

# Peter Addresses the Crowd



## Ice-Breaker

What are you usually doing at 9:00 in the morning on a Saturday? On Sunday? On a weekday?

## Scripture Passage

Acts 2:14-41

14Then 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. 15These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 16No, 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.

18Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will prophesy.

19I will show wonders in the heaven above

and signs on the earth below,

blood and fire and billows of smoke.

20The sun will be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood

before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

21And everyone who calls

on the name of the Lord will be saved.<sup>a</sup>

22"Men of Israel, 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. 23This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men,<sup>b</sup> put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24But 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. 25David said about him:

"I saw the Lord always before me.

Because he is at my right hand,

I will not be shaken.

26Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;

my body also will live in hope,

27because you will not abandon me to the grave,

nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

28You have made known to me the paths of life;

you will fill me with joy in your presence.<sup>c</sup>

29"Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ,<sup>a</sup> that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. 32God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. 33Exalted 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. <sup>34</sup>For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "The Lord said to my Lord:  
"Sit at my right hand  
<sup>35</sup>until I make your enemies  
a footstool for your feet."<sup>e</sup>

<sup>36</sup>"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

<sup>37</sup>When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

<sup>38</sup>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. <sup>39</sup>The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call."

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

a [21] Joel 2:28-32

b [23] Or of those not having the law (that is, Gentiles)

c [28] Psalm 16:8-11

d [31] Or Messiah. "The Christ" (Greek) and "the Messiah" (Hebrew) both mean "the Anointed One"; also in verse 36.

e [35] Psalm 110:1

## Bible Study

1. Compare Peter and the other disciples in John 18:25-27 and 20:19 with their actions here: What accounts for the great difference?
2. In what way is Luke 24:44-49 reflected in this sermon? Given the audience, why would Peter quote from the Old Testament?
3. What is the point Peter wants the people to understand about current events (vv. 15,17-18)? How do you understand verses 19-21? What tells you Joel's prophecy is coming true now?
4. How familiar were these people with the events of Jesus' life? How might they be dealing with the rumors of the empty tomb? Given that, why does Peter emphasize the resurrection (vv. 24,31-32)?
5. What are the implications of the resurrection and ascension for Jesus (vv. 24,30-31,33-36)? For the people? What would it mean to the people that Jesus is a spiritual King far greater than their greatest earthly king (vv. 35-36)?
6. How would you put Peter's answer (vv. 38-40) in your own words to explain what it means to become a Christian? What is required? What is promised?
7. How does the resurrection prove that Jesus is the Messiah? Remembering where these 3,000 came from (vv. 8-11), in what way is 1:8 partially fulfilled here? What news will the people bring home with them?

## Reference Notes

**2:17-21** This passage quotes, with minor changes, Joel 2:28-32 as it was found in the pre-Christian

Greek translation of the Old Testament (The Septuagint), the version of the Old Testament with which the disciples were familiar.

**2:17 In the last days.** Peter changed the original "afterwards" to this phrase indicating that the beginning of the end was occurring. In the New Testament, "the last days" are the period from Jesus' ascension to his return. **on all people.** Since it is not until chapter 10 that Peter realizes the gospel is for Gentiles, Peter probably thought this phrase meant that all Jews everywhere (and not just prophets, kings and priests as in the Old Testament) could now experience God's Spirit.

**2:19 wonders ... and signs.** The tongues were a sign of God's activity. The cosmic changes he alludes to are couched in apocalyptic language. In the Old Testament, such figurative language was used to describe God's judgment upon specific nations (see Ezekiel 32:7-8; Joel 2:10-11; Amos 8:9-10) though they anticipate a real catastrophic rendering of nature at the final judgment. The immediate application in mind might be the darkness that overtook the land during Jesus' crucifixion (Luke 23:44).

**2:20 day of the Lord.** Jewish tradition divided history into two periods: present age, and age to come in which God would set up his kingdom. The dividing line between the two eras was the cataclysmic "day of the Lord" where God would judge the world and exalt Israel (Isaiah 2:12; 13:6ff; Amos 5:18; Zephaniah 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). What the crowd witnessed points to the fact that this day is at hand; the resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Spirit shows God has broken into history; the time of salvation and judgment is now.

**2:22** The fact of Jesus' miracles is not debated. The stories of his work in Galilee had been widely reported (Mark 3:8; Luke 12:1; Acts 26:26). What was debated was the source of his power; early on some leaders accused him of being possessed by Satan (Mark 3:22). **miracles.** Literally, "powers" (Luke 5:17; 10:13). The outward manifestations of Jesus' authority. **wonders.** A word commonly used to refer to "an abnormal occurrence portending the approach of some event of special importance"(Williams). **signs.** This word clearly points to the fact that Jesus' miracles were not ends in themselves but pointers to the nature of his identity and mission. It is the favorite word for the miracles in John's Gospel (John 2:11; 4:54; 6:26).

**2:23** Human responsibility and God's sovereignty are both asserted. Jesus' death was the plan of God, but carried out through the sinful motives of the leaders of Israel. **wicked men.** Literally, "lawless men," that is, the Romans who actually carried out the Crucifixion. They were Gentiles who did not have the Law of God.

**2:24-28** Death could not hold onto Jesus (v. 24) because the Messiah would not be subject to death (v. 27). This is supported by a quote from Psalm 16:8-11 which, in its original setting, was the prayer of a righteous person rejoicing in the fact that because God supported him, he could be assured that he would not be left in Sheol but enjoy God's presence forever. Some rabbis viewed this as a messianic psalm providing a precedence for Peter to read it as one that foretold the death and resurrection of the Messiah.

**2:29 his tomb.** It is unknown whether the present day monument to David in Jerusalem is on this ancient site spoken of as well by Josephus, an early Jewish historian. Peter may have intended a contrast between the tomb of David and the empty grave of Jesus.

**2:33** The resurrection of Jesus was completed by his exaltation to God's right hand, the highest possible position of power and authority. Jesus was not merely given another chance at human life, but enthroned as the divine king over all creation (Matthew 28:18; Colossians 2:10). **he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit.** This may be an allusion to a version of Psalm

68:18 quoted by Paul (Ephesians 4:8) which reads that, "When he ascended on high he led captives in his train, and gave gifts to men." According to tradition, the Law of Moses was God's gift referred to here. Peter may be alluding to the Pentecost tradition that celebrated the giving of the Law by accenting that now Jesus has given his Spirit to people. Compare this with Acts 2:17 which states that God would pour out his Spirit on all people.

**2:34** The imagery in Psalm 110:1 is used several times in the New Testament in reference to Jesus (Luke 20:41-44; Romans 8:34; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Ephesians 1:20,22; Hebrews 1:13; 10:13). This psalm was widely considered by the Jews as a messianic one wherein the Lord (God) invites "my Lord" (the Messiah) to the position of divine power. The Resurrection / Ascension event was seen by the early Christians as the fulfillment of this psalm. Lord. While the Greek word is the same for both, in the Hebrew text the first "Lord" clearly refers to Yahweh and the second "lord" is a title of honor used for both God and royal figures.

**2:35** The exaltation of the Messiah meant that he would triumph over all his adversaries. **a footstool for your feet.** A graphic picture of the conquest of an enemy.

**2:36 Lord.** The full impact of the deity of Jesus gradually dawned upon the apostles. In the early chapters of Acts he is called the Christ, the prophet-like Moses (3:22), God's Servant (4:27), God's Prince (5:31); and the Righteous One (7:52). As the Gospel spread beyond Palestine, his deity became more clearly pronounced as he is referred to primarily as "the Lord" with all the divine implications that carried as the title for God in the Old Testament.

**2:37 cut to the heart.** The horror of the situation sinks in: the long-awaited Messiah was put to death by the very people he was expected to save. They, not the despised Gentiles, are the enemies that the Messiah must now judge. Realizing this, the people ask if there is a way to escape the judgment of God.

**2:38** This verse is a classic summary of the response required to become a Christian and the promises associated with that response. **Repent.** Literally, "Change your mind." Repentance is the act of making a moral U-turn; of turning away from all other loyalties to affirm one's allegiance to Jesus and his way (see Mark 1:15). **be baptized.** Baptism was the outward sign of the inward change of heart and mind showing the desire to be cleansed from sin. Gentile converts to Judaism would be baptized as a sign of washing away their Gentile sin, but until John the Baptist came on the scene, Jews never were baptized. This was a radical admission of their own sin and deep need for God's inner cleansing. Normally, repentance and belief are linked together (Acts 20:2) indicating that baptism is intended to be a sign of faith in Jesus. **in the name of Jesus Christ.** Throughout chapters 2-4 "the name of Jesus" is referred to many times: it is a shorthand way of summing up all that the person and presence of Jesus represents. The person baptized is to call on the name of the Lord (Acts 2:21; 22:16). The early Christians declared "Jesus is Lord" as they were baptized (Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3) affirming their allegiance to him and their dependence upon him to save them. This does not mitigate against the Trinitarian formula of baptism (Matthew 28:19) but accents that recognition of Jesus' messiahship was critical for a person's inclusion in the church. **the forgiveness of your sins.** God's forgiveness is assured to the one who repents and pledges faith to Jesus. This is the same promise John offered to those who submitted to his baptism (Mark 1:4). **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** The coming of the Holy Spirit upon Israel in the Old Testament (Isaiah 32:15-20) was associated with God's provision of security, rest and deliverance. This is the distinctively unique reality that Jesus himself bestows on those who trust him.

**2:39** The promise of God is for all people; both the present generation and their descendants, whether they be near or far. **all whom the Lord our God will call.** This is from the last phrase in

Joel 2:32, completing the quote begun in Acts 2:17. It places the stress on God's mercy as the active force in salvation.

**2:40 *this corrupt generation*.** Probably a reference to Deuteronomy 32:5 which spoke against those who rebelled against God in the wilderness.

**2:41** Peter's message had a profound effect as 3,000 people responded.

## **Caring Time**

1. To repent and be baptized in Jesus' name means to turn away from all your sin and affirm allegiance to Jesus. Does that present a challenge to you? How have you experienced the reality of God's promises for answering his call?
2. From Peter's sermon, what facts about Jesus would be key for non-believers to understand (vv. 29-33)?
3. When did you make your initial commitment to Christ? Who was influential in that process? What convinced you of your need for Christ?
4. What difference does it make that Jesus truly is the reigning King over all? How does that truth affect your daily life?
5. When was the last time you seized an opportunity to witness for Jesus? What happened? Who stood with you at that time? How are you like Peter? Unlike him? What encourages you as you watch Peter? Why?