

Peter's Message on Pentecost

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TYLER, Texas—On the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, we see the apostle Peter delivering a powerful message (verses 14-36). The people in the audience were so moved by Peter's words that they were ready to take some action (verse 37).

Have you ever noticed that Peter's message gave a complete outline of the evangelistic process?

Let's quickly look at the circumstances preceding Peter's message.

Jesus ascended

After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, He was seen for the next 40 days by the apostles and many others (more than 500 people). He spoke with them and gave instructions to them.

Here are some interesting facts that Luke wrote (in Acts 1) about the time preceding Jesus' ascension.

Luke wrote about some things that Jesus began to do and teach (verse 1).

Jesus had given commandments (instructions) to the apostles whom He had chosen (verse 2).

Jesus showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs, spent a period of 40 days with them and spoke to them about the Kingdom of God (verse 3).

He had previously instructed His disciples to wait in Jerusalem to receive the promise from the Father (verse 4).

He reminded them of the baptism of water, but told them about the baptism of the Holy Spirit (verse 5).

When the disciples asked Jesus about the timing of the establishment of the Kingdom (verse 6), He told them not to worry about the timing (verse 7) but to use the power of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of Christ (verse 8).

Then, Jesus ascended (verses 9-11).

The rest of chapter 1 deals with the selection of Matthias to replace Judas.

Count fifty

Luke mentioned in Acts 2 that the Day of Pentecost had arrived.

Pentecost means to "count fifty." At times in the Old Testament, this feast day was called the Feast of weeks. (Notice Exodus 34:22 and Deuteronomy 16:10.) God instructed the children of Israel to count seven weeks (Leviticus 23:15-16 and Deuteronomy 16:9).

The account of Acts 2 describes the first Day of Pentecost following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Pentecost is the day often cited as the beginning of the Church of God. One might take note that this occasion marked a spiritual harvest—firstfruits spiritually who became turned to Christ.

Miracle of unity

When God gave His Spirit to the brethren on this day, He did so in a very dramatic fashion (Acts 2:1-13).

People spoke in different languages (verses 3-4). (Please note that the people were not jabbering in some unknown, weird or mystical verbiage of some kind.)

But the miracle was not just in the speaking—the miracle was also in the hearing.

Acts 2:6—"And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language."

Every person heard others speak in his own language. This was a miracle of unity.

Have you considered how this event on Pentecost was so unlike an event back in the book of Genesis?

You might recall how God dealt with people at the Tower of Babel, when they were doing things contrary to God's will (Genesis 11:4). He confused their language and they began to speak in different languages (verses 5-9).

As I said a few sentences ago, Acts 2 was a miracle of unity.

Peter quoted Joel and David

Here is a quick summary of Peter's message.

Peter referred to words previously written by the prophet Joel in Joel 2:28-32 (Acts 2:14-21).

He reminded the audience that, although they killed Jesus Christ, God raised Him from the dead (verses 22-24).

Then Peter quoted King David of the Old Testament foretelling about Christ's resurrection and about Christ's body not seeing corruption in the grave (verses 25-36). David's prophecy was made hundreds of years prior to this event.

Peter reiterated the point that David never left his grave (verses 29, 34), while Jesus of Nazareth sits at the right hand of God (verses 31-33).

Jesus concluded by reminding them of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (verse 36).

Acts 2:36—"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Reaction to Peter's message

Peter's message inspired many people to react.

Acts 2:37—"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' "

Peter gave the famous response that motivated people at that time and continues to motivate people today.

Acts 2:38-40—"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.' And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation.' "

How many were baptized?

Did you notice how many people were baptized that day? Luke said that 3,000 people were baptized that day (verse 41).

It has been estimated that it would have taken about 5½ hours to baptize them in the Jordan River. The term *baptism* means full immersion.

Baptism is symbolic of death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). When a person dies, he is usually buried. The earth is not merely splashed or sprinkled on him, but covers him totally (full immersion).

Baptism is going into the water and coming out of the water. Going into the water symbolizes the burial of the "old self," and coming out of the water symbolizes the resurrection of the "new self"—a new creation in Jesus Christ.

The newly baptized individual claims the promise of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands (Acts 8:17 and Acts 19:6).

Evangelistic process

Now let's look at the evangelistic process outlined by Peter.

I like to describe the process by listing the following four points.

- Peter mentioned the understanding or knowledge of accepting Jesus Christ as the Son of God and our Savior.
- Peter encouraged people to accept Christ's sacrifice—His shed blood for the remission of our sins.
- Peter taught about repenting—which means more than feeling remorseful for our sins and asking His forgiveness for our sins.

Repentance also involves making a commitment not to repeat the sin. People seek to leave sin behind, to turn their lives around and make the effort to obey God's commandments.

If people really want to know what sin is, they should look to the Bible for the definition—like 1 John 3:4.

Repentance is a daily and ongoing process that is involved in the change and growth of Christians.

We are under grace, but the law defines sin and brings us to Christ.

- Peter taught about receiving baptism (full immersion, symbolic of death, burial and resurrection) and the laying on of hands.