

Sermon Notes on Acts 2:36-41, Pentecost

1. "Pentecost" means "fiftieth". It was fifty days after Easter, the occasion of an OT festival when Jews from all over the Mediterranean world were in Jerusalem for worship. As Jesus had promised, Acts 1:4-5, God would bless them with baptism in the Holy Spirit.
2. Peter used Joel 2:28-32 as his text. Joel had prophesied that God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. It began on Pentecost and will continue until the end of time. Joel said that people of all ages would speak God's Word. God Himself would show signs and wonders. And everyone who would call on the name of the Lord would be saved. Jesus Christ was central to Peter's sermon. Our text begins with the last words of Peter's sermon: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."
3. The preaching of the cross of Christ in this case was the preaching of the Law. Why did the Jews crucify Christ? Because they hated Him and refused to accept Him as the Son of God. That was unbelief. When Peter told them this their very hearts were pricked and they said: "Gentlemen brothers, what shall we do?" By the way, they address Peter with the very words with which he addressed them in vs. 29.
4. Here Peter echoes the preaching of John the Baptist with his baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Lk. 3:3) and of Jesus Himself (Mk. 1:15; Lk. 13:3.5; 24:47). And we think of Luther's first of the ninety-five theses: "When our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ said 'Repent ye' He meant that the whole life should be one of repentance." The NT calls repentance a gift of God, Acts 5:31; 11:18; II Tim. 2:25. What moved me to confess my sins and to believe on the Lord Jesus? The Holy Spirit through the Word of God.
5. John the Baptist baptized people telling them that they should believe in Jesus Who was to come. See Acts 19:4. That baptism forgave sins. Beginning with Pentecost (see Acts 19:5 for another example) people were baptized on the basis of Jesus Christ Who had now been revealed.
6. Peter says that the purpose and result of baptism on the basis of the name of Jesus is the forgiveness of sins and the reception of the Holy Spirit as a gift. With forgiveness of sins comes the Holy Spirit Who now makes the believer's heart His Temple, His holy place.
7. Joel had prophesied: "I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh." Here we have an OT statement of the universal nature of Christ's atonement. It is for all. And it is for infants. Peter says in vs. 39: "The promise is also to your children and to those who are far away." This is likely an echo of Is. 57:19: "Peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near."
8. The last sentence of vs. 39 reads literally: "As many as the Lord God will call to Himself." This does not denote a limited atonement but plainly shows that only God can and does call people into His Kingdom. In baptism God calls the recipient to Himself. We believe that because that is what the Word says.
9. Vs. 40 clearly indicates that we do not have Peter's entire sermon. Peter counselled individuals. He summarizes: "Be saved from this perverse generation." Here "generation" denotes a kind of people, not thirty-five years. Peter's judgment here applies to every generation. We live midst a perverse generation today too.
10. Jesus had said (Jn. 14:12) that, as a result of His returning to His Father, the disciples would perform greater works than they had seen him do. Here in vs. 41 we have an example. The text says: "There were added about three thousand souls (persons)." The disciples performed greater works. But it was the Lord, not they, who actually did these works. The Lord merely permitted them to carry them out. The Lord builds the church, not I. He is the Lord of the harvest. Not I.

Sermon Outline on Acts 2:36-41, Pentecost

Theme: I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT ON ALL FLESH

Introduction: This is the first sentence of Peter's text, taken from Joel 2:28-32, the prophecy about Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit, spoken by Joel hundreds of years earlier. God said that He would keep His promise to send the Spirit. In Jn. 14-16 Jesus spoke of this promise several times.

I-This Denotes the Universal Atonement

A-This had been foretold in the OT. God said to Abraham: "In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Gen. 12:3. We know from Galatians that the word "you" here means "Christ." And we also know that the word "blessed" means "saved" or "justified." Hundreds of years later Pentecost was foretold at Joel 2:28-32. The first sentence reads: "I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh." Note the word "all." Not only had the OT foretold that all people would be saved through Christ but it also foretold that this good news would be for all people. Jesus said at Acts 1:8: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." The book of Acts shows us how this was carried out. It begins in Jerusalem and ends in Rome, the capital of the Empire.

B-First to the Jews, then also to the Gentiles. This expression is found twice in Rom. 2:9-10 and is typical of many other such references. God made His Covenant of the Gospel with Abraham. Four hundred and thirty years later He made His Covenant of Law with Moses on Mt. Sinai. This was primarily for the Covenant people of the OT until Christ would come. Why God did it this way, we do not know. Gentiles could become Jewish proselytes. But they were not Covenant people. But with Pentecost all of this changes. The first Christians were Jews. But then the Gospel spread to Samaria and then to Antioch where there was a Jewish-Gentile congregation. Now there was no distinction. And that is why Joel said: "I will pour out My Spirit on ALL flesh."

II-What This Pouring Out Is

A-First the Holy Spirit shows people their sin. At Jn. 16:8-11 Jesus said of the Holy Spirit: "When He (the Holy Spirit) comes He will convict the world (mankind) concerning sin and concerning righteousness and concerning judgment. Concerning sin because they don't believe in Me (Christ); concerning righteousness because I'm going to the Father and you see Me no more; concerning judgment because the ruler of this world has been thrown out." First the Spirit convicts man about his sin, otherwise man would not repent. Nathan used an illustration of two men and sheep to bring David to repentance. At Lk. 15 Jesus used three parables to bring Pharisees and scribes to their senses. In our text used the crucifixion of Christ to reveal the Jews' sin. Read vs. 36. This vs. serves all Jews of all times notice that they rejected the Son of God. That was unbelief. The Holy Spirit was poured out.

Peter
Spirit

B-Then the Holy Spirit pours out forgiveness of sins. He came to convict the world of righteousness and judgment which means that He tells mankind about Jesus' completed work in their behalf. Sin and Satan have been conquered. In our text this pouring out is found in vs. 37-41. The Law had its effect. Peter's listeners were shocked. They cried: "What must we do, gentlemen brothers?" Their hard hearts had been crushed. Their obstinate rebellion had been stilled. Peter tells them to be baptized on the basis of the name of Jesus Christ. Thus they would receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit. The Spirit had saved these Jews from this wicked and perverse generation.

Conclusion: For two thousand years Pentecost has been going on. The Holy Spirit comes in the Law to convict people of their unbelief. Then He comes in the Gospel and gives them the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus. Our whole life has become a Pentecost. Slava Bagu!