

EXPOSITION OF ACTS

Message #6

Acts 2:14-36

Many people who go to church go with a mindset that says - “I don’t like deep teaching; I just want to hear something that warms my heart.” Truth is most churches that are becoming mega churches are not churches that offer deep teaching of God’s Word. I have in my library a collection of sermons preached at different times in the history of the Church. For example, I have a collection of sermons from Martin Luther and John Calvin of the 1500s and Jonathan Edwards of the 1700s. Having read their works, I can tell you these men of God who were mightily used of God were not shallow. They were serious, systematic teachers of God’s Word and they taught some deep things. The truth is most churches today have lost this focus.

In the book of Acts, there are 19 major verbal discourses that are recorded by Luke:

- 1) Eight by Peter (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11)
- 2) One by Stephen (7)
- 3) One by James (15)
- 4) Nine by Paul (13, 14, 17, 20, 28, 22-26)

When we come to this text of Scripture, we come to the first teaching message that was given after the Holy Spirit had launched God’s program into the Church Age. When we look at this text, we get to see what an apostolic preaching and teaching ministry actually was. In fact, we get to actually see a sermon in print. The sermon was preached by Peter and it was written down for us by Dr. Luke. James Montgomery Boice said “this is a great biblical sermon” (*Acts*, p. 47). At the time Peter preaches this sermon, he does not have a New Testament, but he does have the Old Testament. Not only did he have it, but he knew it and used it.

I find it interesting that as soon as the Holy Spirit had taken up residency in the apostles, they started preaching truth about Jesus Christ. They started unlocking doctrine. When the Holy Spirit is dominating a person’s life, he will be prompted by God to witness. It was nine in the morning when Peter preached this sermon (**2:15**). The results were amazing. What Peter preaches Israel needed to know and so do we. The basic point Peter presents is this:

THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE THINGS THAT HAPPENED TO JESUS CHRIST PROVES THAT JESUS CHRIST IS THE GOD/MAN, THE SAVIOR, AND THE MESSIAH.

We may notice from **verse 1** that Peter stood to deliver this message. What is even more amazing is that just fifty days before this, Peter had denied Christ before a servant girl, but now he will stand up for Christ and preach a powerful message in front of thousands. In fact, at the end of this sermon 3000 people believed on Jesus Christ and were actually and really saved.

They were not saved by manipulation or by begging or pleading for people to raise hands and walk aisles. Peter did not ask for an instrument or choir to start playing “Just As I Am” so he could emotionally get people to respond. These 3000 people were saved by a powerful presentation of truth.

This sermon is rich in theology; it was pertinent and it was positive. When you look down through this sermon, Peter does not say “I feel” or “I think” or “as far as I know”; he simply sets forth truth with a dogmatic certainty. He addresses a specific audience with great power and authority and he doesn’t open it up for questions or group discussions.

The thing that initially catches my eye is the three times that Peter uses the noun “men” (ανδρες). It would seem from this that there are three main messages that Peter was led to give in view of the fact that he had just been baptized with the Holy Spirit.

MESSAGE #1 – Peter’s first message to the men of Judea concerns the Holy Spirit.
2:14-21

Now I want you to notice the emphasis Peter places on them giving heed to “my words.” Peter wants them to carefully listen to his words; that is, the words he is about to proclaim. Words form sentences, sentences form paragraphs, and contextual paragraphs communicate truth. When I taught homiletics, I would make men write out their sermon. Sometimes they would say, I know what I want to say, but I just can’t write it in words. If you can’t write it in words, you do not know what you want to say. In this section there are two main thoughts he wants to communicate:

Thought #1 - The apostles are not drunk. **2:15**

When Peter starts his message, he aims it at the “men of Judea” and “all who live in Jerusalem.” He starts off with a little humor by saying, “These apostles aren’t drunk with wine for it is only 9:00 in the morning.” The Jewish clock starts at 6 a.m., so the 3rd hour is 9 a.m. As if to say, if it were a little later in the afternoon, perhaps they would have enjoyed some wine, but not at 9 a.m. They are not drunk with wine; they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Thought #2 - This is what was predicted by the prophet Joel. **2:16-21**

Peter’s message to this group of men is that the apostles are not drunk and that this Holy Spirit’s presence is prophetically predicted by Joel. In **Acts 2:17-21** Peter recites a prophecy given by Joel (Joel 2:28-32) and he cites Joel from the Greek Septuagint.

Now Joel was the prophet who was known for proclaiming the message to Israel that unless they repent, they were headed to a serious “day of the LORD” judgment that we know will occur during the Tribulation.

In fact, in the next chapter he will call Israel to repent and believe on Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19). Joel’s prophecy has two phases to it: 1) The Coming of the Holy Spirit; 2) The Coming of Jesus Christ which will be preceded by cosmic signs. What Peter is saying is that **Phase 1** is now in existence and we are now waiting for Phase 2.

There is no doubt that Peter saw this business with the Holy Spirit as a partial fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. He saw this as moving the clock of God into the "last days" time period, which we are in right now. It is interesting that when the book of Revelation ends, it ends with Jesus saying, "I am coming quickly."

Now in Revelation there is a discussion of the Church Age, the Tribulation, the Millennium, the Great White Throne Judgment, and the New Heavens, New Earth, and New Jerusalem. It is clear that as Revelation begins, the book is to be viewed as one major prophecy (Rev. 1:3). So what this means is that now that the Church Age, which features the Holy Spirit, is underway, we are in the last days phase of things in the prophetic clock of God, which will ultimately lead to all other prophetic things.

God's final saving program with the Holy Spirit has now begun. This is what Peter realized. We are now entering the time frame when the Holy Spirit is moving among "all" flesh (**2:17a**). God's Spirit only came upon certain individuals in O.T. times so this was all new. As **verse 17** says there are now no gender distinctions (sons and daughters, men and women), there are no age distinctions (young and old), there are no social distinctions (bondslaves). In other words, we are now in a period of time when any who will believe on Jesus Christ may have God's Holy Spirit. This new Age of Grace opens up God's Spirit to any who call upon Him.

The reference to revelatory things like prophecy and visions and dreams were special manifestations in the early days of the Church which have presently ceased ; but Joel makes it clear that after this Church Age is over, Israeli sons and daughters will ultimately prophesy, see visions, and dream prophetic dreams. The cosmic things described in these verses in the sky with the sun and moon will occur during the Tribulation before Christ will come in all of His glory to Jerusalem.

The wonderful truth for us in the Church Age and in the age to come is that "everyone who calls upon the name of the LORD shall be saved" (Joel 2:32; **Acts 2:21**). In other words, we now have the presence of the Holy Spirit, and whoever will call upon Jesus Christ for salvation will be saved.

MESSAGE #2 – Peter's second message to the men of Israel concerns the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. **2:22-28**

Once again Peter challenges the men of Israel to listen to these words. What we know and believe is based on words, not concepts. Peter moves from a focus on the Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ. There are several key facts that he cites concerning Jesus Christ:

Fact #1 - Jesus was the Nazarene. **2:22a**

When Jesus was crucified there was a sign put on His cross which read "Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews" (John 19:19). Peter wanted all these men to know that this very Nazarene is the only One who can save from sins. The Savior was a real Person with a real history. He was born in Bethlehem and He grew up in Nazareth.

Fact #2 - Jesus was a man. **2:22b**

Kent Hughes said in **verse 22** we have the incarnation, in **verse 23** we have the crucifixion, and in **verse 24** we have the resurrection. Jesus who was from Nazareth was in fact a real male person. **It is true Jesus Christ is fully God, but it is also true He was fully human.** The word for “man” (ανδρα) means He was masculine in gender even though He was also Deity.

When Jesus Christ was here on earth, He demonstrated His deity by miracles, wonders, and signs, which are credential signs that were even used to establish true apostles (II Corinthians 12:12).

It is interesting that those who lived in the first century never tried to deny the fact that Jesus did some amazing things. We may remember Nicodemus, who was a ruler in Israel, acknowledged that those signs did prove Jesus was from God (John 3:1-2). Even Josephus, the nonbelieving first century Jewish theologian, said that Jesus was “a doer of wonderful works” (*The Complete Works of Josephus*, p. 379).

The word “attested” or “accredited” (**Acts 2:22**) indicates that Jesus verified and substantiated that He was of God and that He was the Messiah and Savior by doing these various things. Jesus was in the midst of these people and He did these miraculous things, proving He was the God/man. He walked on water, raised dead people, gave sight to the blind. He commanded demons to do things and they did. He did things no man had ever done, proving He is the Messiah and Savior.

Fact #3 - God delivered up His own Son by His predetermined plan which He foreknew. **2:23a**

Carefully observe that Peter’s message continues by presenting deep doctrinal truth about the things that happened to Jesus Christ. **In the first message delivered in the Church Age, Peter stresses the Sovereignty of God.** God foreknew and foreordained the death of His own Son. What we need to grasp about the sovereignty of God is that God will accomplish His sovereign purposes and plans and He will use the actual decisions of people, even evil decisions, to do it.

One might reason if Jesus is the Messiah and Savior, why would God sovereignly deliver Him up to die? The theological answer to this question is that He cannot be our Messiah or our Savior until our sin-case has been resolved. In order for Israel to have a righteous Kingdom, she must be righteous. In order for us to have a relationship with a righteous God, we must be righteous. Since we are not righteous, God had a predetermined plan whereby He could declare us righteous. Jesus Christ came to die to pay for our sins. God used real decisions made by real people to accomplish His sovereign plan and will in killing His own Son.

Fact #4 - Godless men nailed Him to a cross and killed Him. **2:23b**

God's sovereignty does not make the crime of killing Jesus Christ less than it is. **God finds no theological difficulty between His predestined sovereignty and sinful human responsibility**. God has no theological difficulty revealing that no one can come to Him unless He elects them, and at the same time condemning those who do not come to Him. **There are two great theological truths the early Church taught from day one - the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man.** The same crucifixion of Jesus Christ may be attributed to the sovereignty of God and the wickedness of men.

Fact #5 - God raised up His Son because it was impossible for death to hold Him. **2:24-28**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a key doctrine of the book of Acts (**2:24, 32**; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33-34, 37; 17:31; 26:23). The resurrection of Jesus Christ is what sets Him apart from all other religious leaders. It declares Him to be God, Savior, Messiah.

In **Acts 2:25-28** Peter cites Psalm 16:8-11 which is a Psalm of David. In that Psalm, David says that the Lord sits at the right hand of God and makes a prediction that one of the keys to figuring out the identity of the Messiah and Savior is that the body of the Holy One would not stay in the ground long enough to undergo decay (**Acts 2:27**). **The One who could give life and bring gladness to hearts would make His presence known by not staying dead and buried.** God will not abandon His soul to Hades (**Acts 2:27**).

Hades is the unseen world that the soul goes to the moment one dies. There are two compartment areas - one is a place of fiery torment for the unbeliever and one is a place of comfort for the believer. Once you are in this place you do not get out. Contrary to the heretical teachings of Rob Bell, who as John Mac Arthur rightly observed, is a wolf in sheep's clothes (*Rob Bell: a Brother to Embrace, or a Wolf to Avoid?*).

Once one dies who is not a believer in Jesus Christ, that one is abandoned by God forever in Hades until ultimately he will be cast into the eternal lake of fire. If you reject Jesus Christ and drop into eternity today, you will never get out of hell ever. You will burn forever.

One of the many things that separates Jesus Christ from all others, is that after He died and descended to the Abraham's bosom side of Hades, He came back out alive. Not only didn't His body decay, but He came back out of Hades. Peter's message to this group of men is that they killed Jesus Christ, but it was in perfect prophetic fulfillment to things predicted by David.

MESSAGE #3 – Peter's third message to the men who are brothers concerns the resurrection of Jesus Christ. **2:29-36**

Peter's message to the brethren is that Jesus Christ is Davidic - He is the resurrected Savior, He is God, and He is the Messiah who is now seated at the right hand of God. Now in **verses 29-35**, Peter gives four main proofs of the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Proof #1 - The Davidic tomb . **2:29**

David could not possibly be the Messiah because at the time Peter was preaching this, David's tomb was still in existence in Jerusalem, proving David was dead and had not come back to life. In fact, there is a mosque today that, as Horatio Hackett said, "cannot be far from the true site" (*Acts*, p. 51). The Messiah had to be someone other than David because he is dead and buried.

Proof #2 - The Davidic prophecies . **2:30-31**

David was a prophet who spoke not of Himself but of Jesus Christ. Every prophecy David ever made was focused on the Holy One who would be raised from the dead in body and soul. His body would not decay and His soul would not remain in eternity. This is a critical key to showing us that Jesus Christ is God, Savior, Messiah. David did believe that anyone else who died had a body that would decay and a soul that would be in eternity forever.

Proof #3 - The many witnesses . **2:32**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not based on feelings, but on eyewitness testimony of many people. Peter very emphatically says "all of us are witnesses" to the fact that Jesus Christ arose from the dead. There are various moments in the book of Acts where apostles stated they were witnesses to what they were speaking about - **Acts 2:32**; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39-41; 13:30-31.

Proof #4 - The coming Holy Spirit . **2:33**

Who was the Person who left this world and then the Holy Spirit came to this world? The answer is Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit was not going to be given until Jesus was back up into heaven alive and seated at the right hand of God. By virtue of the fact that the Holy Spirit is now present in this age proves that Jesus Christ is alive and arose from the dead. It proves He is the Messiah and Savior. His work is done and He is seated at the right hand of God until the moment when God will make His enemies a footstool under His feet.

Proof #5 - The Ascension and Exaltation. **2:34-35**

Peter says David did not ascend into the heaven, Jesus did. They saw Him go and this fact clearly proves He is God and Messiah.

Peter brings His message to a conclusion in **verse 36** when He gets to the whole point - Jesus Christ is God/Savior and Jesus Christ is Israel's Messiah. All Israel needs to know that they crucified the God/man Messiah and the God/man Savior.

Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Joel said this in the O.T. and Peter says it right here in the N.T. Many question whether or not they are saved. Well, have you called upon the Lord to save you from your sins? Whoever will do that will be saved. Whenever they do that they will be saved. Call upon Him right now right where you are sitting and you will be saved.