in faith must also turn away from sin in repentance; and all who bow the knee to Christ are required to be baptised as the first expression of that faith and obedience.

Peter makes them a promise – that they also will receive the same Holy Spirit. He did not promise that they would do miracles, but receive the Spirit for washing inside. This is the way in which every Christian receives the Holy Spirit. The offer of the Holy Spirit is part of the gospel.

The offer is truly effective to those who the Lord calls. This is speaking of the inward call when the Lord irresistibly summons a person to repentance and faith.

Doctrines (Teachings)

- The end goal of preaching is to call people to repentance and faith in Christ, offering them free forgiveness and the Holy Spirit for change.
- All who believe in the Lord Jesus are commanded to be baptised.

Applying

- Have you been convicted of your sin? Have you had exposed to you how your ways have gone against God? Have you been "cut to the heart" and been led to cry out "What shall I do?"
- Have you repented, and trusted in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins? Have you been baptised in his name? What does Peter promise if you have? Is this promise for you?

(End of week 2)

The Acts Of The Apostles

Daily Bible Reading Notes

Week 2 (Chapter 2)

Grace Church Belper

<http://www.gracebelper.org.uk>

Day 1 : Acts 2:1-4 – The Spirit Comes

Prayerfully read (above and): Exodus 23:16, Levit. 23:15-21, Deut. 16:9-12

Understanding

“Pentecost” is literally “fifty”. The day of Pentecost was also known as the “Feast of Weeks”. It was a yearly harvest festival. The day after the Passover Sabbath, a sheaf would be presented to God in thankfulness for the beginning of the harvest; Pentecost always took place seven weeks (or on the fiftieth day) after this and commemorated the full harvest.

The Lord Jesus was crucified after the Passover festival – as the sacrificial lamb for our sins. He rose again on the day of the first offering – as the first to rise from the dead. He poured out the Spirit on the day of Pentecost – because the church is the resulting harvest from his work. Were the disciples thinking that it might be *this* day that the Spirit would come?

There is a sound *like* a mighty wind, and visible tongues *like* fire. They came on all the believers, assuring them that they were all part of this blessing. Wind and fire symbolise the Spirit's all-consuming power.

Doctrines (Teachings)

- The church was baptised in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. This marked the church out as God's New Covenant people. The Spirit is given to all the church – there is no special class of superior Christians. The Spirit is powerful and sovereign, and enables the church to carry out its work of witness. Notice what the Spirit-filled church did – it began to speak about the great things God had done (see verse 11).
- To be “filled” with the Spirit is to so be influenced and empowered by him to live in a way that brings glory to God – and particularly to be given strength to bear witness to him in words.

Applying (Make sure that you are detailed and specific!)

- Who was present when the Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost (verse 1)? The sure way to miss a blessing is to be missing without a good reason when the people of God are gathered. Does this happen to you? How can you prevent it happening?
- Do you speak to your friends about the great things of God? If not, then what do you need? Make sure that some of your prayers are given to asking God to be daily filled with His Holy Spirit.
- Do you tend to put believers in different “categories” in your mind? How does this passage correct that thinking?

Day 6 : Acts 2:25-36 : Christ Resurrected

Prayerfully read: Psalm 110

Understanding

Peter's argument is simple. David spoke of not seeing corruption through remaining in the grave; but David is still in the grave even as Peter speaks; therefore David was speaking of the Messiah. When we read the Old Testament and find it making some promise for which we cannot understand how its fulfilment was possible, we should consider whether it might not be speaking of Christ.

Notice that Peter declares that Christ is risen, and that he personally is a witness of it. Here we seem him fulfilling his apostolic commission.

Peter then gives the explanation of what is happening – the risen Christ has been raised to the right hand of God. He has received the promised Holy Spirit, and poured Him out upon the disciples.

Peter's sermon climaxes in a great declaration; they crucified Jesus, but God has rejected their verdict, appointing him as both Lord and Christ.

Doctrines (Teachings)

- The Old Testament prophesies the resurrection of Christ. It was one of the great themes which the prophets wrote and meditated upon.
- Many of the Psalms are prophetic – of which we have two examples here (16 and 110). David was not only a poet, but a prophet.
- The great blessing of the church age is that the risen Christ, our Saviour, is at the right hand of God and sending forth the Holy Spirit to his church. The church's growth and spread worldwide is because of this.

Applying

- How well do you know the Psalms? Why not try to memorise one, such as Psalm 110?
- What does it mean for Jesus to be “Lord”? Is He your Lord? If so, what areas of life do you need to bring under his lordship? What specific steps are you going to take to do that?
- What reasons does this passage give us to take heart?

Day 5 : Acts 2:22-28 – Peter Preaches Christ

Prayerfully read: Psalm 16

Understanding

Peter relates what is happening to Jesus Christ. He speaks to the crowd about Christ's life and the proof that he was the Messiah. He speaks about the crowd's sin, and about Jesus' death. He speaks about Jesus' resurrection. Here is a model for proper preaching!

See in verse 23 both God's absolutely sovereignty, and also at the same time human wickedness – in the very same event.

“Hades” in verse 27 is the Greek name for the place of the dead. It does not in itself imply either reward or punishment – just the state of the soul being separated from the body.

Note that Peter didn't “beat around the bush” - he charged them directly and bluntly with having killed God's chosen one!

Doctrines (Teachings)

- Both God's sovereignty and human responsibility exist in the same events at the same time. It is not a case of part of one and part of the other, but both. Whether we understand this or not, yet God's word insists that it is so!
- God was absolutely sovereign in the death of Jesus. It was not an accident, but an event he had planned from before the beginning of the world. God's sovereignty doesn't only include happy events, but even the most wicked act ever committed, and hence every act.
- The first Christian preachers preached about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and God's purpose in it. This is authentic Christian preaching.

Applying

- Think back to the last time something went wrong. Did you pause to think about God's sovereignty in it? How would that change your thinking about it? How often do you meditate upon God's sovereignty? Do you understand the Bible's teaching on this theme? If you do not, then resolve that you will! Note down verses when you come across them, and later, read the verses that you have collected.

Day 2 : Acts 2:5-11 – Tongues

Prayerfully read: Genesis 10:1-11:9

Understanding

Pentecost was the day on which the gospel symbolically began to go to all the nations of the world and not just Jews – but note that actually all those there were Jews! (verse 1). It was a sign of what was to come fully in good time.

The list of nations in verses 9-11 contains people from north, south, east and west of Israel. It contains descendants of all 3 of Noah's sons. They are representative of the whole world.

The Greek word for “tongue” can either mean the thing in your mouth, or a language. Obviously it means the latter! The miracle of tongues was of inspired declaration of the “wonderful works of God” (v11) in unlearned languages. It was not a “private” gift for an individual in an “angelic” language, but a normal human language for public witness. To the nations of the world it was a sign that God was now coming to save them; to the Jews who could not understand it was a sign of judgment - that God was now removing his word from them and taking it elsewhere.

The day of Pentecost is a kind-of reversing of the judgment at Babel. There, new languages were because of God's judgment, and brought confusion. Here, they are because of God's salvation, and bring glorious understanding.

Doctrines (Teachings)

- The gift of tongues was a gift of being able to speak in an ordinary human language, but unlearned. The words spoken in tongues were words declaring the greatness of God. In tongues, glorious sermons were preached without any preparation!
- Whilst before Pentecost there were some believers from outside Israel (e.g. Ruth, Rahab), there were only a few; God's people were basically Jewish. Pentecost is the unique, unrepeatable event where this all began to change. The church is a new, multinational people of God.

Applying (Make sure that you are detailed and specific!)

- Have you ever thought about your privilege of living today? Had you lived 3000 years ago, there would have been no gospel for us.
- What involvement do you have in taking the gospel to the whole world? Is there a country or missionary you particularly pray for? If not, take steps to find one!

Day 3 : Acts 2:12-13 – Response

Prayerfully read: John 7:32-53

Understanding

The people in Jerusalem were only used to hearing preaching in one of the common languages (Hebrew, or Greek, or Aramaic) – not in their own languages. And what preaching it was!

But notice from verse 12, that though they recognised a great miracle was taking place, they did not know what it meant.

And notice too, that though it was a great miracle, some mocked it (v13).

Note that there is no indication that those who mocked weren't able to understand the things being said – verse 6 says that everyone heard.

The “new wine” (or possibly “sweet wine”) would be wine preserved from the previous year's vintage.

Doctrines (Teachings)

- Miracles in themselves do not convert anyone. The human heart in itself is so hard and sinful that some will mock even in the presence of one of the greatest events in the whole history of the world.
- Miracles in themselves cannot convert anyone. Even those who were not mockers yet did not know how to interpret what was happening. They needed it to be explained for them. The crowning glory of the miracle would be when Peter interpreted it and preached the gospel to them.

Applying

- Do you value the preaching of God's word? The miracle of Pentecost was incomplete without it – because nobody knew how to respond! Can you remember the main points of the sermons you heard last week? Can you remember anything that you resolved you need to change to honour God better in response? If not, what steps can you take to help you remember?
- Are you perplexed or troubled when people mock God or Christianity? How does this passage help?

Day 4 : Acts 2:14-21 – Peter begins to preach

Prayerfully read: Joel 2

Understanding

Peter and the eleven, filled with the Spirit, seizes the opportunity. All God's people must witness, but there are those especially appointed to preach.

Jews counted the hours beginning at 6 a.m. - so the third hour would be 9 a.m. The Jews did not eat before that time, let alone drink.

The “last days” (verse 17) either means the final days of the Jewish order, or it means the times of the Messiah (the final stage of world history). Most believe that it is the latter.

The language of verse 19-20 is “de-creation” language. The prophets often described God's coming to act (particularly in judgment) in terms of a kind of shaking of the created world. God was now going to “shake up” the world in the most dramatic way.

Joel prophesied three things: First, the giving of the Spirit to all of God's people; secondly, a great judgment coming, and thirdly salvation to those who called on the Lord. Notice that (contrary to some modern interpretations), Joel does not say that every believer will prophesy or see visions.

Doctrines (Teachings)

- The prophets prophesied about the Lord Jesus, and what he would do.
- In particular, Pentecost, the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church, the judgment of Israel and the free offer of salvation in the gospel, were all prophesied. The Messiah, judgment, salvation, and the glories of the gospel age through Him are some of their great themes.
- The great work of the Christian preacher is to relate all things to the will and purpose of God in Jesus Christ, and to call for repentance and faith.

Applying

- Have you called on the name of the Lord? Are you safe from the coming judgment through him?
- How do you read the prophets? Are you looking for the great themes which Peter preaches about? Take notes as you read, and try to see more of these things each time. If you are not in the habit of reading through the Bible a little at a time, then get a bookmark and start!