

Peter's Sermon on the Day of Pentecost

Acts 2:14-35

Acts 2:14-21: *"But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. ¹⁵ For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. ²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. ²¹ And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

Background Notes

As a result of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Jewish Feast of Pentecost, the early Christians were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began praising the Lord in the Temple courts in different known languages. The Jews and the proselytes (converts to Judaism) from all over the Roman Empire who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover heard these praises to the Lord in their own native tongues, and they were amazed! *"So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?" ¹³ Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine" (v12-13).* There were mixed reactions among the people who witnessed this great event.

It was at this point that Peter stood up and explained to the people what was going on. *"But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day" (v14-15).* These early Christians were not filled with wine - it was only nine o'clock in the morning, and this was the Feast of Pentecost. These folks were filled with the Spirit! This was a fulfillment of prophecy.

A simple three-point outline of Peter's Pentecost sermon would be as follows:

1. This event is the fulfillment of prophecy.
2. Jesus is the Messiah, and He is alive.
3. The Holy Spirit has been poured forth.

In his sermon, Peter quoted from three Old Testament prophetic passages: Joel 2, Psalm 16, and Psalm 110. Our three doctrinal points will focus on these three passages.

Doctrinal Points

1. The return of Christ was predicted in Joel 2.

Verses 17-21 quote from the Old Testament prophecy of Joel 2:28-32. The big question is whether Joel's prophecy was completely fulfilled at Pentecost. At first glance, it seems that it was, in view of what Peter said of Joel's prophecy in verses 17-18: *"And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy."* It appears that the events on the Day of Pentecost fulfilled this prophecy.

But then look again at verses 19-20: *"I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. ²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord."*

These verses certainly were not fulfilled at Pentecost. In fact, these verses sound more like what our Lord predicted in His Olivet Discourse, that these "wonders in the heavens" would be signs of His return. And notice that Peter never said that the signs on the Day of Pentecost *completely* fulfilled Joel's prophecy. In verse 16 he said, *"But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel."*

So we believe that Joel's prophecy was only *partially* fulfilled at Pentecost. It will be completely fulfilled when the Lord returns. Then the Spirit of the Lord will be poured out on all believers, but it will be a day of darkness and judgment for all unbelievers. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost certainly illustrates what it will be like when the Lord returns to set up His kingdom here on this earth.

If the nation of Israel had received her Messiah at Jesus Christ's first coming, then Joel's prophecy would have been completely fulfilled. But Israel rejected her Messiah, and so the complete fulfillment of Joel's prophecy awaits until the second coming of Christ. In that sense, it predicts the return of Christ. Christ's return was predicted in Joel 2.

2. The resurrection of Christ was predicted in Psalm 16.

Verses 22-32: *"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— ²³ Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; ²⁴ whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it."*

²⁵ For David says concerning Him: 'I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. ²⁶ Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. ²⁷ For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. ²⁸ You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.'

²⁹ "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, ³¹ he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses."

In verses 25-28, Peter quoted from Psalm 16, a Messianic psalm. His main point for quoting this Messianic psalm is the second point of his sermon: Jesus is the Messiah, and He has risen from the dead.

David said that "God would not leave my soul in Hades, nor allow the Holy One to see corruption" - but David did die and was buried, and his tomb was right there in Jerusalem (v29). So David must have been looking ahead and predicting the resurrection of his descendant, the Messiah, Jesus Christ. God promised David that one of his descendants would sit on the throne, so David must have been writing prophetically about the Messiah (v30). How else could you interpret this psalm of the Hebrew Scripture?

Now, Peter said, we are all witnesses to the truth that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, has been resurrected. No one can deny it - the evidence is too overwhelming! ***Jesus is the Messiah and He's alive!*** The resurrection of Christ was predicted in Psalm 16.

3. The ascension of Christ was predicted in Psalm 110.

Verses 32-35: "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. ³³ Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. ³⁴ "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, ³⁵ till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"

In verses 34-35, Peter quoted from Psalm 110, another Messianic psalm. We know, said Peter, that David did not ascend into the heavens, and yet in Psalm 110 David said: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" How is this to be explained?

There's only one way to explain it, said Peter: David was predicting the bodily ascension of the Messiah into Heaven. And that's where the Messiah is now – He ascended in Heaven, and is glorified and exalted to the right hand of the Father! As a result, the Holy Spirit has been poured forth at this time of Pentecost, and that's what you are seeing and hearing (v32-33). The promise of the Holy Spirit has been received. It's because of Christ's ascension that the Holy Spirit has been poured forth. The ascension of Christ was predicted in Psalm 110.

Notice that all three members of the Trinity are mentioned in verse 33: *"[Jesus] being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear."* Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit – all three members of the Trinity are mentioned in this verse.

Practical Application

Get comfortable with the doctrines of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility

Notice what Peter said about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ: *"Him [Jesus], being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death" (v23).*

If the crucifixion was part of the predetermined plan of God, how can God hold man accountable for putting Jesus Christ on the cross? The explanation is that **God is sovereign**, but **man is responsible** for his own actions. Both doctrines are taught in Scripture. God is sovereign in that **He works all things after the counsel of His will** (Ephesians 1:11). But man is responsible for every single sin he chooses to commit.

It seems that these two doctrines contradict one another - but they are not a contradiction! It's beyond our finite comprehension to completely fathom how they harmonize, but they do not contradict one another. They would be in contradiction to one another if the Bible said in one Scripture that God is sovereign and said in another Scripture that God is not sovereign - or if one Scripture said that man is responsible for his actions but another Scripture said that man is not responsible. But the Bible does not say that. The Bible teaches that God is sovereign, and it also teaches that man is responsible.

The Bible is very comfortable in teaching both the doctrine of God's sovereignty and the doctrine of man's responsibility - even in the same verse, as in verse 23. So if the Bible is comfortable teaching it, it's important for us to get comfortable with the doctrines of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.