



PETER'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS

SERIES: *THE SPREADING FLAME*

Catalog No. 1233

Acts 2:14-41

Fourth Message

Gary Vanderet

August 29th, 2001

In the second chapter of Acts Luke tells the story of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, including the audiovisual aids to faith: wind, fire, and foreign languages. In 2:14-41 now, the apostle Peter will now go on to explain what Luke describes in 2:1-13.

This is a very short sermon. If it is given verbatim here, Peter would have taken about three minutes to deliver it. Someone has said that the apostle set a good precedent! I am inclined to think that his message was longer, however. Luke says at the end of the sermon that "with many other words [Peter] solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them" (2:40). The sermon has three points. The apostle begins with an explanation of the phenomenon about which the multitude gathered in Jerusalem had inquired; then he makes a declaration of the gospel, the good news about Jesus Christ; and finally, he concludes with an application to his hearers.

This is a powerful message, so powerful that at its conclusion, three thousand people responded. It is a wonderful example of what happens when the gospel is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We pick up Luke's words at verse 14:

But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day." (Acts 2:14-15, NASB)

Peter begins with a rebuttal, saying that these men were not drunk. The Old Testament had an explanation for what had happened.

"but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:

**'And it shall be in the last days,' God says,
'That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind;**

**And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
And your young men shall see visions,
And your old men shall dream dreams;
Even upon My bondslaves, both men and women,
I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit
And they shall prophesy.**

**And I will grant wonders in the sky above,
And signs on the earth beneath,
Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke.
The sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,**

Before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come,

And it shall be, that every one who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:16-21)

Peter explains that what they had just seen and heard was not unexpected. The miraculous phenomenon of spirit-filled believers preaching in foreign languages they had never learned, was the fulfillment of Joel's prediction that God would pour out his spirit on all flesh. The Spirit's coming, according to Peter, was the indication, even the assurance, that the Messianic Age, or the "last days," had begun. This is how all the apostles began their preaching — by announcing that the messianic era had come. The kingdom for which the whole world was waiting was here, in fulfillment of Joel's prediction.

The "last days" is often used today to refer to some prophetic event immediately preceding the Second Coming of Christ. But actually, the "last days" began when our Lord came to earth. Jews used this term to describe the messianic era. So did the apostles. Hebrews says, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son" (Heb 1:1). So the "last days" is not some far-off era. It is the period between the first and second comings of Christ. This means that we are living in the last days. Joel said that this time was predicted when God said he would pour out his Spirit on all flesh.

Furthermore, this blessing would be upon "all mankind." Not just Jews, but everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. A time was coming when God would pour out his Spirit on everyone, without distinction, Jew and gentile, young and old, rich and poor, male and female. God would indwell all humanity. The only condition was that they have to call upon *him*. If we call upon the Lord, he will come and indwell our humanity. And Joel said that we will have an incredible impact on the world. That is what is meant by those strange verses in 19-20 about wonders in the sky and other cosmic disturbances.

Joel was speaking metaphorically of the upheaval that the Spirit's coming would have in the world. Everything that man regarded as stable and reliable would be shaken. That is exactly what happened. This little group of 120 multiplied themselves many times over. Before long, Rome had collapsed, and slavery as an institution was dead. These were the people of

whom the early non-Christians said, "They have turned the world upside down." As David Roper put it, "They shook the world, because they permitted God to indwell their humanity."¹ God filled them and flooded them and used them for his purposes. Peter declares that God will inhabit any body, and he will use us to shake the world.

The best way to understand what happened at Pentecost is not through a knowledge of Old Testament prophecy, however, but through knowing the story of Jesus. So Peter continues, in verse 22.

"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power." (Acts 2:22-24)

As Peter urges his hearers to listen to him, his first words are, "Jesus the Nazarene." Then he goes on to tell the story of Jesus. He begins by stating that Jesus was truly a man, but that his life and ministry were endowed with divine power. God had accredited his ministry publicly with miracles, wonders and signs. As David Roper put it, "he had the right credentials."² Jesus stilled the winds and the waves, healed the sick and the lame, cast out demons and raised the dead. It's possible that Lazarus and Jairus' daughter were right there in the midst of the crowd. Those miracles were signs that pointed to who Jesus was. They were intended to validate him, but the Jews missed it.

The OT predicted that when the Messiah came, he would give sight to the blind. That was one of the ways people would recognize him. And Jesus did all these things. The Jews should have known that he had the right credentials, but instead, they credited his miracles to Satan. They refused to believe that he was the Messiah, even though he came in the proper way and had the proper marks.

Peter continues, "This Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death." They put to death the one who bore the proper credentials.

But amazingly, Peter adds that God himself was responsible for the events of Passion Week. The arrest and the trial did not catch him by surprise. No, from the beginning it was determined that the Lord should suffer and die. When Adam and Eve made that fatal choice that threw the world into sin, right then, God made the promise that there was one coming who would set everything right. Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection were not an afterthought.

Here are two concepts that seem incompatible. Both

God and human beings are responsible for the same events. Notice that the same historical event could be described in two separate ways. It could be attributed to the evil of men (who were held accountable for their actions), or to the goodness of God's providence. And God overruled evil for good.

We can't reconcile these, and the apostles never tried to. Peter says that God was responsible, but so are we. Peter said, "You murdered the Messiah." We put to death the man upon whom God had put his seal of approval. "You put to death the Lord of glory," wrote Paul. That's how wise we are. We put to death the only good man who ever lived. We are like the silly men who killed the goose that laid the golden egg.

But, Peter tells us, God raised Jesus from the dead "since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power." That is the bedrock of our faith. The resurrection really happened. It wasn't a sham. Jesus' body came out of that tomb and he walked the streets of Jerusalem. His followers saw him, touched him, and ate with him. It wasn't a spiritual resurrection.

Reading these words I was struck that nobody protested Peter's claim of the resurrection of Jesus. One of the powerful proofs of the resurrection was that less than two months after the crucifixion, Peter stood in the same city before the very people who put Jesus to death, and preached that he rose from the dead — and no one challenged him. The officials would have given anything to produce the body of Jesus, but they couldn't. They had no answer.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to Christianity. It was the resurrection that changed that first group of disciples, who were cowering behind locked doors, and transformed them into a band of champions of their crucified Lord.

Earl Palmer tells the story about an experience he had while he was in seminary. He was a student at Princeton, and one summer after finals, he and three friends were returning home to the West Coast. They drove straight through, each taking turns driving for a number of hours. About 3 a.m., somewhere in Iowa, the man who was driving had just passed a gas station when he realized he needed gas. He made a U-turn and returned to the station. He then woke up Earl (it was his turn to drive), and fell asleep without telling him that he made a U-turn. Earl began driving back East. He drove for three hours before he realized he was going in the wrong direction. There were plenty of signs that should have alerted him to the fact that he was going the wrong way: mileage signs, road signs, advertisements, etc. When a Greyhound bus went by with "Las Vegas" on the destination sign, he thought to himself, "they really should change those signs more often." But he ignored all the signs until he saw the sun rise in front of him. He said, "When I saw the sun come up, that was too big a sign to ignore." It is the same with the resurrection of Jesus: it is a sign too big to ignore.

Like all the apostles, Peter roots his teaching in Scripture. He continues by quoting a section from Psalm 16.

“For David says of Him,

**‘I was always beholding the Lord in my presence;
For He is at My right hand, that I may not be shaken.**

Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted;

Moreover my flesh also will abide in hope;

**Because Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades,
Nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay.**

Thou hast made known to me the ways of life;

Thou wilt make me full of gladness with Thy presence.’

“Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.” (Acts 2:25-32)

David knew these words would not be fulfilled in his own life but in the life of one of his descendants. Peter says they were fulfilled in the Messiah — and David knew it. They speak of one whom the grave could not hold and who did not undergo decay. David died — his tomb was right there in Jerusalem — but he knew that God was going to put one of his descendants on his throne. At David’s coronation, God promised him that he would have an eternal throne, and one of his descendants would sit on that throne forever. Peter says that David knew that these words were not fulfilled in his life, but in the life of one his descendants, his Messiah.

The apostle adds,

“This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.” (Acts 2:32)

We join our witness with the witness of David. Those two sets of witnesses, the OT prophets and the NT apostles, agree in their proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus.

In his final point, Peter explains that Jesus not only was raised from the dead, he ascended into heaven.

“Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says:

‘The Lord said to My Lord,

“Sit at My right hand

until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’

Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain

that God has made Him both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified.” (Acts 2:33-36)

From his exalted position of honor and power at the right hand of the Father, Jesus poured out the Spirit. Again, Peter clinches his argument in Scripture. In the same way that Psalm 16 looks forward to the resurrection, Psalm 110 looks forward to the Messiah’s ascension. David didn’t ascend into heaven any more than he was resurrected.

Concluding, Peter declares that all Israel should now be assured that this Jesus, whom they had rejected and crucified, is both Lord and Christ. The tongues of fire, the sound of the violent wind and the foreign languages were proof that Jesus of Nazareth is Lord.

The clarity of Peter’s argument hit home with full force. The crowd realized that the one whom the apostle had proved, with irrefutable evidence, to be Lord, was the very one they had crucified fifty days earlier.

Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.” And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!” So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:37-41)

Hearing Peter’s clear proclamation of the gospel, the crowd responds, “What shall we do?” Notice that it wasn’t the miracles but the clear presentation of the gospel that produced their response. When we proclaim the good news clearly, it always impacts people. They may not always believe it, but they know they have to do something; they cannot remain neutral. We don’t have to defend the truth; we merely have to proclaim it. We don’t have to be brilliant, witty or even persuasive. Look at the response to Peter’s simple message. Three thousand people answered by asking, “How can we be saved?”

According to Peter, they needed to do two things, which would produce two results. First, they had to repent. Repentance is a much-misunderstood word. We confuse repentance with sorrow. Feeling sorrow and crying may often accompany repentance, but they are not synonymous. The word means to change your mind about something. You are going in one direction and you change your mind and go in a different direction.

Peter tells the crowd that the first thing they had to do to become believers was to change their minds and their attitudes about Jesus. They crucified him. They didn’t believe that he was who he claimed to be, whom God said he was, the Messiah. We need the same mes-

sage today. Becoming a Christian is not merely praying a prayer to ask Jesus to come into our life, it involves allowing Jesus to be who he is, Lord and King, and letting him rule our lives. Maybe you think that Jesus was merely a good man or a great teacher, but now you must think again.

The second thing to do, says Peter, is to be baptized. Baptism is the outward symbol of inward repentance. We publicly identify with Jesus as Lord, and with his people.

If we do this, according to Peter, two things will result: we will be forgiven, and we will receive the Holy Spirit. We will receive forgiveness for all our sins, past, present, and future. All of those terrible things that we did in the past will be put away. They will be done with, forgotten and forgiven. God will never hold them up again. There will be no more blame and no more shame. And secondly, we will be given power to live a new life. When we receive Christ, we are given the same Holy Spirit that those 120 received on the day of Pentecost. We will be filled and flooded with God himself. We will have new power to handle temptation, and to undo habits that have dominated us.

I don't know how this message relates to you. If you are a believer, I encourage you to get on with the task of sharing the good news about Jesus. We never need to be ashamed of him or his message. It is the only life-giving message in the world. If you have no unbelieving friends, I encourage to get out of your holy huddle and make some new friends. Begin praying specifically for some of your neighbors and co-workers. Ask God to show you how to love them and build relationships with them. If you are an unbeliever, I exhort you to repent, to change your mind about Jesus and to allow him his rightful place in your life. He is Lord. He has the right to rule your life. If you repent, you will receive complete forgiveness and resurrection power.

1. David Roper, *The Coming of the Spirit*, message preached at Cole Community Church, Boise, Idaho, May 30, 1982.

2. David Roper, *What Should We Do?*, message preached at Cole Community Church, Boise, Idaho, June 6, 1982.

© 2001 Peninsula Bible Church Cupertino