

Bible Study 7 – Acts 2:22-36 – Peter preaches Jesus Christ

We pick up where we left off prior to Easter and therefore we are in Acts chapter 2, verses 22 – 36. We are reflecting on the Apostle Peter’s address to the crowds in Jerusalem at Pentecost after the Spirit had baptised the church. And here we get to the heart of his apostolic message. Let us hear the word of God:

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— 23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. 24 God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. 25 For David says concerning him,

“I saw the Lord always before me,

for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;

26 therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;

my flesh also will dwell in hope.

27 For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,

or let your Holy One see corruption.

28 You have made known to me the paths of life;

you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’

29 “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, 31 he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. 32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. 33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. 34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

“The Lord said to my Lord,

“Sit at my right hand,

35 until I make your enemies your footstool.””

36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

1. The Apostle Peter preaches Jesus Christ, a crucified and risen Saviour and Lord: “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— 23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. 24 God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. vv.22-24

a) Jesus Christ is the focus and fulcrum of Peter’s preaching. Peter preaches the word of scripture, the primary purpose of which is, to reveal the Word Incarnate. And this is the key that opens the door to apostolic and catholic biblical interpretation. Peter particularly makes use of Psalms 16, 110, and possibly 132 to proclaim not only the resurrection of Jesus but also his ministry as Messiah and Lord.

It is worth noting in passing that the psalter was the prayer book and hymnal not only of the Old Testament church but the New Testament one too. And the psalms were ever on the lips of the Lord Jesus. If we would cultivate the mind of Christ, then we should make good use of the psalter which sadly is often undervalued and underused in the contemporary church.

The apostle points to eyewitness evidence and experience for the resurrection and so the scriptural references are designed not only to reinforce the reality of Jesus’s resurrection but are principally cited to demonstrate that Jesus is God’s Christ who is now Lord of lords and King of kings.

Peter preaches the historical person of Jesus and his saving ministry or works which culminated in his death and resurrection – his cross and crown.

b) Faith in Jesus Christ and repentance towards God is the aim of Peter’s preaching as we shall see. His preaching Christ is with confidence and conviction. It is challenging and confrontational - you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. Peter does so to show the people gathered before him their need. Hence conviction of guilt must precede a recognition of the need for God’s grace and mercy in the gospel. Peter seeks to show folk their sin to lead them to the remedy for sin in the person and work of the Saviour!

c) Peter’s desire is to fashion followers of Jesus Christ. This is wholly in keeping to the Lord’s command in the Great Commission to go make disciples, baptising, and teaching them all things that Christ commanded.

2. The Apostle Peter proclaims Jesus Christ as always central to God’s saving plan and purpose: 23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. 24 God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it... 36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

a) Here we encounter the apparent paradox of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Christ’s cross, death and resurrection were always central to God’s plan and programme of salvation. They were foretold, symbolised, and typified in the Old Testament. They became a

reality in the New. Jesus himself, repeatedly made clear to Peter and other apostles and disciples that he must go up to Jerusalem to be betrayed, crucified, dead and buried but he made clear that he would triumphantly rise again.

Peter references Psalm 16 but you might also want to reflect of Isaiah 53 for the significance of Jesus's substitutionary sacrifice. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isa.53:4-6).

God's sovereignty is cause for faith and hope but it in no way absolves or exonerates the guilt of those responsible for Jesus's betrayal, crucifixion, and death. The people acted as free if fallen agents. God did not make them condemn and crucify Jesus! And yet God had foreknown and planned it. Hence, John the Baptist's words at the outset of Jesus' earthly ministry, 'behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.'

b) The Son took our human nature to himself in the person of Jesus and willingly accepted his ministry and mission from the Father. And hence King David spoke prophetically in Psalm 16 of Christ who saw beyond his cross and grave to his everlasting crown and glory at the Father's side.

c) Therefore, the same Jesus who fulfilled all righteousness, who worked wonders and signs, and who was crucified, dead and buried, also rose again, and ascended to glory. He is Lord and Christ (the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Messiah). He is God's appointed and anointed Prophet, Priest and King.

He is the Prophet, God's last Word to us, whose voice we are called upon to hear and heed. He is the Priest who offered himself and who has entered the true Holy of Holies in Heaven where he ever intercedes for his people. He is the King whose reign is eternal and whose rule we must submit to for love's sake.

3. The Apostle Peter pronounces the resurrection and reign of the Lord Jesus Christ as a past and present reality: 36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

a) Peter makes clear that Jesus's earthly ministry that culminated in his crucifixion and death was central to God's saving plan but is now a past reality. An historical event of the utmost significance for our present and future!

It is finished was the last thing that Jesus said on the cross. He had accomplished his saving mission. He had consumed to the uttermost the cup the Father had handed to him. And hence we remember this is the sacrament of the Lord's Supper which he instituted for his church. Do this in remembrance of me – my body given for you and my blood shed for you! His cross was and is central to the saving work.

b) Peter makes clear that Jesus's resurrection is also a past historical event of everlasting significance. The same Jesus who was crucified, dead and buried, rose again. He rose physically, possessing a risen, glorified body. He appeared to numerous disciples and

fellowshipped with and taught his church for some forty days afterwards before his ascension to his coronation, continuing ministry, and reign at the Father's side in heaven. From where he will return at the end of this age to judge the world and usher in the eternal state in the new heavens and new earth.

c) Peter desires that all know these things for certain. That this is God's revealed will and work. That Jesus is God and Christ. That he is Lord and Saviour. As the psalmist says: This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes (Ps.118:23).

4. The Apostle Peter proclaims the pouring out of the Holy Spirit as the promised gift of God in and through Jesus Christ: Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

a) The Old Testament prophet, Joel, had foretold this day as we noted in a previous study.

b) Jesus had similarly explained why it was necessary that he ascend to the Father's side and send them the Holy Spirit as Counsellor, Comforter, Guide, Sanctifier, and Illuminator. You may wish to read chapters 14 and 16 in the Gospel According to John for Jesus's actual words.

c) Peter was able to point to audible and visible proofs of the Spirit's presence among them - he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

Questions

1. How would you respond to those who say that the Old Testament scriptures are no longer relevant to the Christian?
2. Why is Jesus's resurrection so central and crucial to the gospel message?
3. What is the significance of Jesus's ascension?
4. What evidence should we seek for the Spirit's work in our individual and corporate lives as Christians?