

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Confronted with The Last Days **Acts 2:14-21**

Keywords: Acts, Day of Pentecost, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Sovereignty, Day of the Lord, Last Days

PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: Peter stands and delivers a powerful and densely packed sermon to this crowd of Jews after the Holy Spirit filled and moved in the early Church. It is a sermon that explains what is happening, what happened to Jesus Christ, why it happened and their own responsibility and guilt in it. It is a call to repentance but it is not a man-centered message. It is designed to teach and explain while holding nothing back. The effect and the results are left to God and it is a mighty act God does in response.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read Acts 2:14-21
- B. What is happening in this section of Acts is so critical to the over-arching flow of what people call “redemptive history.”
 - 1. This is the grand story over all the stories in the whole Bible.
 - 2. When you read the bible you can get lost in the individual stories and yet miss the point of it all. It is a story of creation, fall, redemption and restoration.
 - 3. It is the story of God’s glory revealed in some of the most surprising of ways. But it all is moving toward the final time of restoration where God makes the new heavens and earth. Our great enemies are gone and life in its fullest sense begins for eternity.
 - 4. Depending on the person there are various ways that the bible is divided into parts to help see how God is working. Some do this via covenants. Others will speak of administrations. Still others will use dispensations. And finally others will use age. This is what I will use most of the time.
 - 5. In the Old Testament much of it is dealing with what I would call the age of the Law. Several things control the understanding of the Old Testament, such as the covenant with Abraham, the covenant made with Moses and Israel and the covenant made with King David. The one that is most important is the Mosaic covenant. Much of the Old Testament is seen as the age of the Law, or age of Moses.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

6. This actually continues through the Gospels and Acts 1. But with the advent of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 we come to a new way that God interacts with humanity. Not through Israel, but through Christ and the Church. And so it is called by me as the age of grace or the age of Christ or the Church age.
 7. To see this a different way, you can say that the whole of the Old Testament is looking forward to the coming of the Messiah, or Christ.
 8. The gospels are unveiling the Christ, who is Jesus. That He is God in flesh. Who died on the cross as the perfect, eternal sacrifice for sin. And who rose again on the third day, just as He promised.
 9. Then, in Acts and the rest of the New Testament we see the bible looking backward at what Christ did, while looking forward to when Jesus Christ returns to make all things new.
 10. So what is happening here in Acts 2 is a new age where Jesus Christ is front and center. It is the age of Jesus Christ, it is the age of the Church.
- C. We have today the goal of looking at this important sermon by Peter that sets into motion the salvation of a large number of Jews. It is the main point of this chapter, but too often it is lost in the over-emphasis on the speaking in tongues.
- D. We will deal with it over two week since it is so dense with Old Testament quotes and explanations regarding who Jesus Christ is and what happened on the cross and afterward. Today we will consider vss 14-21 and then vss 22-36 next Lord's Day.
- E. At the core of this message is that the people are confronted with two things or realities that cannot be ignored except at the peril of their souls. And the same is true today. To ignore either of these is to place yourself in great peril for all eternity.
1. The first thing Peter confronts the people with is that they are now living in the last days. Something we will focus on today.
 2. The second is even more important and tightly connected to the first point. He confronts them with Jesus Christ. Who He is. What He did. Why His was crucified. Who is responsible. And finally the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the grave.
 3. So, two main points, each of which need to be understood so that we can understand how we ought to respond.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

II. Confronted with The Last Days.

- A. Peter needs to give explanation as to what is happening in Jerusalem right now.
 - 1. People heard the noise of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the people gathered together as commanded by Jesus.
 - 2. They are watching people proclaiming the great power and glory of God to others in languages they did not know but could somehow speak perfectly.
 - 3. It is creating quite a scene here at the Temple grounds and questions arise as to what is happening And so Peter tells them what is happening.
- B. First, what is not happening (15).
 - 1. They are not drunk.
 - 2. Some, likely those who live in and around Jerusalem (14) are upset with what is happening and they are blaming it on drunkenness.
 - a. It is likely a cheap shot against the Hellenized Jews (explain).
 - b. Note that others are amazed or at a loss to understand what is happening.
 - 3. The reason given is that it is early in the day. 3rd hour is our 9 am. A time for prayer and only at 10 am would they then eat which is where wine might be consumed.
- C. So what is happening?
 - 1. What he does is quite shocking to the ears of those listening. He says that prophecy is being fulfilled right before their eyes. And he then uses Joel 2 by way of explanation.
 - 2. Notice in vs 17 that he speaks of the “last days.” This is key to understanding the passage and it is quite fascinating. And he uses the Old Testament prophet Joel to make this point.
 - 3. Joel speaks of something that is called the “day of the Lord.”
 - a. Not a single day, but it speaks more of a time frame, you call it the “time of the Lord.”
 - b. It is also found in the prophets of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Obadiah, Zephaniah and Malachi.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- c. It is many things, but the key one is the judgment of the one true God upon humanity. It is culminated at the return of Jesus Christ and you can read about it in Revelation 19, or listen to my sermons on that section of Revelation.
- d. So to put it simply, the last days began with the ascension and giving of the Holy Spirit and culminates at the return of our Lord.
- e. Listen to how it is rendered in Joel 2 (read).
 - (1) It is not a pretty time nor a joyous one.
 - (2) No one can stand in that time. All will quake and fall.
 - (3) The only thing that can be done is to know it is coming, that nothing can stop it and as a result NOW you ought to repent (Joel 2:12-13)
 - (4) In the later portion of Joel 2 we see God restoring and saving Israel from their enemies. And sadly this is what the Jews grabbed hold of and did not first see the need for they themselves to repent.
 - (5) The same would be true of any cultural Christian today. Raised in the Church. Making a profession of faith but never repenting and truly turning to God through Jesus Christ.
 - (a) Hearers and not doers of God's Word.
 - (b) Claiming godliness but denying the power of true godliness, which is at its center a true, committed hope and love of God that is seen in action.
 - (c) These are the ones who are cast back and forth with every new wind of doctrine that rises within the Church. They spout religious slogans and claim to love but do not do what truly loving God demands.
 - (d) They have ears that listen to the wolves in the midst of the Flock of God and some of them are wolves themselves.
 - (e) So may each of you have ears to hear and eyes that see.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

4. What Peter says here in our passage that what they all just saw and heard with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit means that the last days have begun.
 - a. Don't miss that word, "begun."
 - b. What happened over 2,000 years ago is that the last days began and have been hurtling toward the return of the Lord and His day of judgment.
 - c. In other words, we are living in the last days since Acts 2.
5. A quick overview of the "last days."
 - a. Depending on the passage this phrase is focusing on various aspects and time periods that are part of the last days.
 - b. Isaiah 2:2 says that in the last days the Lord will reign in Jerusalem and the nations shall come to learn. It will be a time of peace. We know it as the millennial reign described in Revelation 20.
 - c. Micah 4:1 says almost exactly the same thing in his prophecy.
 - d. Jeremiah 23:20 speaks of the anger of the Lord. He is warning the people to not listen to the false prophets who are claiming peace and prosperity when in fact judgment is coming.
 - (1) *"The anger of the LORD will not turn back Until He has performed and carried out the purposes of His heart; In the last days you will clearly understand it."*
 - (2) What is not clearly seen to those hearing Jeremiah's prophecy shall make complete sense in the end.
 - e. In Ezekiel 38 we read that God shall raise up the people of Gog shall come up against Israel. This is likely just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. And that in doing so God will again show His power, glory and holiness.
 - f. In Hosea it speaks of the nation of Israel repenting and returning to the Lord. But this will be done in the last days. It is not looking at individual Jews here but the nation as a whole. So this looks to that moment in time that Romans 11 speaks about when all Israel is saved and it speaks of the millennial reign.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- g. In 2 Timothy Paul says in the last days the church will be filled with foolish, evil rebellious people who are not really in Christ. It indicates the reality of a growing apostasy during the Church age (read).
- h. In James 5 he rebukes the rich who are lovers of money for they foolishly are storing up their treasure in the last days. They think they are safe because of their riches but in reality that money shall stand as a witness against them in the coming judgment.
- i. And finally, in 2 Peter 3 we see that in the last days people will mock the message and warnings of Jesus' return. They will follow their own ways and desires believing that there is no God and that judgment is a figment of the imagination.
 - (1) The reasoning is that a long time will transpire between the warnings of judgment and the actual coming of God to judge. And we see this today. 2,000 years since Peter utters the words in Act 2. People believe there shall always be a tomorrow. They believe better days are coming.
 - (2) But Peter warns in 2 Peter these words, *"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up."* (2 Pet. 3:9-10)
- 6. This puts the event of the coming of the Spirit into an eschatological framework and we must remember that.
 - a. The promise of the coming of the Spirit was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. But, and this is important, but it doesn't mean it is not stilling being fulfilled. It continues to be fulfilled even today.
 - b. So what we have here in Acts 2 is that this event functions like a entrance-way into the Last Days. This also fits with the end of Peter's sermon that speaks of the coming Judgment—which is another key part of the Last Days.
 - c. Let me use Zechariah 12:10 as an illustration: *"I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit*

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

*of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom
they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for
an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter
weeping over a firstborn.”*

- (1) There are two parts to this prophecy, one that has occurred and one that is yet to happen.
 - (2) The out-pouring of the Holy Spirit is what we see here in Acts 2. The looking at the Messiah is yet to come and is when Jesus Christ returns as Jesus Himself said in Matthew 24.
 - (3) But they are placed right next to one another as if there is not any gap between them. That is what we see in Joel and many other places in the Old Testament prophets.
 - d. I might add that it is also not a precise quote from Joel. He is using the LXX translation, that is obvious. But he also is paraphrasing by way of explanation so what we have is him giving the sense, the meaning of the passage.
7. “Pour forth of my Spirit on all mankind” (17a)
- a. Before this time you only saw the pouring out of the Spirit in very unique situations. Now there is a much broader application of the Spirit.
 - b. More important is the phrase “all mankind (or flesh).”
 - c. Notice vs 33 Who is pouring out the Spirit? Jesus.
 - (1) Why is this important to note.
 - (2) First, it puts Jesus as the mediator of the Spirit upon mankind. The Spirit is not acting on His own.
 - (3) And second, it is another point of vindication of Jesus’ death and resurrection, that He is God’s mediator of the Spirit. He promised that He must go to the Father after His resurrection and that He would send the Spirit.
8. In vss 17-18 we see three parallelisms given.
- a. sons/daughters

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- b. young men/old men
 - c. male slave/female slave.
 - d. And the point is that in these last days the blessing of the Spirit that the giving of the Spirit is not limited in any way. Not due to age, gender or social status. All who trust in Christ alone receive the Spirit.
 - e. Remember that the baptism of the Spirit is not merely some moment of ecstatic experience; rather, it is where we are placed into Christ, which is the Church, or His Body.
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 12:13.
 - (2) Galatians 3:27-28.
 - (3) This unity we possess by the Holy Spirit is precious and so Paul commands us to guard and preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace in Ephesians 4:3.
- D. In vs 19 it shifts to focus on God's activity and takes on an overt apocalyptic edge.
- 1. This part has not occurred yet and no amount of talking will change that reality. In vs 20 it speaks of the final moment of history we know as the final judgment. Here is where I ask you to remember what we saw in Zechariah 12:10.
 - a. Here, then is a warning to the hearers. The Holy Spirit is poured out, we are now in the last days as Joel prophesied. So what awaits them? What awaits you? Judgment. Wrath.
 - b. "Blood" and "fire" and "smoke" all raise the image of judgment. It is a time of destruction and of violence. It is a time of intense terror and despair.
 - 2. "Before" in vs 20 speaks of these events in vs 19 and 20 precede the end.
 - a. The clock is ticking and time is running out. Every time we see wars break out and every time we see disasters strike it is another warning of what is to come.
 - b. Jesus warned that as these things break out that they serve as "birth pangs" of the future judgment that is building.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- c. Paul says that as any of us continue in unrepentance and rejecting Jesus Christ that all we are doing is storing up the wrath to come at the revelation of Jesus Christ. And each disaster and war is a tiny glimpse of what awaits you.
- 3. At the end of vs 20 it describes the culmination of all of this as “glorious.”
 - a. We think of glorious as something fun, exciting and breath-taking. But seldom will you think of it as bloody and terrifying.
 - b. We are guilty, too often, of making God out to be tame and safe. He is not and shall never be that. He is an all-consuming fire and it shall be a terrifying thing to fall into His hands on that day.
 - c. That on that day the heavens and earth shall flee and we will all stand before our Creator. Whether we believed He existed or not will not matter.
 - d. So it will be both horrifying and glorious at the same time.
- E. Which brings us to vs 21 and here we have the first call by Peter for the people to repent and be saved.
 - 1. What is a person to do in light of the certainty that we live in the last days? What is a person to do in light of the coming judgment of our Holy God?
 - 2. Therefore, call on the name of the Lord to be saved. The only way of salvation, **to be saved from that day of wrath**, was to call on this Name.
 - 3. What name? The Lord.
 - a. This is simply a declaration that they must repent and call upon YHWH to save them.
 - b. They are the people of Israel and therefore they might assume they are safe. But they are not. Not in the slightest and the rest of Peter’s sermon will make that clear.
 - c. But who is the Lord? Who is YHWH? That is the question. And the answer is, Jesus.
 - (1) Important to remember this. It is not just a vague calling upon “God,” nor is it just loving “Jesus”. It is seeing Jesus as “Lord” which makes him the one true God. And this is something a Jew would be reluctant to do.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- (2) But Peter forces them to that very narrow point in vs 38.
- (3) Paul uses this same passage in Romans 10:12-13.
- 4. Peter is a changed man. Gone are the days of timidity and vagaries regarding if he follows Jesus. No more denying and no more hiding.
 - a. He is boldly proclaiming to a crowd of unbelieving people that the last days are here and that the wrath of God is building up, ready to pour out.
 - b. He is taking the person of Jesus and thrusting Him before the people and confronting them with Him. No other name will do. They must be confronted with Jesus.
 - c. And so must you. What have you done with Jesus? How have you responded? And where do you make your stand?

III. Conclusion.

- A. I find it interesting that the very first sermon ever preached with the New Testament Church present is an expository sermon.
- B. Also, that it is doctrinal and theological in nature. This is not some simple message that is designed to excite everyone and make them feel good. It is a heavy, dense sermon filled with Scripture and theology. It has nothing of the current trend of words like “I think” or “I feel” or “Maybe it means.” He speaks with authority and clarity.
 - 1. It is a sermon that is designed to explain and give meaning to what is happening around the people.
 - 2. It is a sermon to correct error.
 - 3. And it is a sermon designed to warn them and to call the people to respond properly by repenting and returning to the one true God.
- C. God continues to show patience and the gospel continues to call you to not delay but to place your trust fully in Christ alone. But there shall come a time when it is done. When the only thing that awaits is the wrath of God for all eternity.
- D. Have you called upon Jesus alone for your salvation? Have you turned from your ways and your power and goodness to only Jesus? I urge you to do so. Do not assume you have tomorrow.
- E. May each of us be found safe in the refuge of Jesus Christ.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

Small Group Questions

- **When you consider that you live in the last days and that over 2000 years have transpired since the beginning of the last days what are thoughts that you might have? Think about this in relation to you and to those you know.**
- **I don't have other "good" questions to ask as this is not a strong application oriented passage. So I would suggest you talk through what was helpful and what was perhaps challenging in some way.**