

PETER'S PENTECOST SERMON

ACTS 2:14-41

THE SPIRIT-FILLED PETER was a totally different man than the one who cowered before a lowly servant girl and denied the Lord three times.

The three outstanding features of Peter's Pentecost sermon, as he speaks as the spokesperson of the whole Church are:

1. He explained what happened: the Spirit had come (vv. 14-21)
2. He explained how it happened: Jesus was alive (vv. 22-35)
3. He explained why it happened: to save sinners (vv. 36-41)

He explained what happened: the Spirit had come (vv. 14-21)

He says, "Listen carefully; *these men are not drunk, with wine, as you suppose* (v. 15)."

They were intoxicated alright, but not with the world's wine, for they were filled with the new wine of the Kingdom of God. At the marriage of Cana, the best wine — the gift of Christ—was kept for last. So in these "last days" the best wine has been given in the coming of the Holy Spirit (James Smith).

What happened there that day is what the prophet Joel prophesied centuries ago (Joel 2:28-32). God had promised, "*I will pour out my Spirit on all people.*"

The Spirit has been given, but He has not been "*poured out on all people.*" Pentecost was an initial and partial fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, because the signs and wonders predicted had not occurred. When you read Joel's prophecy in context, you see that it deals with the nation of Israel in the end times, in connection with "the Day of the Lord."

The cosmic signs we read about in the second part of the prophecy are still future. They are descriptions of things that will happen during the Great Tribulation. Then at the return of Jesus, *all* who will be allowed into the kingdom will possess the Holy Spirit.

Peter was led by the Spirit to see in the prophecy an application to the church.

He explained how it happened: Jesus was alive (vv. 22-35)

Peter gave them proofs of the resurrection of Jesus and then he called on them to believe on Christ and be saved.

Peter bore witness to the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was, "*A man approved of God* (v. 22)." The works that Jesus did were the works that no other man could do (John 15, 24). His "miracles, wonders, and signs" were irrefutable evidence of His holiness and superhuman power, of His actual oneness with the invisible and almighty Father (John 14: 10-11).

Paul quoted Psalm 16:8-11, verses that clearly could not apply to David who was already dead and buried. Being a prophet of God, David wrote about the Messiah, that His soul would not remain in Hades (the realm of the dead) or His body in the grave where it would decay.

But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power (v. 24).” He who claimed to be “the Resurrection and the Life” proved His claim by rising from the dead (John 10, 17).

The word translated "pains" for agony of death means "birth pangs," suggesting that the tomb was a "womb" out of which Jesus was "born" in Resurrection glory (see Acts 13:33).

Peter's other proof of the resurrection of Christ was the presence of the Holy Spirit (vv. 33-35). Follow his reasoning. If the Holy Spirit is in the world, then God must have sent Him. Joel promised that one day the Spirit would come, and Jesus Himself had promised to send the gift of the Holy Spirit to His people (Luke 24:49; John 14:26; 15:26; Acts 1:4).

But if Jesus is dead, He cannot send the Spirit; therefore, He must be alive. Furthermore, He could not send the Spirit unless He had returned to heaven to the Father (John 16:7); so, Jesus has ascended to heaven!

The coming of the Holy Spirit was not only the fulfillment of a promise, but also the guarantee that He who had been crucified was now " *by the right hand of God exalted* " (vv. 33-36), and made " *both Lord and Christ.* "

He explained why it happened: to save sinners (vv. 36-41)

Peter's conclusion was both a confirmation and an accusation: *Jesus is your Messiah, but you crucified Him!* (see Acts 2:23). Peter did not present the cross as the place where the Sinless Substitute died for the world, but where Israel killed her own Messiah! They committed the greatest crime in history!

Peter was an exemplary preacher. He was bold, clear, forceful and persuasive. He went straight for the conscience whether men would listen or not. The Holy Spirit took Peter's anointed message and used it to convict the hearts of the listeners.

“*Whom you crucified (v.36)*”, was Peter’s burning stab. Peter is spiritually empowered to use the sword of the Lord as his weapon. He had by now learned that a soldier’s sword is of no use for spiritual warfare.

Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart. The conviction was painfully deep. Unexpectedly they felt anguish and remorse, and great guilt for killing their Messiah. It was as if they felt the nails with which they had crucified Christ piercing their own hearts.

Then a burning question, coming from Spirit-pierced hearts, was uttered, “*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*”

Peter gave them plain directions: *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (vv. 38-40).”*

Peter's word was not, “Reform, and be more civilized,” but “Repent, and be baptized.” To repent was to change their minds completely regarding Jesus Christ, whom they had rejected; and to be baptized implied the renouncing of the old life, and an open confession of Christ as their Lord. In doing so this would receive the promised Holy Spirit.

Many gladly received his word (v. 41). On that single day, three thousand people repented, believed, were saved and baptized.

With much indebtedness to James Smith (Handfuls on Purpose) and Warren W. Wiersbe (Acts of the Apostles).