

Acts 2:14-47

Peter Preaches From The Hip

Objectives

- Examine how the early disciples saw how Christ fulfilled the early songs and prophecies in the Old Testament.
- Reflect upon the significance of Jesus' work on the cross, and, in light of that truth, discuss how we should respond.
- Optional: Examine how the characteristics of the early church can help guide our church today.

Pray for your time together as a group!

? What's the most exciting news you've ever received? How did you react when you first heard it?

Read Out Loud: Previously In Acts

Acts recounts the early days of the disciples' ministry on Earth after Jesus ascends into Heaven. The first half of Acts 2 recounts the story of Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit, which marks the official inauguration of the Church. Filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, the disciples are compelled to gather in the street and testify about the good news of Christ's resurrection. However, some bystanders interpret these disciples' enthusiasm as drunkenness – which urges Peter to launch into the following sermon.

PART ONE: Peter's Sermon

Read Out Loud: Acts 2:14-36 (NIV)

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

²² "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. ²⁵ David said about him:

“I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. ²⁶ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, ²⁷ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. ²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.’

²⁹ “Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

“‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand ³⁵ until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

Questions For Discussion

? In verses 17-21, Peter quotes from the Old Testament book of Joel (Joel 2:28-29). When Joel talks about the “last days,” what do you think he’s actually looking forward to? What is he hoping for?

Possible Answers: Verse 21 is the answer. Joel is looking forward to a time when anyone can call on the name of the Lord and be saved. Jesus fulfilled the OT promises and the hope of Israel. It’s possible that Peter meant that only the first part of Joel was fulfilled, with the wonders in the sky to come later; Pentecost fulfills the Spirit’s outpouring, but a final judgment still remains.

Leaders’ Note: Language of Joel: We recognize that your group might be curious about the apocalyptic language that Joel uses. Here are some references to help you facilitate a discussion about this if it comes up. The sun actually turned to darkness during the crucifixion: Matthew 27:45, Mark 15:33, Luke 23:44-48. The spirit being poured out: Acts 2:4. Dreams: Luke 2:26, Acts 10:9-48, Matthew 27:19.

? Similarly, David’s poetry (Psalm 16:8-11), quoted in verses 25-28, praises God for many things. What is David looking forward to?

Possible Answers: Steadfastness, living in hope, guidance by the Holy Spirit, joyful living. Looking at verses 34 and 35, we can also see that David was looking forward to a time of peace when God would judge the world and bring about a new world order.

? Looking at verses 22-24 and 29-33, what does Peter say about Jesus in light of these Old Testament prophecies?

Possible Answers: Basically that they were pointing to Jesus. Jesus performed a lot of miracles, which were well known. One His greatest miracles was raising from the dead. Even death couldn’t hold Jesus

down. Much like David talked about being at the right hand of God, Jesus was raised to life at the right hand of the Father and has sent His Spirit down among His people.

? In verse 21, Peter quotes Joel saying, “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved,” alluding to the fact that Jesus is that name. How would this interpretation have been radical to Jews of the day?

Possible Answers: Ancient Jews believed that they could call on the name of the Lord, but they only had the right to do this through obeying the law. After Jesus’ death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit was available to everyone who believes. Jesus’ death and resurrection is the fulfillment of the law that the Jews believe. But this interpretation would seem too easy for the Jews.

? What implications do the “last days” have on your life now?

? This revelation made Jesus’ disciples so excited that they seemed drunk. Has this revelation ever made you that excited? Why or why not?

What’s In A Name?

One of the Jewish words for God is the term Yahweh. The Jewish people believed this name for God was so sacred that whenever they read scripture out loud they would substitute it with another word that meant Lord. Jews considered the written term Yahweh so sacred that it should never be spoken or expressed with human lips. This reverence for God’s name helped the Jewish people to maintain a sense of piety and respect for our Creator, but it also acted as a kind of exaltation that separated God from humanity. As a result, it’s likely that many OT Jews didn’t feel like they had a very intimate relationship the Lord. When Joel looked forward to a time when “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved,” he may have been looking forward to a time when the relationship between God and humanity was redeemed to the point that anyone could verbally speak God’s name without desecrating it. Peter believed that Jesus had ushered in that era, and that we are now free to call on His name for our salvation.

PART TWO: The Response

Read Out Loud: Acts 2:37-47 (NIV)

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Questions for Discussion

? How might the crowd’s response be a good example for us when we feel “cut to the heart?”

Possible Answers: They genuinely desired to know more about God, and wanted to draw closer to Him. They sought wise counsel from those who knew Jesus well and then responded in obedience and faith.

? How do you tend to react when you are “cut to the heart?”

? In response to Jesus’ work on the cross, Peter tells the crowd to “repent and be baptized.” Why are these good responses to Christian conviction?

Possible Answers: Repentance is how we turn away from our sinful lives – acknowledging that Jesus is our Lord and accepting His sacrifice as absolution for our sin. Baptism is an outward expression for how we live out our Christian lives – a display to those around us that we have been washed clean.

? Optional: Many of the ways in which we gather together on Sundays for worship are based more on tradition than explicit biblical direction (the Bible doesn’t tell us how to participate in communion, for example). Even so, how do verses 42-47 provide a glimpse for God’s vision for the Church?

Possible Answers: Oneness, unity, caring for one another, living together, continuing to live in the way that Jesus had taught and led them to live.

? Optional: What can we do to make the church the kind of place that will attract others to Christ?

For Discussion And Accountability

? In the midst of everyday life, how can you consistently “call on the name of the Lord?”

? Are you feeling “cut to the heart” about anything right now? How might the Gospel speak peace into that situation?