

Changing The Days

Acts 2:14 – 39

Acts 2:14-39 is Peter's lengthy sermon explaining the extraordinary event of the Apostles being baptized in the Holy Spirit. They preached the gospel in the known dialects of the foreigners who came to Jerusalem. The following is an outline of Peter's sermon, yet for our purposes today we will only study the first part.

Part I: **Fulfillment of prophecy** v.14-21

Introduction: "Men of Judea..."

Preface to passage: these men are not drunk

O.T. quote: Joel 2:28-32 is fulfilled in these men

Part II: **David's prophesy** v.22-28

Introduction: "Men of Israel..."

Preface to passage: life, death, resurrection of Jesus

O.T. quote: Psalm 16:8-11, David spoke of Christ

Part III: **Christ Fulfilled David's Words** v.29-35

Introduction: "Men and brethren..."

Preface to passage: Christ has risen, not David

O.T. quote: Psalm 110:1, David spoke of Christ

Conclusion: "Therefore..." know that Christ is Lord, repent and be baptized. v.36-39

Notice there are three parts to this sermon with a conclusion calling all the people to faith and repentance in Christ. The introductions are similar, and each section has a preface to an Old Testament quote. So far, in the first two chapters of Acts, Luke has recorded the quotation of five Old Testament passages: Ps.69:25, 109:8; Joel 2:28-32; Ps. 16:8-11; and Ps. 110:1. Notice that four out of five of these passages have been quotes from the book of Psalms. For today's study we will focus on the first section of Peter's sermon and the quote from Joel 2.

I. The Unexpected Fulfillment of Joel's Prophecy v.14-21

Notice the structure of Joel's prophecy, as quoted by Peter. It speaks of the "last days", which Peter applies to that day of Pentecost when the Lord's church experienced the empowering of the Holy Spirit. As a matter of observation, notice that this same passage from Joel is also quoted in Roman 10:13 and Rev. 6:12. Yet, to appreciate the significance of this passage we should consider the surrounding theme of Joel.

The book of Joel anticipates the great and dreadful Day of the Lord. Notice the following passages from Joel:

1:15 "*Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is hand; It shall come as destruction from the Almighty.*"

2:1,2 "...for the day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand: A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness."

2:11 "for the day of the Lord is great and very trouble; who can endure it?"

3:14 "for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision."

In the context of Joel the "day of the Lord" is a day of wrath and judgment which will be very terrible. Then after that day of judgment Joel says that God will pour out His Spirit: "*And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh.*" From this verse we should notice that Peter quotes Joel with a slight alteration of that passage to explain the fulfillment of it.

Instead of saying the pouring out of God's Spirit "*shall come to pass afterward*", Peter alters Joel passage to say, "*it shall come to pass in the last days*". Joel's prophecy originally identifies the pouring out of God's Spirit as an event that will come after the day of wrath, after the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Yet Peter explicitly says that God has poured out His Spirit "*in these last days*". The means, for Peter, the day of the Lord is still at hand and pending – just as much as it was pending when Joel wrote his book. But in spite of that pending judgment, in spite of the dreadful day that is coming, Jesus' work and the work of the Spirit have already come *beforehand*. This reveals to us two reasons for Peter saying these are the last days.

First, these are the last days because the great and dreadful day of the Lord is still ahead. It is the next and only great event to be had since the coming of Jesus and the Spirit. The day in which "God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" (Rm.2:16) is the only day that we are awaiting. It will be a day of resurrection, vindication, and judgment – all in one Day of Judgment.

Second, these are the last days, not only because of the judgment ahead of us, but because of the experience we have in the present tense. The pouring out of God's Spirit that was anticipated to come after the day of Judgment in Joel, has now been poured out before the day of judgment in Acts. The original readers of Joel would have expected the pouring out of God's Spirit to occur in "the age to come", or the in "the life of the world to come" – all after the great and final day of judgment, even after the bodily resurrection. But Peter understands that the Gospel of the Spirit's work has shattered the Old Testament paradigm and worldview. The spiritual blessing of the "age to come" is now being experienced in this "present age". The "life the world to come" is now being experienced in the present life of the church. Therefore, these are the last days because of the judgment ahead of us, and Spirit's presence with us and in us.

It is very interesting to observe how commentators scramble over the fact that New Testament authors tweak some of the Old Testament passages, or even apply passages well beyond their Old Testament context. Some take this as an opportunity to try to disparage the authority of Scripture. Others try to reconcile the New Testament quotes and applications with the Old Testament text and circumstances. But the facts remain: the Scripture is entirely authoritative and the New Testament quotations contain adjustments to the Old Testament text.

The best explanation I have read on this issue comes from Peter Leithart's book "Deep Exegesis". I quoted from his book when we studied Acts 1:15-26. Leithart's basic point was that the meaning of Old Testament passages *do change* in light of what

Christ has experienced and accomplished. Leithart says, “The apostles teach us to recognize that “how it turned out” exposes dimensions of the original event or text that may not have been apparent, and perhaps were not even there, until it turned out as it did” (p.74). With this understanding it is authoritative and faithful to the Old Testament for Luke and Peter to alter the Old Testament quotation. The way it turned out was that the Day of Pentecost was a “last day” event, which meant that there was more to Joel’s prophecy than even Joel himself would recognize.

This same point was made about the Psalm written by David, which prophesied about Judas (see Acts 1:20). David never mentions Judas’ name. Nevertheless, the way things turned out, the way Christ was betrayed by an evil man – necessarily means, retrospectively, that those Psalms did prophesy about Judas. David prophesied and wrote about Judas even though Judas was not in David’s mind. We will see a similar event in the Psalm quoted by Peter in Acts 2:25-28. The way things worked out through the Lord Jesus Christ expands, and even alters where necessary, the meaning and text of the Old Testament.

Thoughts Of Consideration:

1. Authentic History

“The way things turned out” in Christ did not fit into the little box of Old Testament prophesies. God did something in Christ that was far beyond the paradigm of the Old Testament. Yet, all that God did, was consistent and faithful to His Old Testament promises. To understand those historical promises rightly, God’s people had to accept the new work that God had performed in history. Many liberals and non-Christians assume that the early Christians made up their own religion and savior. This is impossible because everything about Christianity is founded upon an unprecedented and unexpected event, an event that did not fit into the old creation nor old covenant – the Christ event that brought new meaning to the times and text of Scripture, all the while bringing fulfillment to the times and text. Those who reject the historicity of Jesus’ death and resurrection reject His Gospel; and all their objections are merely a denial of that real historical event.

2. The Present Time

Since Pentecost we have lived in the last days of the world. And these last days have been marked by the increased presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has always worked upon creation (Gen.1:1-2), and continually worked throughout the Old Testament. Yet, the Spirit works upon God’s people with a much more extensity and intensity. Since the Spirit works in such a greater dynamic way, the Apostle Paul can identify our era as “the ministry of the Spirit” (II Cor.3:8) that is more glorious than the little glory of Moses’ ministry.

We truly live in a great time period than the Old Covenant. Therefore, all who have received the Spirit’s sacrament of water baptism are even more without excuse. That initial rite is the first objective work of the Spirit of God upon the visible church. And by the Spirit’s effectual work, He will make that sacrament and all His other means of grace effectual unto our eternal salvation.