

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Peter's Sermon: Explaining Pentecost

Scripture: Acts 2:14-21

Code: 1705

Turn in your Bibles to Acts Chapter 2. We begin our study this morning. Some strange reason as I began this message early in the week and study in preparation, I had this compelling desire to just talk about the importance of preaching. Now you say well that's just defending your own thing. That's right. There's no question about it, but I had this compelling desire to just really emphasize the priority of preaching as we enter into, of course, Acts 2:14, it's Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost.

And I really didn't know why. I just felt this very strongly. And so I sat down, I just kept writing and writing and writing and writing all my thoughts about preaching. And I still didn't know why this morning and I got up and I preached away about the priority of preaching in the 8:15 service. After the service was over this morning, I started down and the gentleman came up and he took my hand and he said, "you don't know me, but he said I'm a preacher." And he said, "I've been 18 months in my church," and he said, "I needed to get away and reevaluate what I was to do." He said, "I...my wife and I took a room at the Holiday Inn down here and we decided we'd come here this morning and see if maybe God would speak to us." And he said, "Thank you, that's what I needed."

You just really never know what God is planning. Now for you, of course this sermon is superfluous. But anyway, Acts 2:14-42 is the sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost. It is strategically important because it is the first Christian sermon ever preached. And thus it sets for us a pattern of preaching, apostolic preaching and a pattern that carries down even for our own preaching today.

Before we do get into it though, I do have some things that I want to say in regard to the priority and the importance of preaching since the first thing the early church did the first day it was born was begin by preaching. I think something was established that is of prior consideration. Now there's much literature being produced today about the church. I suppose in Christian literature and there's an awful lot of it, the two reigning things that seem to be dominating are counseling or Christian psychological therapy or whatever title you want to give to it, how to set your family straight, how to set your marriage straight, how to set yourself straight, and then how to set your neighbors straight, all the way down the line.

And the other great volume of material is being put out on the subject of the church, it's identity, it's contemporary priorities, where it fits, etc., etc. And the current church emphasis has in my mind one glaring omission. And that is that there seems to be in so many of these books and in so many cases of what people are advocating today, the omission of preaching. Now this greatly concerns me. I have

read at least two or three books that eliminate preaching altogether from the life of a church, from the pattern of the church.

And I believe this is a gross injustice to God's pattern and God's design and is a miscalculation of the New Testament genius of Christianity and its dynamic. Today we have this great emphasis on whole gob of little group Bible studies and home interaction things and in their place they're all very good. But seminaries and colleges that are supposed to be producing men for the ministry today are teaching psychology and counseling techniques and they're producing reams of material on psychotherapy, group counseling, sensitivity training with certain deletions so it becomes palatable to Christianity, etc., etc.

And there are only perhaps a handful of seminaries in all of our country that are exceptions to that rule that are teaching men principles by which they can teach and preach with power of the word of God. The small group interaction bonanza is upon us. And it's part of the cycle of getting back to individuality in a computer in a mechanized age. I'm aware of that. But in many churches, the church life and the pattern of the Holy Spirit moving in the church is bogged down because men are lost in all kinds of foolishness that it's secondary to the power of preaching the word of God.

And we make no apologies at Grace Church for our preaching ministry. In fact, we've established it as a priority. When Paul told Timothy what to do about his ministry he said it as simply as you can say it. He said, "Timothy, preach the Word. Preach the Word." The book of Acts is a record of apostolic preaching. And I'll give you a nice little journey through Acts right now. Don't try to follow me. But just listen and this will be a view of Acts from the standpoint of preaching and we'll see whether it's priority.

Acts Chapter 3, verse 20, "And he shall send Jesus Christ who before was preached unto you." 4:2, "Being grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead." And then over to Chapter 8, skipping some sections, verse 5, then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them. Verse 25, "And they when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord returned to Jerusalem and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans." Verse 35, "Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture and preached unto him." He only had one in his audience, but he still preached. Verse 40, "But Philip was found at Azotus and passing through he preached in all the cities until he came to Caesarea. Chapter 9, verse 20, "And immediately he preached Christ in the synagogue that He is the son of God." Verse 27, "But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared unto him...unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way and that He had spoken to him and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus."

You can go to Chapter 13, 14, 17, 20, and right on out to the end of the book of Acts and you'll find that the priority in the church was the preaching of the Word. Now it's important to have Bible studies.

It's important to have Sunday School. It's important to have home action groups. It's important to have a lot of things. Nothing supplants the preaching of the Word. Preaching is characteristic of Christianity. Broadus in his classic volume on preaching says, "No other religion has ever made the regular and frequent assembling of the masses of men to hear religious instruction and exhortation, an integral part of divine worship except Christianity. It's the genius of Christianity as so designed by the Holy Spirit. Others have copied it because of it's power."

In the ministry of Jesus the Bible says that Jesus came preaching. And in Luke Chapter 4, I love Jesus' view of His own ministry. He says in verse 16, "He came to Nazareth and when He was...where He'd been brought up and as His custom was Jesus went was, Jesus went into the synagogue on the Sabbath Day and stood up to read. And it was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Isaiah and when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He hath anointed Me to," what, "to preach." "To preach the gospel to the poor. He had sent Me to heal the broken-hearted. To preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised to preach the acceptable year of the Lord and He closed the book and gave it to the minister and sat down."

The priority of Jesus Christ repeated three times and the prophecy of Isaiah was that He came to preach. John writing many years after that looked back and said, "Jesus cried in the temple teaching and saving." Jesus boldly preached. His preaching was powerful. His preaching was urgent, but His preaching was at the same time compassionate. Preaching involves the gospel proclamation and it also involves theological instruction. And for a moment, I'd like to get you into a definition of preaching.

So often we hear this statement, well, he's a good preacher, but he's not a teacher. There's no such thing. He is not a good preacher if he's not a teacher. He's the worst kind of preacher. There is no such thing as preaching without teaching. The theological view of preaching right out of the Word of God is that it contains the proclamation with the doctrine with the instruction. That's how our Lord preached. He left that legacy to all. He told His apostles to go into all the world and to preach and to teach, and there's no difference. They are the same. In fact, those two words are used in the gospels interchangeably when referring to Jesus Christ.

For example, in Matthew, it'll say in Jesus Christ taught. And in a comparative passage in Luke, it'll say and Jesus Christ preached. And in the very same incident recorded by various views, the two words are used interchangeably. So that preaching without teaching is non-existent. Preaching was the announced purpose by Jesus Christ. It was the announced purpose given to His apostles and they carried out in the book of Acts and it's not different today. Paul said to Timothy, "Preach the Word."

The history of the church records the preaching of the Word of God. Now there have been many things that have come along to try to supplant it. We have a lot of things today that try to replace preaching. And the sad part of it is that most people let it happen. And you open your newspaper and instead of seeing through the church page, men preaching the word of God, you read about musical, phantasmagorias, and movies and this and that and the other thing going on and they all have a place. Never do they have a place in supplanting the powerful Spirit energized preaching of the Word of God.

And we can talk all we want about radio programs and TV programs and Christian movies and drama and everything else, but to me all it is, is a challenge to make my sermons more relevant, more fresh, more dynamic and more exciting so people will want the real stuff. Now, I'm not discounting the place of all of those things. I'm only establishing the priority of preaching. Those things have their place. And sometimes they're used to good effect. They can never supplant the preaching of the Word. A holy man gifted to preach by the Spirit of God and prepared in the word of God has not equal in a power presentation of the truth. That's the pattern of Scripture.

And if the preaching doesn't make it, it's not the fault of the method, it's the fault of the man. Social work and pastoral work are all important, but they never compensate for a lack of power in the pulpit. This is the thing that God uses abundantly. And you know, I have to ask myself today the sad question, where are the preachers? Where are they? So many times people say to me where are the men who preach the Word of God? Where are they? I don't know where they are. They're few and far between, I know that. Where are the great men who preach and teach God's words whose lines are so saturated with the word of God that Spurgeon said their blood is bibbling.

Where are the men of God who are lost in their message with no personality and no gimmick just firing out the word of God and the energy of the Spirit? Where are these men? Great men of God don't just work with small groups, some do. Not exclusively. Great men of God are men who proclaim the truth of the word of God to thousands of people. You can go back in history and look at the revivals that have happened through history and they've centered around the preaching of the Word of God.

I was reading about Whitefield. What a masterful man he was, and what a man of God and what a powerful preacher. And Whitfield, you know, preached in Bristol to 20,000 people regularly, often daily. Sometimes when Whitfield got up in the morning, there'd be 10,000 people outside waiting for him to begin. Often he preached to 40,000 people. It is said that near Glasgow, Scotland he preached to as many of 50,000 to 100,000 people. Now this was without any...this was without any preparation. This is without any publicity. This is just people drawn to the power of the word of God.

And this is without a microphone. Think about that. His voice must have been something unbelievable. Even if you didn't want to listen, a lot of choice. He was sometimes accused of rambling

in his sermons and getting off the point. Who wouldn't preaching all day, every day like that. But he replied, "If men will continue to ramble like lost sheep, I'll continue to ramble after them." At 70 years of age George Muller preached regularly to 5,000 people. Moody, Spurgeon, Edwards, Finney, and the rest preached and taught to thousands of people in great crowds and great tabernacles and great congregations and they preached in the Spirit's energy with great power.

There's nothing sacred my friends about small groups. People say to me, well, isn't your church getting too big? I mean, if you get too many people there, what happens to your small groups? And my answer is, if God wants to build a church where the word of God is preached, I don't care if He brings 50,000 people if that's His desire. I believe in the word of God as preached. And we need some men today like that. We need some faithful, some bold, some powerful men, some holy preachers who make no compromise with the world, no compromise with the flesh, no compromise with the devil, and stand true to the word of God and declare with fire and power.

And I sometimes wonder where they are. I pray God, that out of this congregation He'll raise up some. I really do get weary of the view that the ministry is glorified group therapy. The preachers are errand boys for a congregation or a denomination. I think we need to establish the priority of preaching. And I pray God that in this church this will be a place of powerful preaching and that we will never substitute anything for the Spirit energized preaching of Christ, His cross, and the word of God. Now if you haven't gotten, I believe in preaching.

You say well where do you get all this? Where do you get the idea of the priority? Well, the first thing that happened on Pentecost was just that, and as we come to Chapter 2, verse 14 that's where it all begins. Don't go there yet, I'm not done with the introduction. Peter is the preacher. And Peter is Spirit filled and Peter's been restored and Peter's a firebrand now and things are going to happen, and it all begins with a sermon. Now people can try to design the sermon out of the service and enter in with all kinds of different things and so forth and so on, but there's never to be replacing of that.

Acts doesn't say that after being baptized into Christ's body in Chapter 2 and being filled with the Spirit and beginning to speak the wonderful works of God and all those languages and gaining the ear of the multitude that they all broke into small groups for interaction. It doesn't say that. Or that each received a mimeographed sheet for their independent study. Doesn't say that either. Or that the disciples immediately went into 12 weeks of training for pre-evangelism. It says that when the Spirit of God had filled them, they stood up and they spoke. And later in Acts it says when they were filled with the Spirit, they spoke the Word with what? With boldness.

The dynamic of the Spirit of God issued itself in the birth of church in the preaching of the Word. And I think it still does. I think it still does. When the Spirit had come, we saw the strategy last week didn't we? We saw how the Spirit of God set the scene for the sermon. Beautiful. By the sound that they all heard of the wind, the crowd gathered. And when the disciples began to speak in all of these

languages, they were amazed and shocked, they were at God with wonder, they were astonished. They couldn't figure it out. Some of them said they're drunk. They couldn't understand how these Galileans from up there where the hayseeds lived in the northern part, they're not even educated. And here they are rattling off these languages like mad. They couldn't figure what was going on.

The Spirit of God had set the stage. They were together, they were confused. It was time for somebody to come in who wasn't confused and eliminate the confusion, perfectly setting the stage. And as we begin in our study today we're just going to barely get into Peter's sermon. You say how come it takes you four weeks to preach one sermon? That's my problem. Peter preached it in one shot, I can't.

I want to take you into it and show you the details. It's a good thing I wasn't there on Pentecost or this sermon would have run into Chapter 7. But anyway, Peter got it out a lot faster and easier than I did, but let's face it. He had direct inspiration from the Holy Spirit for every word. I fumble around, but I hope I get there eventually. Not to inspiration, but to the end.

In Chapter 2:14 to verse 42, this whole sermon appears and we'll be in it for a couple of weeks because I want you to see it. Strategically, it is the pattern of apostolic preaching. It's the foundation of all of our apostolic proclamation. The preaching of the cross all through Acts, through the Epistles and even today follows this pattern or should follow this pattern. But the Spirit had set the scene so perfectly. He had even tied the whole thing into the God of these people, the true God of the Old Testament by making these languages to speak the wonderful works of God. So that the people were seeing this miracle and they would say well it's a miracle, therefore it comes from a supernatural source.

Well, it either comes from the devil or God, because they're the only two supernatural sources. And if they're all declaring the wonderful works of God, you know the devil's not in the business of doing that. So therefore, the Spirit had staged the deal, getting them altogether confusing them and then having them hear the wonderful works of God tying it all into God. And now with that beautiful illustration, that beautiful stage set, Peter just slips in and just fires away.

The Spirit of God has done all the preparation. And this is a fantastic sermon. The results, verse 37, look at the results. When they...I'll give a look at the end before we get there. "And when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart and they said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, men, brethren, what shall we do." I mean, they were shook. And verse 41 says, "Three thousand of them were saved and baptized."

It's wonderful to see Peter doing this, isn't it? That's what's known as recovery. Now I want to give you a little view of preaching in terms of what I mentioned earlier, it's content. The word preach, *kerusso*, is to proclaim or herald a proclamation. It means to announce a proclamation. That's

kerusso and from the word kerusso comes the noun kerugma. Now kerugma is preaching the content of the proclamation. When I get up and preach, what I have said or what I have proclaimed is the kerugma or the body of proclamation.

And the kerugma in the New Testament was made up always of the same things. First of all, it centered in Jesus Christ, always. And throughout the book of Acts it involves the fact, number one, that Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy. It was always tied into the Old Testament prophecy. Secondly, it always indicated that Jesus was God in human flesh. Thirdly, it centered on His life and work, particularly death and resurrection. Fourthly, it always talked about His second coming and fifth, it always ended with the fact that salvation was alone in Him and anybody who rejected it was lost forever.

That was the *kerugma*. That was the content of the proclamation. But may I add something very, very important. Apostolic preaching and all preaching was not just *kerugma*. It was not just proclamation, it was also *didache*. *Didache* is the Greek word for teaching. And *didache*, from which we get *didactic*, which has to do with teaching referred to actual reasoning and doctrine so that Christian preaching was a combination of *kerugma* and *didache*. And you can spring that on your friends and they'll think you've got the scholars corner on it.

But *kerugma* and *didache* made up preaching. There is no such thing as preaching without content and doctrine. They always went together. They always overlap in Acts. There's no preaching without teaching. Frequently for example, in the book of Acts we read that after one of the apostles had preached, it doesn't say that people were convicted or converted, it says that people were persuaded. And the very fact that that term is used indicates that they were going through a logical process. That there was doctrine involved, that there was a body of truth. How many times have you heard a cheap presentation of the gospel that never did start at the beginning and end at the end and then when the appeal was made, the appeal was made on the basis of nothing really.

And the only response could be an emotional response. All of the preaching in the book of Acts and in the New Testament a true apostolic preaching has integrity my friends. That is it gives the kerugma and the didache before it ever makes the appeal. Stott says in his book *The Preacher's Portrait*, you never make an appeal without a correct kerugma. A correct proclamation. And vice versa, you never give the *kerugma* and the *didache* without making an appeal.

You say why do you always have an invitation. Just because I believe that that's what you ought to do. If you're going to ask somebody to do something, then you ought to give them a chance to do it. The best example I think of this is Paul in Ephesus. And you know, Paul was there for two years, because he had a lot to work against, you know. That was a pagan place. And he argued...the Bible says "he argued daily in the hall of Tyrannus." And some of the old manuscripts say he argued from the fifth hour to the tenth hour. That's five hours a day for two years.

Paul argued or reasoned, his preaching was doctrinal preaching. That's 25,000 plus hours of preaching I figure. That's a lot of preaching. No wonder the next verse says all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord. And Paul's content was kerugma, proclamation of Christ and didache, doctrinal instruction, the two go together. So this we understand then first of all, the importance of preaching and its priority and secondly we understand the character of preaching.

Now we'll get to my sermon and Peter's. Now as we come to this sermon, it falls into four parts and really all sermons do. So it's a perfect pattern of preaching, a good one to teach preaching from. It has an introduction. It has a proclamation or a body. It has an appeal and then a result. And all good preaching, incidentally has a result. The introduction explaining Pentecost, the proclamation exalting Christ, the appeal exhorting people, and the results examining effects.

Today, we'll only look at the introduction and may not get too far into that. We'll see. Verse 14, "But Peter standing up with the eleven," now that's nothing new for Peter. He was always standing up to say something only this time it's under the control of the Holy Spirit, which is a nice change. And you'll notice that he's standing up here with the eleven and that indicates that Matthias had been absorbed into the eleven having been selected at the end of Chapter 1 and now the body of the twelve is complete.

So Peter stands up. Now the moment is fantastic. The Holy Spirit has set the stage. The people are confused. Their minds are all messed up. They can't understand what's been going on. From their standpoint everything is ready. From Peter's standpoint everything is ready. He's been filled with the Spirit of God. He's about to open his mouth and God is going to speak and so he stands up. And then I like this, it says "he lifted up his voice." Oh preachers love that verse, because that's a wonderful text that grants New Testament precedent for yelling. "And Peter lifted up his voice." You know some preaching demands that.

I mean, some...you can...I remember in seminary, you know they used to train us how to do that. You say oh boy I wish they hadn't done that. But that's part of it. You know, one seminary professor used to tell his kids that when you get out and you forget your next point, just yell a lot. And if you don't have anything real solid to say, just really yell and make it heavy, you see. So one guy got into his pulpit and he was preaching on the coming of Christ and judgment and he came to the statement "Behold I come quickly," and he couldn't remember his next point. And so he decided I better yell and maybe it'll come to me. "Behold I come quickly," and it didn't come. So he said, I'll try it again, I'll hit the pulpit. And he hit the pulpit, "Behold I come quickly," and it still didn't come. And he said I'll try it a third time and gave it everything he got and hit the pulpit, "Behold I come quickly," sailed right over and landed in a lady's lap. And he was so upset and he said "oh ma'am, I am so sorry." She said, "Sorry, why should you be sorry. You warned me four times."

But nevertheless, Peter lifted up his voice. Now he...when he lifted up his voice, listen to what he said. If there's anything I love, it's a positive preacher. "Ye men of Judaea," that is the ones who lived and resided in there, "and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem," that is you who have come to sojourn here during the time of the feast, "be this known unto you and hearken to my words." Oh I like that. Don't you like that? I heard a preacher not too long ago who got up and I dare say that ten times during his sermon he said now this is only my opinion and I'm only giving you what I think and how I see it and you know, my reaction was well friend go home and get in the book and when you can come and say thus saith the Lord, then you say it.

If all you've come to do is deliver your opinion or your ideas or give me the options I'm not interested. And I know one minister who left the ministry because he could never decide on what the second coming was all about so he just got out of the ministry. Unfortunately, for him he couldn't stand it. Fortunately, for everybody else he did get out of the ministry, lest he confused.

Dear ones, if we can't stand up in the pulpit believing in our heart that God has put us there and with His truth then we shouldn't be there. And I don't mean that we're hard-shelled and that we're dogmatic or we have no right to be, but we better be able to say thus saith the Lord. And so Peter stood up and I love it, he says, "Be this known unto you and hearken to my words." He says listen people, I've got something to say and you better hear it. Don't you like that? That's boldness. Now where did he get that boldness? That's the same coward who was running at a little girl asking him if he knew Jesus. What's going on here? He may be talking to as many as 100,000 people to 200,000 people. Where'd he get the courage. The Spirit of God gave it to him.

You see Spirit filled Peter is different than plain old Peter. Now mostly like Peter spoke in Aramaic because that was the vernacular of Palestine and familiar to everybody. And so he perhaps spoke and they would all hear, but he begins his sermon with the illustration. And the illustration bounces off the scene that's just been painted. His introduction has already been staged by the Holy Spirit. You know, they used to tell us in seminary that if you can have a good introduction and really hook the people at the beginning, you've got a really great start going for you. In other words, if you drag the beginning of your sermon, it takes them a long time to get warmed up.

Now some people, you know, develop shock type things at the beginning of their sermon to startle everybody and get their attention, so forth and so on. Other people teach the idea that what you ought to do is create confusion at the beginning of your sermon and then when they get real confused you're there to give the answer. You sort of get their spiritual salivary glands going and then you feed them. You create a hunger, and in a sense that's very good. That's very good. And it's exactly what the Spirit has done here. He's confused these people so much that they are so hungry to find out what's going on that Peter just stands up and says here folks I'll tell you. The thing is set. Every ear was right on Peter. No confusion at all about who they wanted to listen to. Peter stood up and said

now listen to me and I'll tell you what it's all about.

The Spirit of God had prepared everybody by the languages, the wind, all of these things had brought it about. I used to talk about having a grabber at the beginning of your sermon to get your audience. Well, the Holy Spirit provided a living grabber and they were congregated in one spot wondering what was going on. A living illustration and in the midst of that Peter steps up and takes off of that illustration bouncing right off what had happened and begins his introduction. Now at last, let's look at verse 15.

Here comes the introduction. "For these are not drunk and ye suppose. Seeing it is but the third hour of the day." You say well Peter that is a weak argument for drunkenness. I know people that are drunk before nine o'clock. What does that prove? Well, that's because you didn't live in a Jewish culture. No Jew would drink or eat prior to the third hour of the day which was approximately nine o'clock in the morning. That was time for morning devotions. They did not eat nor drink until after nine o'clock. Especially did they not do that on a Sabbath, a feast, or a festival day, and this indeed was the feast of harvest, Pentecost. And so no Jew would be drinking by this time and so Peter says simply that.

In other words, the custom was so wide spread and so universal that Peter only has to appeal to that custom to settle the argument that they're not drunk. You know better than that, it's only nine o'clock. They don't even begin to eat or drink until after that. And so he passes off that and then he wants them to know that the Holy Spirit is doing it, so he launches into a prophecy from the Old Testament. And of course, preaching out of the Old Testament to these Jewish people is really the genius of his approach all through the book of Acts, it's always that way, because they want to put it in their frame of reference.

So he says, your own prophet Joel prophesied this thing. Beginning at verse 16, and let me read the whole passage for you and then we'll just pick it up. Verse 16, "But this is that which was spoken through the prophet Joel." And then he quotes for Joel. Joel Chapter 2 verse 28-32 and he quotes it. "And it shall come to pass in the last days saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh your sons, your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before that great and notable day of the Lord come. It shall come to pass that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Now in this passage that Joel gave, Joel had in mind the kingdom and the coming of Messiah to reign. That's obvious, because he makes reference for example in verse 19...pardon me verse 18 "to the pouring out in those days of my Spirit to the wonders," verse 20, "to the sun darken and the moon

blood," and all these things we see in connection with the kingdom and the tribulation and other passages and then at the end of verse 20, the notable day of the Lord. Now the notable is the terrible day of the Lord. Not notable, but terrible. He's talking about the day of the Lord. When is the day of the Lord? That's the time when Jesus comes in judgment to set up His kingdom. This is a kingdom prophecy. This is Joel's prophecy of the coming of Messiah to set up His kingdom. And judgment is involved in it isn't it?

When Christ comes, judgment is involved. Now the Jews knew. When Messiah came He would come first to judge the ungodly and to set up His glorious kingdom. And so Joel is speaking in a millennial sense, talking about the kingdom of Israel to be established when Israel is in the land, the one that was promised throughout the Old Testament. Now notice this phrase, catch it, verse 17. "It shall come to pass in the last days." Now this is a very important statement, the last days. A common Old Testament expression, watch this, get it, "for the messianic times."

The term last days referred to the time when Messiah came. Are you with that? Throughout all the Old Testament the prophets would speak of the last days, the last days, the last days, and it always read reference to the coming time of Messiah. Now mark this, the Old Testament prophets saw no such thing as the church or the great age of grace as we know it. They didn't see that. It's not in the Old Testament. They only saw that Messiah would come and set up His kingdom in one big thing.

For example, Isaiah Chapter 9, "A child is born," and the next thing it says, "the government shall be," what, "upon His shoulders." They didn't see anything in the middle. They saw a child born and a king reigning with nothing in between. That's why Paul says the church, that's us, slapped in the middle of the first and second comings of Jesus is a mystery, right? That fact means that it was hidden from the Old Testament saints. Only Paul discloses it in Ephesians 3 as the Spirit revealed it to him. The whole church thing, what we're living in is the mystery kingdom. We're living in the mystery form right now that never was seen in the Old Testament. The Jews of the Old Testament only saw Christ the Messiah coming and reigning and they saw nothing in the middle. They didn't expect a 2,000 year parenthesis to intervene.

What reason would a Jew have, for example, hearing the word of Daniel reading the instruction of Daniel to assume that there's going to be at least 2,000 years between the 69th and the 70th week of Daniel, no reason at all. In other words, they only saw Messiah coming in full glory. And therefore, when Messiah came it was the last days. Now I'll tell you something very simple. Put it in your theological file, you're living in the last days. Everybody's been living in the last days since Jesus arrived to minister.

The Jewish last days began 2,000 years ago, did you now that? That's right. The Jewish last days began 2,000 years ago with the arrival of Messiah. They will be completed when the setting of the kingdom takes place. It just so happens that the last days has stretched at least in the 2,000 years.

You say why so? Because God graciously is calling a people from the Gentiles. And secondly, because God in chastisement is punishing Israel for unbelief.

And when God gets through calling together the fullness of the Gentiles and gets through gathering and regathering Israel to the land, then the last days will be consummated. Now Paul writing to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:1 and 2 Timothy 3:1, talks about the last days there, but he's talking about the last days of the church. That the interval of 2,000 years that we've been living in, I believe we're living in the last days of that. Do you believe that? Do you believe Jesus is coming soon? Do you believe the rapture is soon? Then we're not only in the last days of Israel and have been for 2,000 years, but we're in the last days of the church.

But you see this is a Jewish context. And so he says it shall come to pass in the last days. And the last days were messianic times and the Messiah had come so it was the last days. The last days began with the arrival of Jesus. Let me prove that to you by showing you several verses. 1 Peter 1:20 says this, it's talking about Christ, the Lamb without blemish and without spot. And verse 20 says, "Who verily truly was ordained before the foundation of the world?" Jesus was, wasn't He?

Then he says this, "But was manifest in these last times for you." Do you know that the last times began when Jesus was manifest? Hebrews 1:2, 1:1, "God at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers hath in these," what, "last days spoken unto us," what, "by His Son." Jesus came in the last days. Listen to this, 1 John 2:18, "Little children it is the last time." You see that's an eschatological term for messianic time. And you have the same thing clearly indicated in Hebrews 9:26. And that statement shows that they really believed that the last time began with Messiah. The writer of Hebrews says this, "But now once in the end of the ages hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." When they saw Messiah come and die, they said gang it's the end of the ages.

And Peter says in 1 Peter Chapter 4, verse 7, "The end of all things is at hand." He didn't know there'd be 2,000 years in there. Nobody knew there'd be 2,000 years, because of those times and seasons no man knows. And so everybody, since the time of Peter, lived as if Jesus was coming in the next moment to set up His kingdom, because the last times have already begun 2,000 years ago.

And so the last days of Israel began with the coming of Messiah to summarize so you'll understand it. The kingdom was not brought at that time because you see when Israel wouldn't believe the kingdom had to be postponed. Until Israel could be regathered, redeemed. And then once they believe again, the kingdom will come and the last days will come to an end. So Peter is right to apply this text. People said well, Peter blew it here. He didn't apply the right text. He's exactly right, it is the last days.

Now, let me give you another thought hang on here. But all of the things of this prophecy haven't been fulfilled have they? No, just the very smattering of the beginnings. They can't all be fulfilled til all

the last days is wrapped up, right? It's easy to understand if you just interpret it dispensationally. Prophecy will be completely fulfilled at the beginning of the millennium as Christ comes and the great judgment at the end of the tribulation and then He sets up His kingdom and then the visions and dreams and prophesying and all of that's going to take place, and all of the wonders in the heavens and in the earth. And the day of the Lord as well.

So what does Peter say? Saying this, what you see is the beginning of the end. The beginning of the last days. Now you're not seeing the full fulfillment of it, but you're seeing what Dr. Feinberg coined the prefillment. In other words, a preliminary fulfillment. I'll show you what I mean. Verse 17, "It shall come to pass in the last days saith God, I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh." Has that happened? He's poured out His Spirit, right? On all flesh? Wrong.

That's kingdom. All flesh in the kingdom, why? Because when the kingdom begins the only people who will be in the kingdom at the start will be believers. And so all of them will receive the Spirit. But at this time, He has poured out His Spirit. We've begun to see what it will be like in the kingdom. Because the last days began with Jesus Christ, in a prefillment sense. And I'll take you a step further to help you grab this, because it's important. Everything that's going to happen in the kingdom has already begun to happen in a kind of a prefillment sense already in our lives. We live in a kind of a mystery form of that kingdom but the full millennial earthly kingdom is yet to come.

Now in this form that we live in, a mystery form of the kingdom, we experience some of the things that are going to be fully in the kingdom. For example, during the kingdom, the Spirit will be poured out on all flesh, but during the mystery kingdom, the Spirit's poured out on us, right? Titus 3, "That He has poured out His Spirit abundantly upon us all." In the kingdom there is perfect peace. Is there perfect peace in the world now? No, but there is my heart.

In the kingdom, Jesus Christ reigns. Does He reign in the world now? No, but He reigns in my life. In the kingdom, Christ is the judge of all things. He is the one that brings all things to light. In my life He is just the same by His Spirit convicting me and revealing things to me. To see everything that is going to take place in the kingdom in a pre-sense is now living within me in the form of the Spirit.

So what Peter is simply saying is that. He's saying friends, you've seen the beginning of the last days. And what is going to come to a full fruition in the great kingdom has already begun to be seen at Pentecost. Do you see how he is explaining to them what happened at Pentecost? And tying it right in with the prophecy of the Old Testament and with their own God, and showing them that it is the last days? And so Peter bounces right off that living illustration with great power.

Well, look at the verses just individually and we'll just look at them very quickly. "I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams." Old men don't see visions as well evidently. They get

tired easier and God communicates to them in sleep. But whether you're awake or sleep at that time is going to be visions or dreams. God's going to communicate whether you're awake or sleep, and men are going to prophesy.

You say what does all that mean? I haven't got the faintest idea. I have no idea. I read my Bible just like you and it says that and then it stops at the end of verse 17 and that's where I stop. But that's talking...mark it, that's not talking about now. I'm not saying everybody go out and get a vision. That isn't the point. If anybody comes to me and says I had a vision, oh I worry. I ask them first of all, what did you eat before you went to bed. The point here is this is millennial. This is talking about the period of the time when Messiah comes to set up His kingdom, then there's...God's going to communicate directly through dreams and visions and through prophesying.

And verse 18, "On My servants and on My handmaidens, I'll pour out in those days of My Spirit and they shall prophesy." There's going to be some fantastic things going on in the kingdom as God works His Word through individuals. I don't know what that means. I just know that's what it says. And I'll be around at the time of the kingdom and I'll find out and so will you if you know Christ. But I'm not going to worry about it.

Like Mark Twain said, "It's not what I don't know that bothers me, it's what I do know." Verse 19, "Also at the time of the kingdom, I will show wonders in heaven above, signs in the earth beneath, blood and fire and vapor of smoke." And here he specifically mentions some things that are going to happen around the time of the coming of Christ. Don't you see the power of putting this Old Testament kingdom passage right into the issue there at Pentecost to show them how critical it was that they move. Peter didn't know when Jesus was coming back. For all he knew He'd back in three days or one day.

Do you see the urgency? He didn't know when this was going to happen, but it fired him up. I think so many of us, because it's been so long have lost some of that fire. But Peter says it's going to be like this, quoting from Joel, "blood, fire, vapor of smoke." And you know something if you read the book the Revelation which details the end times for us when Messiah does come back you read about just those three things.

For example, I read about blood in Chapter 6, verse 7, Revelation. We're skipping 7, it says in verse 8, "Power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, with the beasts of the earth." There's going to be blood unbelievably streaming about the earth in that great terrible fourth seal, which is death. And then in moving through Revelation Chapter 8, we find it again in 7, 8:7, "The first angel sounded, there followed hail and fire mixed with blood." Verse 8, "Fire was cast into the sea and a third part of the sea became blood." And on and on it goes. In Chapter 9:15, it says, "And the four angels were loosed who were prepared for an hour and a day and a month and a year to slay the third part of men." Bloodshed as one-third of the population of the

world dies.

And then further on in Chapter 14, that most remarkable verse 20, "And the wine press was trodden outside the city and blood came out of the wine press even to the horses bridles by the space of a thousand six hundred furlongs." Blood five feet deep covering 200 miles. And on and on it goes. Chapter 16, verse 3, there it is again, "blood like the dead man, the sea turns to blood." And then we find in the book of Revelation also fire indicated at the time when Jesus comes back. Chapter 8, verse 5 talks about the censer filled with fire and cast to the earth. Verse 7 of the same chapter talks about fire again. Verse 8 talks about fire again, cast into the sea. Verse 10, burning fire cast into the area of the rivers and the fountains of waters.

And then as we read Chapter 9, we read about the smoke as the demons ascend out of the pit. All of these things are pictures of the coming judgment of Christ when He returns. Then in verse 20 it tells us something more. "It says the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood. And before that great notable day of the Lord come." Now isn't it amazing that although they hadn't seen all of these things, they had in fact, seen wonders in heaven, hadn't they? They heard the sound. And they had not only seen that, but they had seen wonders in the earth. The miracles of the languages. Not only that, what happened all over the place at the death of Jesus Christ? Darkness covered the earth.

Verse 20, "The sun shall be turned to darkness." So you see in that same kind of preliminary way, they had begun to experience what the fullness of the great and terrible day of the Lord was going to be like. The sun shall be turned to darkness, the moon to blood. We read in Matthew Chapter 24 an indication of that in the direct words of Jesus in talking about the time of His coming to set up His kingdom. Matthew 24:29, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be dark and the moon shall not give its light. The stars shall fall from heaven, the powers of the heaven shall be shaken and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

You see there Jesus' coming is again tied with the wonders in heaven. As we saw in Revelation the wonders in earth as well. And so before that great and terrible day of the Lord, these wonders shall occur. Now the term the day of the Lord has to do with the coming of Christ in judgment. It is a term that refers to the coming of Christ during the tribulation and at His second coming when He judges. It's a terrifying term. It's an Old Testament term for judgment. So you see what Peter does? He ties this whole thing together as the fulfillment of prophecy with a powerful urgency that messianic times have already begun. It is the last days and he wraps it up with Joel's great climax in verse 21. "And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

A natural question would be at this point coming to the end of verse 20, how do you get out of it, right? So he says it shall be those that call upon the name of the Lord. Do you see what he's doing? He's driving into their hearts the need for salvation. And then as we'll see next week, he begins in verse 22 to show them who it is and it is alone that can save them, you see?

The power of this sermon, the way it has been carried, led of the Spirit of God brings him right up to the fact that you need to be saved and you need to be saved now and here's how. Through Jesus Christ and Him alone. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for what we've learned this morning. Thank You for tremendous truths of the Word. And Lord we are so thankful too for the wonder of preaching, for what we learned from Peter for how the Holy Spirit set the stage for him. And then how filled with the Spirit he simply stood up and opened his mouth. And he quoted from Joel and so fit the scene. And how he pressed to their hearts the urgency of these coming judgments and oh Father we know those Jews gathered that day understood what he meant when he said the terrible day of the Lord.

Father, how their hearts must have been burning inside of the them. They had seen such miracles. They had seen them a sign to their own God. They had seen them from Peter's lips as the fulfillment of their own prophesies. And how their urgency must have been gripping them and then to have Peter say you need to be saved from this coming judgment.

Father, we just thank You for the Spirit of God's preparation and then that Peter could from there and teach them how to come to Jesus Christ and be saved. Father we learned so much about how we should present the gospel from this. Thank You for teaching us. Father, we know too that there are some here this morning with us to whom we would say it is the last days. Indeed, for Israel that began 2,000 years ago, but we believe it is the last days for the church and Jesus is coming so soon.

And we even look up, for our redemption draws nigh. And Father, we would not have anyone leave this place even today who doesn't know Jesus Christ who has not yet been saved. We pray Lord that Your Spirit will do a work of conviction and bring that one to Christ. And Father for those of us who are Christians, challenge us with priorities in our lives of fearlessly and boldly proclaiming Jesus Christ whatever the cost.

Father, raise up from this congregation preachers, holy men who will speak Your truth with power. And Father maybe there are some whose hearts are even challenged this morning that You are speaking to about this, but Lord for all us as Christians, help us catch something of Peter's urgency. If blessed Peter could be so fired up and so urgent 2,000 years ago, oh Lord, what must be our urgency? Challenge our hearts Lord with these truths. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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