

Study 2 6/2/14

Peter and the Reigning Christ

Acts 2:14-40 and 3:12-26

Pentecost is harvest thanksgiving for Israel, but also connected, by tradition, with the giving of the Law. Many are in Jerusalem, and this is the time chosen by Christ for the outpouring of his Spirit.

The apostles could never have calculated or produced the effect created by the coming of the Spirit. They found themselves proclaiming the wonderful works of God. Jesus had promised that when the Spirit came the Apostles would bear witness to him (1:8). They would have the witness in themselves (1 Jo. 5:10) so that they could no more deny Christ than they could deny their own existence. Now, they had authority, zeal, opportunity, potency, and especially, the understanding provided by the love of the Spirit (Rom. 5:5).

A multi lingual crowd soon gathers, Jews from all the places where they had been scattered, and they hear the great deeds of God being announced in their own languages. Some acknowledge the miracle and seek to know the meaning of these things; others mock. We see what is in the heart and mind of the Apostles, and the believing Church, by what Peter says to explain their proclaiming of Christ, and his healing of a lame beggar.

'We are not drunk!' (2:15)

The sinful mind seeks to flatten everything and find human explanations for God's work, but there is no such explanation available here. The only explanation is in Israel's prophecies. The Spirit as an effusion of grace has come. Numbers of Scriptures had spoken of this (e.g. Num. 11:29; Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Ezek. 36:27; Zech. 12:10) but Peter recalls the prophecy of Joel from a time when Israel was under a terrible judgement (Joel. 2:28-32). But this would not be the last word; rather, there would be such an outpouring of God's Spirit that the whole nation, young and old, male and female, would understand and declare God's truth. Wonders in the heavens may refer to the celestial events when Christ was crucified: day was turned to night, and 'the paschal full moon may well have appeared blood-red in the sky in consequence of that preternatural gloom' (F. F. Bruce on *Acts*). The death of Jesus and the Spirit's coming are eschatological events; that is, they, and we, are dealing with 'last day' or final issues. But it is not a day of doom; Israel should call on the name of the Lord—the Lord Jesus as it now will appear.

'This Jesus you killed!' (2:23, 36; 3:13; 4:27; 5:30; 7:52; 10:39; 13:27-28)

Preaching of the cross in Acts is consistently an accusation. Even when the message is announced to Gentiles, the note of human failure 'they crucified him' is preached. The killing of Jesus is the sign of unbelief. This refusal to believe in the suffering and exalted Jesus is the point at which the Spirit convicts people of sin (John 16:8-11). As we see in our own city at present, the crucifixion remains something the thing the world loves to scoff at. It remains folly to the world (1 Cor. 1:21). Those who are brought to know this Christ by the Spirit, and turn away, crucify Jesus all over again (Heb. 6:4-6). Our sin is not measured so much by our crimes as by our refusal of God's Son. That is where sin's enormity can be seen.

'This Jesus is exalted!' (2:24, 32; 36; 3:13, 15, 26; etc.)

Being 'raised up' means he has defeated death. It was not just humanity that killed Christ; God gave him up to death according to his definite plan. The judgement of man has been

reversed, but then, if God raises the one he gave over to death, the judgement of God is concluded. Death no longer needs to reign for anyone. Clearly, Jesus is greater than Israel's revered David, and David himself gladly called this coming one 'Lord' (as Jesus had noted— Luke 20:41-43).

Being 'raised up' also means his being exalted at God's right hand (2:32-33). As Jesus said, 'All authority has been given to me in heaven and in earth' (Matt. 28:18). Here, he marshals all things, and especially, intercedes for his people (Rom. 8:34). But the immediate result is the Spirit being poured out. This is also the constant result of Christ's exultation. It is how he reigns in his Church and how the kingdom is established.

The exalted one now bears the names of 'Lord', which, for a Jew, means God. He is the Christ, the fulfiller of God's entire announced agenda for the world and the sole means of his blessing. Jesus is the Lord's Servant (3:13, 26), now exalted, a reference to Isaiah 52:13. He is 'the Holy and Righteous One' (3:14), the Author of life (3:15) and the Prophet anticipated by Moses (3:22). The apostles show that their Old Testament has been transformed and every part of it is filled with Christ.

'The promise is to you!' (2:39; 3:25)

The apostles announced the abundance of God's promise to his people. In one sense, Israel's greatest treasure was that God had chosen them (Deut. 7:6-8), but Jesus warned Israel of presuming on this (Matt. 22:14). Here is the way to live as his chosen people, to believe in Jesus.

What I do have, I give to you! (3:6)

Peter expects that God will intervene to authenticate his word with signs. What he has of course is the name of Jesus. We could say he 'had' healing, but then, Peter makes nothing of this when he speaks. The healing is the evidence, and the 'line of evidence' is seamless, but the reality is Jesus.

At a time when church leaders and members often *do* have silver and gold, our expectation of God's immediate action may easily be dulled, but the truth remains that an unbelieving public will only be convinced if God authenticates his own truth, however this may be.

Israel should have known their God, from the days of Abraham. The God they thought they worshipped has raised Jesus up, and here he is, still, doing good deeds among them. The grace of God could not be more thoroughly demonstrated.

Repent and believe! (2:38; 3:19)

The assembled Jews, at Pentecost, and later, in the Temple, are shocked and in fear (2:37; 3:11), but Peter says they should not be crushed by their mistake but change their mind and express this by identifying themselves with the crucified and risen Christ in baptism.

They are guilty, for sure, but have been ignorant, and this does not have to remain the case. They have before them, in the announcement of the good news at Pentecost, and in the healed man in the Temple, proof in plenty that God is ready to bless them, not curse them. As the crippled man has been healed in the name of Jesus and through faith in that name, so they should come to the God in the name of this Christ for the healing they *also* need.

'Your will receive...' (2:38; 3:19-21)

What a surprise for guilty people! They can again be receivers of God's bounty. They will receive the gift of the Spirit, their sins will be blotted out, there will be times of refreshing while they wait for Christ return, and for the restoration of all things (or 'regeneration' as in Mt. 19:28). God's blessing through his Messiah is to turn them from their wicked ways.