

## Bible Study 6 - Acts 2:14-21 - Pentecostal Promise

We pick up where we left off last time. We are in Acts 2, and our focus will be upon verses 14 through 21.

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. 15 For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. 16 But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: 17 ““And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; 18 even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. 19 And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; 20 the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. 21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

1. Consider Peter’s prominence: But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them:

a) Note the togetherness. Peter stands with the other eleven apostles. They are united. They are of one accord. They are one in heart and mind concerning the Faith which they confess and are determined to communicate in obedience to Christ’s commission to them.

b) Note the tenacity of Peter. He lifted up his voice. He did so courageously and with conviction to communicate Christ’s gospel with volume and clarity. His voice must be audible and hence able to carry the length of the crowd gathered at Pentecost. Like his Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Spirit of the Lord has anointed him to preach good news to the poor.

In an age before electrical amplification orators had to throw their voices effectively to be heard. And buildings and natural spaces were often designed and chosen that helped embellish the sound of the human voice. I have seen evidence of this here in Scotland where in the past thousands used to gather outdoors at Communion Seasons. There’s a couple of places I am familiar with in the Highlands that were chosen because they are naturally formed amphitheatres.

c) Note the transformation of Peter. This disciple who had denied Christ three times on the night of his betrayal and arrest and who later fled in despair was forgiven and restored through faith and repentance. He is now resolute and determined to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour to all. Even to the citizens of Jerusalem who little over a month past had been baying for Christ’s blood, and shouting out ‘crucify him, crucify him.’ Even in Jerusalem, where the religious authorities had made no secret of their hatred and hostility to Christ and his followers. But here is Peter boldly addressing and refuting the scoffers and mockers that had accused Jesus’s followers of being drunk. And who is about to preach Jesus as the promised Messiah, Lord and Saviour

2. Consider Peter's public address: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. 15 For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

a) Peter addresses the crowd: Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus had commanded his church to go preach the gospel to everyone beginning at Jerusalem and Judea. And immediately after receiving the baptism of the Spirit, the work begins in earnest - there and then.

While the convention 'men of Judea' is used by way of formal address, recognising that the Law mandated the male heads of households to keep the three annual feasts, of which Pentecost was one (as we considered last week), there would also have been women and children present too. The Holy City would have been near to bursting due to the Jewish pilgrims and God-fearers present from all over the ancient land of Israel and further afield.

b) Peter appeals to be heard: let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. Peter urges the crowd to listen thoughtfully to his words. He pleads with the people to accept and appropriate his words. The Apostle Paul rightfully reminds us elsewhere that this is vital because faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ (Rom.10:17).

c) Peter answers and annuls a false accusation: For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. Those who had received the Holy Spirit had begun to speak in foreign languages so that those in the crowd heard the good news in their own native tongues. One can imagine a local religious person, say a supporter of one of the two main sects, the Pharisees or the Sadducees, whose language was Aramaic and that person now hears these Galilean Christians speak in foreign languages and hence the accusation of drunken gibberish. But no, Peter points out that they are not drunk, they are speaking in recognizable languages. Moreover, it is only 9am in the morning (the 3rd hour by Jewish computation).

3. Consider the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit as the fulfilment of promise: But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel.

a) It was foretold in the Old Testament scriptures. Specifically, in the Book of Joel. One of the Minor Prophets, which is a reference not to minor importance but to the length of the book. The 12 Minor Prophets were ordinarily grouped together for one book or scroll during the time of Jesus and the early church.

Joel prophesied this very event some nine centuries before it came to pass. You may wish to pause and read the verses as they appear in Joel 2:28-32 and the wider context of that chapter and book.

b) It was foreseen in the annual feast of Pentecost. The annual feast kept God's promise relating to the New Covenant era and internalisation of God's law of love by the Spirit alive. It helped to engender expectation and anticipation.

c) It was fulfilled 50 days from Christ's death and resurrection as promised. Great is God's faithfulness. He is the God of his word. He is the Sovereign Lord.

4. Consider the prophetic context and content of Peter's text: "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; 18 even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. 19 And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; 20 the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. 21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

a) This is prophetic language: it foretold the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon the church. Men and women alike received the Spirit and proclaimed God's word. The word was foretold and forthtold. The Spirit who inspired the word would enlighten through that same word and empower for service. He will accompany His word and be a Helper to God's people as they communicate it.

He will provide them with vision and will motivate and move God's people. He will bring life to the spiritually dead. And transform relationships, with God and others. And that is presented in picture language.

b) This is poetic language. It is apocalyptic language like that used by the Lord Jesus when asked about the end of the age. It is not necessarily to be taken literally. You may recall a few years back some gullible souls becoming almost apoplectic about blood red moons and the like!

c) This is purposeful language. Confirming the new era has begun. These are the last days. It is written to elicit a response from us. It is written to encourage us to engage in the Great Commission. To make a difference for good. It is written to strengthen our faith and trust in the LORD of history whose will be done. He is on his throne. His word transforms individuals, families, and communities but it will turn the world on its head.

The Lord Jesus will return to judge the world and usher in the eternal state. And hence the use of apocalyptic language and signs associated with the end times.

1. Why should the church promote unity today?

2. Where is church unity to be found?

3. How do we reach large numbers of people with the gospel today?

4. What does the Lord Jesus's command to preach the gospel throughout the world beginning at Jerusalem say about:

a) The extent of God's grace, love, and mercy?

b) The nature of the church in this New Testament era?

c) The magnitude of the church's task in this New Testament era?