



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Sermon Notes

Seven Weeks After Easter Morning

Acts 2:1-41

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Introduction

1. I wonder how it would have played in the modern news cycle.
 - a. The movement of Jesus, the charismatic and beloved preacher who captivated thousands, had crumbled as he was arrested, tried, and summarily executed for treason.
 - b. Reporters might have been assigned to do perspective stories: Jesus' rapid rise to celebrity status, the Jewish leaders' view of him as a blasphemer and messianic pretender, and the political dealings they had with the Roman governor.
 - c. News that his tomb was found empty on the Sunday following his death surely would have gotten attention; so would the report that authorities suspected someone – sources were saying the disciples were the primary suspects – had stolen the body.
2. But seven weeks had gone by. The disciples were keeping to themselves. There were new stories to report: the size of the crowds at that year's Pentecost festival; interviews with selected visitors. Was this their first time to visit Jerusalem? Was the experience what they had expected? As the leaders hoped, the rise and fall of Jesus was becoming a memory.
3. Then, reports began to circulate that something had happened at a house in Jerusalem at about 9:00 Pentecost morning. Later reports would say some heard a sound like a mighty wind and saw some sort of visual phenomenon. Other witnesses would tell how a group of Jesus' followers – all from Galilee – emerged and began to speak the native languages of the gathered peoples.
4. Yes, things *were* different then. But, it's hard to believe something like what happens now didn't occur. Passover – the day would not associated with the term "Easter" for sometime – was seven weeks behind them. The leaders who had turned Jesus over for execution had begun to relax. But, once again crowds were gathering and people were talking about Jesus. What was happening?
5. Peter's sermon in Acts 2 explains, and gives the essence of our faith. We benefit from a review. Peter told them that:

BODY

- I. God had a plan.
 - A. Peter began his explanation with a citation from Joel 2:28-32 (Acts 2:17-21).

1. This is one of a number of prophetic texts that declare God's plan to restore a remnant of his people (see Isa. 40-66; Ezek. 36:22-33; 37:7-23; 39:25-29).
 2. A common theme was the association of the restoration of the Jews with the outpouring of the Spirit, precisely what Peter said about Joel.¹
- B. That this happened on Pentecost was also significant.
1. Pentecost was a celebration to honor the Lord as the provider of the harvest and one who deserved the first fruits of all the produce (see Lev. 23:15-22; Deut. 16:9-12).
 2. During the time between the testaments, the Jews developed the understanding that Pentecost was a time of renewal of the covenant God made with Israel.
 3. Acts 2, then, "depicts Pentecost as the end-time renewal of the people of God, 'the whole house of Israel' (Acts 2:32, 39), and the Spirit is therefore also the fulfillment of covenant promise (cf. Acts 3:25)."²
- C. Peter highlighted the fulfillment theme elsewhere.
1. Crucifixion was not a loss, it was part of God's plan to defeat death (2:23-24).³
 2. The continuity of the events on Pentecost with the prophetic expectations for "the last days" (Acts 2:17) and the Davidic dynasty, is further developed in the citations of Psalms 16:8-11 and 110:1 (Acts 2:25-28, 34) (Lincoln).
 3. It was part of the proof that Jesus is Lord and Christ (2:22, 24-32, 36).⁴
- II. God had a way ("Christianity is Christ"⁵).
- A. Peter began with Jesus' incarnation and ministry, especially the mighty works, wonders, and signs by which God attested (ἀποδείκνυμι, *apokdeiknumi*) to him (2:22).
1. He was Jesus of Nazareth, a man whose example is worth seeing.
 2. He was accredited as more than just a man, capable of being Lord and Christ.
- B. Jesus was handed over to lawless men who crucified him (2:23).
1. This was not something that caught God by surprise; it was part of his plan.
 2. Yet, those who carried out the crucifixion were accountable for it.⁶
- C. Death was not the end of the story; "God raised him up" (2:24-32).
1. The impossibility of death to hold him (v. 24) casts "the resurrection as a validation of Jesus' life and ministry" (Fernando, 103).

¹ C. Philip Slate, "The Birth of the Church: Continuation and Beginning (Acts 2)," in *Acts, the Spreading Flame: Harding University's 1989 Lectures* (Searcy, AR: Harding University, 1989), 95.

² A. T. Lincoln, "Pentecost," in Ralph P. Martin and Peter Davids, eds., *Dictionary of the New Testament and Its Developments*, electronic ed. (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000, c1997).

³ See Ajith Fernando, *Acts, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 109, 114-115.

⁴ Fernando, 102, observes, "The point about fulfillment of prophecy was a key aspect of the *kerygma* of the early church" and then reminds his readers of the influential book by C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development*.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁶ "We see here, as often in Scripture, the paradox between divine providence and human responsibility (4:27-28). While God planned for Christ to die on the cross, those who carried out this act were responsible for it" (Fernando, 102).

- a) The word “pangs” (ὠδίν, *ōdin*) usually referred to the pains of childbirth, leading one writer to say, “The abyss can no more hold the Redeemer than a pregnant woman can hold the child in her body.”⁷
 2. Resurrection was also part of the fulfilled plan of God, as David had anticipated (2:25-28, citing Psa. 16:8-11).
 3. David’s tomb being inhabited, he could not have been referring to it; he must have been referring to Jesus’ tomb, which was empty (2:29-31).
 4. The apostles stood as witnesses to Jesus’ having been raised (2:32).
 - D. Peter’s final point was Jesus’ exaltation (2:33-35), including the ascension and more.
 1. He sat at the Father’s right hand (v. 33) and, as the citation of Psalm 110:1 will show (v. 35), he will bring about the defeat of his enemies.
 2. He who had received the Holy Spirit sent him on Pentecost.
 3. This, too, was part of the plan of God as seen in Scripture (vv. 34-35).
 - E. Based on this evidence, Peter declares that Israel should understand “that God has made him both Lord and Christ” (2:36).
 1. “Lord” is the exalted term used for God.
 2. “Christ” returns to the fulfillment theme; Jesus is Israel’s hoped-for deliverer.
- III. God welcomed all.
- A. Hearing of Peter’s conclusion, his guilt-ridden hearers, believing they had killed the Messiah in the person of Jesus (2:23), were convicted (2:37).
 - B. Peter told them the only thing he could tell them (2:38).
 1. They needed to repent and identify with Christ in baptism (see Rom. 6:3-4).
 2. They would then receive forgiveness and the Holy Spirit.
 - C. Peter reassured: God would welcome them; 3,000 took him at his word (2:39-41).

Conclusion

1. Not quite 2,000 years later, we can again hear Peter, understand his meaning, and come face to face with ourselves.
 - a. We can look at God’s plan – and marvel at how he brought it all about.
 - b. We can look at Jesus’ example – and see what it means to be good and please God.
 - c. We can think about ourselves – and realize that, while our sin is not the same as theirs, we miss the mark in other ways.
 - d. We can ponder the marvel of resurrection – and what that means in terms of hope.
2. To us the words come, just as they did to those assembled in Jerusalem so long ago: “Save yourselves from this crooked generation” (2:40). Because of Jesus, we can do so.

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⁷ G. Bertram, “ὠδίν,” *TDNT*, 9: 673, in Fernando, 103.