

The Commencement of the Church – Part II

The Commencement Address – Peter’s Sermon

(Acts 2:14-40)

Introduction:

1. The next recorded event by Luke following the coming of the Holy Spirit is a sermon that Peter preached to the crowds there in Jerusalem.
2. Why preach a sermon?
 - It was the method that Jesus used so often during His earthly ministry to compel the hearer to respond to what is said. (Matthew 4:17, Mk 1:14, Luke 4:43, Matt. 11:1, Luke 4:16-21, **Mk 1:38-39**)
 - The one who is preaching or declaring truth; would present a compelling case or argument for the hearer to consider.
 - Here are some examples in which preaching was used in the early church:
 - 1) In Acts 4:2ff Peter and John are actually arrested for **preaching** about the resurrection which resulted in thousands coming to faith in Christ.
 - 2) After the Jewish council arrest the apostles and put them in jail for **preaching** – see Acts 5:1-32, and Gamaliel counsels the Sanhedrin to accept that this may actually be of God (Acts 5:33-41); the apostles continue to use this method (**preaching & teaching**) of getting the Gospel out into the world (Acts 5:42).

- 3) Even in the midst of persecution the apostles continued to **preach** the truth that Jesus saves (Acts 8:1-4).
 - 4) We have Phillip **preaching** to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:35), as well as Phillip, Peter and John preaching to the Samaritans (Acts 8:5, 12, 25, 40).
- Paul used this same method of **preaching** throughout his ministry
 - 1) Immediately after his conversion he began to **preach** in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. (Acts 9:20)
 - 2) Even toward the end of his life; Paul before he was imprisoned in Rome **declared/preached** the Truth claims of the Gospel to King Agrippa and the record says; “Agrippa said to Paul, you almost persuade me to be a Christian. (Acts 26:26)
3. Preaching has been the method and pattern from the early days of the church and it has been at the core of what the church is to be and do.
- Paul declared that “Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel”. (I Corinthians 1:17)
 - Paul went on to declare that; “.....it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.” (I Corinthians 1:21b)
 - The church throughout the days of persecution, the reformation, and subsequent revivals has not stopped declaring the Truth that Jesus saves and preaching has been the method of getting out that Gospel.
 - 1) Reformers such as Martin Luther, Zwingli, John Calvin, John Knox as well as the Puritans continued in this same pattern.

- 2) Revivalist such as George Whitfield, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, D.L. Moody, Charles Spurgeon, Billy Sunday, and Billy Graham were instrumental in declaring/preaching the simple Truth that Jesus saves (Romans 10:14-15). They made it their primary mission to preach this truth at times when the Church was becoming something other than its intended purpose!

4. What is preaching?

- Here is something John MacArthur says in his Commentary on Acts, page 50; “True preaching is proclaiming the great truths and under girding them with the richness of the supernatural and profound wisdom revealed throughout Scripture.....there is no such thing as genuine biblical preaching that is devoid of doctrinal content”.
- Preaching is a means by which a person is “persuaded” (Acts 18:4) by the things spoken. (Acts 28:23-24)

The Establishment of Authority (Acts 2:14-15)

1. In response to the charge that the Apostles were drunk Peter will offer a rebuttal.
2. Let’s take note of a few things about his position and response that begins to add credibility and authority to the message he would so boldly declare:
 - First he stood in solidarity with the other _____ which meant that all were in agreement with what he was about to say.
 - Second it was _____ who seems to become the leader and primary spokesperson for the Apostles which reveals a natural structure of one person leading with the consent of the whole. This will see itself develop as the method in which the church will follow as it begins to take shape.

- Third Peter will _____ his voice and _____ to the hearers that they are not in fact drunk but filled with the Spirit and **they best listen to what he has to say!** (*my emphasis added*)
 - 1) This is a good reminder that we take serious that what we proclaim (The Gospel – Good News that Jesus Save) is true, defendable, and the only means by which a person can make themselves right before God.
 - 2) Peter will later write these words in his Epistle; “Be ready to always give an answer/defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is on you with meekness and fear”. (I Peter 3:15)
- 3. Peter will refute the charge of drunkenness as being ridiculous for in those days not even drunkards start drinking that early which he identified as 9:00 am (the third hour).
 - It would have been universally accepted that the charge was invalid because Peter’s words were true.
 - Even though Peter was right in what he said, the fact that no one continued with the chiding remarks tells me that he earned their respect and the hearers at least agree to pay attention.
- 4. The Holy Spirit had already prepared the hearers; for the miracle of the rushing wind and tongues of fire was what really got their attention.
- 5. Thus it laid the ground work or established an introduction to what Peter is about to declare to them that Christ’s coming is precisely what the prophets spoke of and he will now set out to use the words of Joel to prove it.

The Explanation of the Act (Acts 2:16-21)

1. Peter makes the connection to what transpired at Pentecost to what Joel spoke of. (Joel 2:28-32)
 - First he says; “And it shall be in the last days...”
 - 1) Christ’s coming to earth (His birth) ushers in the “beginning of the last days” (I John 2:18, I Peter 1:20, Hebrews 1:2, **Hebrews 9:26**)
 - 2) The “last days” have included the last 2000+ years (the Church Age) in which Gentiles have been called to salvation (the kingdom) and Israel continues to suffer and be chastened for her rejection and unbelief.
 - 3) It will be during the “millennial kingdom” (1000 years reign of Christ) that all of the events spoken of by Joel will see their fulfillment. (Matthew 24:29-30)
 - Next Peter says that; “God says, that I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind.....” (The points below are take from John MacArthur’s Commentary on Acts, page 53)
 - 1) “During the church age, God pours His Spirit into believers” (cf. Titus 3:5-6)
 - 2) “In the kingdom, there will be perfect peace (Isaiah 9:7), peace rules now in the hearts of believers. (John 14:27)
 - 3) “In the kingdom Christ will reign (Luke 1:33), He reigns now in the hearts of believers”
 - 4) “In the kingdom, Christ will judge all men (Acts 17:31, II Timothy 4:1), now He judges His people through the Spirit’s convicting ministry in their lives”

2. Therefore what was witnessed on the Day of Pentecost was the “beginning of the last days” that the Prophets (in this case Joel) spoke of.
 - These “Last Days” will culminate in a catastrophic event (which has not happened yet) described by Daniel (Daniel 7), Jesus (Matthew 24:1-28), the Apostle Paul (II Thessalonians 2), the Apostle John (Revelation 13) and others; that many refer to as the Great Tribulation.
 - This Great Tribulation is then followed by the Glorious Return of Christ and the millennial kingdom begins. (Revelation 19:11-21, Matthew 24:29-30)
3. The call that is made by Joel; “And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” was made on that day to the hearers of Peter’s message. Well will learn later that thousands will respond. That same message to “call on the Lord” is still being proclaimed today and will continue until the Lord returns for there is salvation in no other name but Christ’s! (Acts 4:12)

The Evaluation of Its (The Message) Authenticity (Acts 2:22-36)

1. Was the message that the Apostles were proclaiming an authentic message?
 - Since the Apostles were followers of Christ and believed that He was the promised Messiah (John 1:29-34), God in the Flesh (John 1:1-14), The Christ (Matthew 16:13-17); it only stands to reason that Peter will let that testimony stand on its own!
 - Thus Peter will describe to the hearers a compelling testimony of who Jesus is in a very succinct and systematic manor.
 - 1) Many will _____ the Truth claims that Jesus is the promised Messiah.
 - 2) Others will continue to _____ Christ

2. Evaluating His Authentic Life (Acts 2:22)

- Was there a real Jesus who was from Nazareth?
 - 1) According to the testimony of the Gospel writers there was (Matthew 21:11, Mark 10:47, 14:67, 16:6, Luke 24:19, John 18:5, 7)
 - 2) The inscription on the cross; “Pilate wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews” claims him to be a real person from a Nazareth.
 - 3) The other Apostles used the term Nazareth to describe where Jesus was from. (Acts 3:6, 4:10, 10:38, 26:9)
 - 4) Ironically to claim he was from Nazareth added insult to the Jewish religious leaders because they just could not conclude that anything good could come out of Nazareth! Thus Peter’s reference to Jesus being from Nazareth would constitute a “mild rebuke” to those (especially the religious leaders) who continued to deny His Deity!
 - 5) The key thing to note here is the claim is made that Jesus was a real person and those in the audience were well aware of that as actual fact.
- He was “attested” by God (Acts 2:22)
 - 1) What does the word “attested” mean?
 - 2) Today’s English Version (GNB or paraphrased version) says this; “Listen to these words, fellow Israelites! Jesus of Nazareth was a man whose divine authority was **clearly proven** to you by all the miracles and wonders which God performed through Him.”

- It was the miracles that Jesus performed that were God’s way of verifying Jesus’ authenticity.
 - 1) Note the story of Nicodemus in John 3 where he says; “Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” (John 3:2)
 - 2) Critics and skeptics have tried to eliminate, or explain away by some natural means the miracles performed by Jesus. However, this has ended in mere frustration for they can’t seem to explain away the miracles performed by Jesus without somehow admitting they occur.
 - 3) Listen to what C.S. Lewis says; “Now we must agree with Hume (David Hume – an 18th century philosopher who rejected the possibility of miracles) that if there is “absolutely uniform” experience against miracles, if in other words they have never happened, why then they never have. Unfortunately we know the experience against them to be uniform only if we know that all the reports of them are false. And we can know all the reports to be false only if we know already that miracles have never occurred. In fact, we are arguing in a circle.” (C.S. Lewis, *Miracle*, page 105)
- Much of what Jesus did while ministering on the earth was centered on miracles, wonders, and signs, all of which was done with the Father’s approval. (Matt. 11:1-6, Jn. 5:1-17, **John 14:10**)
- It would have been utter foolishness for the hearers of Peter’s sermon to deny the miracles performed by Jesus (Acts 2:22). “The evidence from Jesus’ life and works that He was the Messiah was conclusive and undeniable. But “because men loved darkness rather than light; for their deeds were evil” (John 3:19), they committed the greatest sin that can be committed – they rejected Jesus Christ. John MacArthur Commentary on Acts page 62)

3. Evaluating His Authentic Death (Acts 2:23)

- We must never forget nor accept that the crucifixion was ever in the hands of man, for it was no accident that Jesus was crucified, nor was He the victim of chance or a martyr for some good cause! John 10:17-18, 19:10-11)
- Peter tells us here that; “this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to the cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.” (Acts 2:23)
 - 1) It was by design that Jesus was betrayed by Judas and then given up to the Jewish leaders to be handed over to the Romans to be crucified.
 - 2) God planned it and He ordained it so! (II Timothy 1:9, Revelation 13:9)
 - 3) It wasn't that God looked down into the future and saw that Israel would reject Jesus and then he worked the crucifixion into His plan – the established fact is that God ordained (predetermined/predestined) the crucifixion just as He ordained (predetermined/predestined) our salvation. To conclude otherwise is to deny the sovereignty and omniscience of God! (Acts 2:23)
- There are a couple of things here that we don't want to miss:
 - 1) Just because God used evil men to accomplish His purposes, the fact remains that those who crucified Jesus are guilty and not absolved from their sin. There is no way for any of us to escape the guilt and punishment for our sin on our own! (Matthew 23:33, Romans 2:3, Hebrews 2:3)
 - 2) Note the affirmation of Jesus' death on the cross

4. Evaluating His Authentic Resurrection & Ascension (Acts 2:24-36)
- The resurrection is the central theme of Christian Doctrine (I Corinthians 6:14, (I Corinthians 15:16-23))
 - The resurrection is the greatest proof that Jesus is the Messiah and something that unbelieving mankind can only deny in ignorance, for it is impossible to prove that He did not raise from the dead!
 - 1) One must prove He never existed in order for the resurrection to be false!
 - 2) It was impossible for death to keep a hold of Him
 - The main point and most lengthy portion of Peter's sermon are the Resurrection & Ascension. Contained in the sermon are five proofs of these as being factual: (Acts 2:24-36)
 - 1) The **prophetic proof** declared in *Psalm 16:8-11* in which David speaks of a "future resurrection" or future restoration of his body where he would no longer be separated from God. Peter declares this to be the very resurrection of Christ that is the fulfillment of that hope! (Acts 2:24-31)
 - 2) The **physical proof** existed in those who witnessed the resurrection. (Acts 2:32, 3:15, 5:32, 10:39-41, 13:30-31)
 - 3) The **supernatural proof** evidenced by the unexplainable events that occurred at Pentecost. (Acts 2:1-13, 33)
 - 4) The **fulfilling proof** evidenced in the fact that Jesus Ascended to the Father (Acts 1:9-11, Acts 2:33)
 - 5) The **declared proof** evidenced by Peter's claim that "this Jesus whom you crucified is both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36)

The Exactness Of It's (The Message) Application (Acts 2:37-40)

1. These verses reveal the results of the convicting work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11)
 - Note that they were “pierced to the heart” which means “to strike, prick violently, to stun”.
 - Why were they in such anguish?
 - Note the response to the conviction; “Brethren, what shall we do?”.....What does that say about their current spiritual condition?
2. Peter's response
 - _____ and be _____
 - 1) _____ (*metanoesate*) means to have a change of heart, change your outlook, or reverse the direction of your life. The emphasis is an intentional change of heart and mind (one's outlook) from something and towards something else in the opposite direction. To those who heard this message it was clear that Peter was telling them that the Jesus they rejected was the Jesus they need to accept and embrace....therefore they needed to repent of their attitude toward Him and accept and embrace Him as Lord and Savior! (Acts 2:38, 3:19, 8:22, 11:18, 13:24, 17:30, 19:4, 20:21, 26:20)

2) Be _____; which is a natural act that follows repentance. In this particular text it seems that in answering the question, *Brethren what shall we do*, the answer is not that salvation comes in two parts, but both actions (repentance and Baptism) reveal the true intentions of the responder. The outward action of Baptism was a mark that identified the person as a follower of Christ and the cost was often high for such a public confession. It (Baptism) was an action that made a “public break” from Judaism and established the person as a follower of Christ....there was no turning back once this occurred. In other words there were no “secret disciples” (Matthew 10:32-33). This action would pretty much eliminate or weed out those conversions that were not genuine.

- Why did Peter state that they needed to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus?

- Is Peter teaching that the act of baptism is essential in order to receive “forgiveness of sins”?

1) I think the best approach to this question is to never lose sight of the fact that “faith” (believing in Jesus) is the essential ingredient to salvation which is the forgiveness of sins. (Hebrews 11:6, Romans 1:17, John 1:12, John 3:16, Acts 16:31, Romans 3:21-30, Romans 4:5, Romans 10:9-10, Philippians 3:9, Galatians 2:16)

2) Once we get that down then we won’t get hung up on reversing the process, whether it be baptism, taking communion, going to church, tithing or any other outward manifestation (work) that a follower of Christ is to practice.

- 3) You see baptism is the not the cause of forgiveness, it merely follows it or is the result of it!
- 4) I think a person or “religious entity” that teaches “baptismal regeneration” (baptism saves) is treading on dangerous ground for such a position rubs against or in my mind seems to contradict too many other passages that teach faith (shown through the act of repentance) is what brings forgiveness.
- 5) Another important element that we don’t want to lose sight of was that faith and baptism were inseparable as seen from the early days of the church. (Ephesians 4:5)
- 6) Is Baptism essential....absolutely! Peter knew full well that those who were truly repentant would need to step out publicly and proclaim their allegiance to Christ which in those days and even in ours continues to mark us as followers of Christ and therefore separates us from the world. This is sometimes hard to grasp in the modern American Church for we seem to think following Christ is a piece of cake or a walk in the park. For many American Christians when the going gets tough we take our marbles and go home!
- 7) Is Peter saying that baptism saves? No more than James the author of the Epistle is saying that works will save you. But he is saying that baptism is necessary for it reveals where our head and our hearts are. In many ways it becomes our first act of obedience after deciding to repent and follow Christ.

- Peter continues in his explanation that one of the greatest joys for a believer is knowing that we stand “right” before God!
 - 1) This is what repentance brings (Ephesians 1:17, Colossians 2:13, I John 2:12)
 - 2) There is no other way (John 14:6, Acts 4:12), to obtain peace with God (Ephesians 1:7) without believing in Jesus! This is accomplished through repentance (Romans 10:9-10) and results in a new life (II Corinthians 5:17) that is evidenced by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 1:13-14)
 - 3) The only thing standing in our way of being made right before God and receiving the “gift of the Holy Spirit” is our sin. Once a person repents and believes in Christ then the Holy Spirit is given as a gift (Acts 2:37) and according to the teaching of Scripture; “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory”. (Ephesians 1:13-14 NKJV)
- Questions/Comments:

3. Peter provides a good reminder that God is the one who calls us to salvation (Acts 2:39)
- I love this passage because it helps (for me anyway) piece together the ever ending debate between election and free will.
 - 1) Our responsibility is “to repent” which is an action that we must do in order to obtain forgiveness of sins (being made right before God) and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (our seal of redemption).
 - 2) Along with that is the “divine side” which is the “call” of the Lord and none of us come to Him unless He calls us. (Romans 8:28-30, Ephesians 1:7-14)
 - I like how John MacArthur says it his *Commentary on Acts* page 76; “A biblical view of salvation does not exclude either human responsibility or divine sovereignty, but allows them to remain in tension. We must resist the attempt to harmonize what Scripture does not, content in the knowledge that there is no ultimate contradiction in God’s mind”.
4. Peter continues to exhort and plead with the crowd; “And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them saying, be saved from this perverse generation.”
- What awaited the Jewish community was continued persecution at the hands of the Romans and many would perish as a result from their Jewish revolt. The eventual destruction of the Jewish Temple in A.D. 70 would also claim many Jewish lives.
 - All of this persecution and killing along with the Jews being once again forced from their homeland, makes this message from Peter all the more timely and applicable.
 - Stay tuned next week as we see the results of the sermon and the official beginning of the “First Christian Fellowship”.