

Cut to the Heart! - Part 1 of 3 (Acts 2:14-21)

The gospel, according to Paul, is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes it (Romans 1:16). And the Holy Spirit, according to Jesus, is at work both through us to present it (Acts 1:8) and to help listeners receive and believe it (John 16:8-9). In this time of social unrest, a global pandemic, and unusual occurrences both in the heavens and on earth, we who believe in Jesus should be focused on helping people to learn about salvation. Heaven and earth are indicating that there should be an urgency in our efforts.

But do we really believe Jesus? I am not referring to the resurrection. I am referring to His promise to be with us (Matthew 28:20; John 14:18), work through us (Matthew 10:19), and graciously help others to believe (John 16:7-8). Do we believe that we have the power to present the gospel effectively? Do we believe that Jesus is at work helping others to hear and heed what is spoken?

What follows is a brief study of what happened when the work that Jesus began to do was continued through His new community on earth – *the Church*. In the account of what happened immediately following Pentecost is a true story that should embolden believers to preach Christ with confidence. Luke recounts for his readership what happens when a few Galileans step out in faith to be witnesses. It is nothing short of a marvel of grace through the Spirit. The people who hear the witnesses are cut to the heart and make decisions.

Peter Explains the Sign (Acts 2:14-21)

¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. ¹⁵ For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is *only* the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. ²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. ²¹ And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.’

Refuting the Ridicule (Acts 2:14-15)

The people marveled when they heard Galileans speak with other tongues (Acts 2:7). In that marveling crowd were two camps:

- (a) The Make Sense Crowd (Acts 2:12) - These that tried to make sense of what they were seeing and hearing. This group asked aloud how this could be happening. They asked good questions. How does a group with a notoriously bad pronunciation of their own tongue suddenly learn to speak so many other tongues? The accent was still present but so was an unprecedented ability to speak in Aramaic, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and Nabatean.
- (b) The Make Fun Crowd (Acts 2:13) - These that tried to mock what they were seeing and hearing. Their explanation was simple. According to this camp the Galileans are not really saying anything. According to this camp what sounds like Galileans proclaiming the good works of God in other languages was

really the effects of alcohol. They attributed the multi-lingual witnessing to spirits – the alcoholic variety. “They are just drunk.”

Peter, the leader of the group and one with the keys to the kingdom, stands **up with the eleven**.¹⁴ The rugged fisherman **raised his voice** above the ecstatic utterances and responses of the crowd to prophesy.¹⁵ He speaks with authority as he declares the truth and an admonition. He says in effect, know the truth and take my advice (**heed my words**). Peter then says that the accusation of drunkenness is invalid based on their custom and culture:

- The Custom of the Jews – “Nine o’clock in the morning was an hour of prayer, the time of regular morning sacrifice.”¹⁶ Peter says that this accusation clashes with the customs of the Jews. Wine would only be imbibed in the evening hours. The idea that such a large group had made the collective mistake of drinking to excess at the hour of prayer was not tenable.
- The Culture of the Jews – At this time the special offerings associated with the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost would have been taking place. What would Jews be doing so near the temple drinking heavily at a time when the solemn Feast of Weeks (aka known as Pentecost) was being carried out. The idea that such a large group had made the collective mistake of becoming drunk during the feast was not tenable in light of the culture and time.

Peter says, in effect, what **you suppose** cannot be supported; it is 9:00 AM in the morning. He does not say that drunkenness was impossible. Rather, in light of the customs and culture of the Jews, the explanation of drunkenness for **these** was not reasonable (Acts 2:15). The attempt to mock the sign was based on a silly assertion: *a group of Galileans became inebriated in the morning and then began, under the influence of alcohol, to speak about God’s great works... fluently in other languages*. And then Simon goes on to put forward the real reason for the strange things that the crowd was seeing and hearing.

Explaining the Sign (Acts 2:16-20)

“But this is what it really is,” says Peter. **What was spoken by the prophet Joel** is happening here and now. He then goes on to quote Joel:28-32. Luke indicates that Peter spoke these words from memory. Is the former fisherman’s memory that good? Can’t say. But we know that the same anointing that inspired Joel is now at work both in and through Peter. In fact his utterance is the speaking of the Spirit through him:

¹⁷ ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ And on My

¹⁴ Those that try to gainsay the authenticity of Matthias as an apostle should note that in the newly formed church he is numbered with the twelve (Acts 2:14). Matthias will also be numbered with the twelve later in Luke’s record (Acts 6:2). The record clearly states that Matthias is regarded as be an apostle. Denying his apostleship is tantamount to saying that the eleven were not able to discern the difference between a real apostle and a false apostle. Moreover, what of the fact that wonders were done through the apostles (Acts 2:43)? The account in Luke has no caveats indicating that miracles were wrought by the Spirit through everyone... ahem... except Matthias.

¹⁵ The word used of Peter’s address has been previously used in Acts 2:4. Then the word utterance (*ἀποφθέγγομαι*) was the inspired speaking of those who had been anointed by the Spirit. Luke is indicating that what formerly was manifest in the sign of Galileans speaking with other tongues is now seen in the plain speech of Peter. He is speaking truth to the crowd in the power of the Spirit (Acts 2:14; 26:25).

¹⁶ Fruchtenbaum, Arnold G., Acts – A Messianic Bible Study from Ariel Ministries, pg. 9.

menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. ²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. ²¹ And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.’ (Acts 2:17-21)

It is important that we realize Peter was not saying that Joel 2:28-32 was seeing final fulfillment. Commentators are quick to say that. However, Peter is saying that it is the same phenomenon mentioned by Joel – *the outpouring of the Spirit*. The prophecies of Joel 2:30-31 quoted in Acts 2:19-20 were not being fulfilled. That day awaits repentance of Israel as a nation. Is it the last days mentioned by Joel? What about **the great and awesome day of the LORD** (Acts 2:20)? The day of the LORD is used throughout Scripture to refer to a day of restoration and/or reckoning for a community or nation.¹⁷ The generation that had refused to receive Messiah were facing an eminent day of the Lord by not *The Day of the Lord*.¹⁸

The Exhortation to See the Sign and be Saved (Acts 2:21)

Peter’s preaching is God’s idea. The Lord, through the Spirit, is making the most of a moment created by the Spirit. The Spirit of Christ has been poured out on the apostles and upper room community. With something to hear (rushing wind) and something to see (tongues of fire) it was indicated that the promise of Power had been kept (John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26). The manifestation of speaking in other tongues was being used to draw a crowd. To what end?

The Spirit has come to promote the plan of God for saving the world (John 3:16). This is the kickoff of doing that through the Church. Peter, speaking with unction, has indicated that the sign of Galileans speaking with other tongues is the outpouring of the Spirit before judgement like what was mentioned by Joel. The day of the Lord is near for the **men of Judea** (Acts 2:14). To be saved from the wrath to come one must **call upon the name of the Lord** (Acts 2:21). What would his hearers have been thinking at this point? That is, what would have been going through the mind of a Jew seeing and hearing all of this? Think about it.

Peter, when he began speaking, told the Jews to heed his words. He is calling them to more than just paying attention. There is an exhortation. If he is telling his audience to call on the name of the Lord they may have had questions. I believe that they would have thought something like this:

It is 9:00 AM. Drunkenness does not explain this phenomenon. This Galilean fisherman is making sense; this really is what the prophet Joel wrote about. We are seeing the outpouring of the Spirit in a way that cannot be denied. Galileans are speaking about the wonderful works of God... in languages they don’t speak. But if this part is happening then what about the great and awesome day of the Lord that this guy just quoted. Won’t that part happen as well? If we want to be saved in that day of the Lord we need to call upon His name. Wait. What is His name? **WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE LORD?** I am trying to heed his words but I have questions.

In the next chapter we look at how Peter’s sermon deals with their questions.

¹⁷ The “day of the Lord” is seen throughout the prophets in reference to Divine restoration of His people and judgement of the nations that oppose Him (Amos 5:18-20; Malachi 4:5; Isaiah 13:5-10).

¹⁸ In 70 AD the Roman general Titus would have his armies surround Jerusalem and then raze it. The inhabitants would experience a day of the Lord that had been mentioned by Jesus (Luke 21:20).

Questions for Missional Community Discussion

1. What is the real reason for the group of Jesus followers speaking in other tongues? Why would God have done that through them?
2. What part of the Joel prophecy would have been comforting to Peter's listeners (Acts 2:17-18)?
3. What aspect of the Joel prophecy would may have been disturbing to Peter's listeners (Acts 2:21; Joel 2:31-32)?

Cut to the Heart! - Part 2 of 3 (Acts 2:22-36)

Peter has started preaching to the crowd. He explains that the sign of Galileans speaking with other tongues is the outworking of the Spirit. And, contrary to what some have said (Acts 2:13), the spirit is not new wine. Peter says that it is the Holy Spirit. He explains the sign with quotes from the prophet Joel. His quote ends on a part of the prophecy that suggests that dire consequences await those who do not take the sign to heart. The sign is an indicator that (1) the Spirit has been poured out and (2) a day of the Lord is eminent.

If the listeners want to be saved in the mentioned day of the Lord then they need to call on His name (Acts 2:21). But what is His name?¹⁹ For those with questions like these Peter, speaking under the influence, has answers. Specifically, he is being used by God to help the **men of Judea** (Acts 2:14) to see (1) the relevance of the recent resurrection, (2) the tie to the outpouring of the Spirit, and (3) what the name of the Lord is.

Peter Introduces a Seemingly Unrelated Character (Acts 2:22-24)

²² **“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—²³ Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; ²⁴ whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.**

Instead of simply stating the name that his listeners need to call upon Peter starts talking about something else. At first it seems orthogonal to the matter of being saved in the day of the Lord. But it will soon all make sense.

The Segue to Jesus (Acts 2:21-22)

The **men of Israel** are told to pay attention to what is said next. He says, **“hear these words.”** After this he goes into a brief review of the ministry of **Jesus of Nazareth**. The events of most recent weeks would have been fresh in the minds of everyone in Jerusalem. Regarding this Jesus there had been a triumphal entry, a cleansing of the temple, and finally an execution. Highs, hopes, and abysmal lows had all taken place just before and during Passover. Before the most recent events news about the wonderful works of Jesus had been spreading throughout the region for a few years. By the **miracles, wonders** and **signs** that were performed it had been shown that Jesus had God’s approval. And more than His approval. Peter explains that those supernatural activities were actually being done by God through Jesus (John 14:10). The **miracles, wonders, and signs** were performed by and **through [Jesus] in [their] midst**. Those things were so well known Peter speaks about them as things that his readers **also know** (Acts 2:22).

Their Crime against Jesus (Acts 2:23)

Peter now unveils shocking news. First, an innocent **Man attested by God**. Had been had **taken** (arrested), **crucified, and put to death**. Their murderous actions against **Jesus of Nazareth** were **lawless**; he was falsely accused and sent to the cross even when it was determined by Pontus Pilate that he was innocent (Matthew 27:24; Luke 23:4; John 18:38; 19:4,6). A man of their own, approved by God with miracles, wonders, and signs, was killed in a way that was reserved for criminals. In fact, among the Jews, his dying on a cross was

¹⁹ Or His Son’s name if anyone knows (Proverbs 30:4)?

especially ignominious – it was reserved for the cursed (Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13). That is the second part of the news; the delivery of Jesus into their hands was known and planned by God. The bitterness toward Jesus was not God’s fault; and it also was not wasted. God used it to provide a means by which the Passover Lamb of God would be slain. God the Father was moved by love to offer His own Son against the debt incurred by the nation:

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10, NKJV)

The Vindication of Jesus by God (Acts 2:24)

To prove that Jesus of Nazareth was approved by God He was raised up from the dead. The horrors and birth pangs of death eventually gave way to Jesus being released through resurrection back to life.²⁰ At this point Peter says a curious thing: **because it was not possible that He should be held by it.** The **because** (καθότι) is a marker indicating that what follows is a reason or rationale for the resurrection. Peter says that, logically speaking, it was not possible that Jesus should be held by death. Why? He then goes on to explain why it would be illogical for Jesus to remain dead.

Peter Explains the Significance of the Resurrection (Acts 2:25-36)

²⁵ For David says concerning Him: ‘I foresaw the LORD always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. ²⁶ Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. ²⁷ For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. ²⁸ You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.’ ²⁹ “Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, ³¹ he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. ³³ Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. ³⁴ “For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: ‘The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, ³⁵ Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.” ’ ³⁶ “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

²⁰ The word translated pangs (ὠδίν) is actually the word for birthing pains. It used elsewhere in Scripture to indicate that the difficulty of a moment is giving rise or birth to something else (1 Thessalonians 5:3; Matthew 24:8; Mark 13:8).

David Foresaw Jesus' Resurrection (Acts 2:25-28)

Peter says that David spoke about **Jesus of Nazareth**. The quote is from Psalm 16; that psalm is regarded in Christendom as being messianic.²¹ In the psalm David attaches his hope of being made to know the ways of life and joy in God's presence to the expectation that Messiah would be raised from the dead. Two things are mentioned that indicate a rise to eternal life for the Messiah:

1. The soul of Messiah will not be left in the abode of the dead (Hades).
2. The Holy One of God will not be allowed to suffer decay.

Some might say, "David was talking about himself." Peter anticipates such an objection and goes on to show that is not the case.

David Was Talking about the Son of David (Acts 2:29-31)

Before proving that David was not referring to himself Peter takes a moment to prepare his audience for strong words. They needed to know, before the statements were uttered, that the apostle was not being disrespectful to the patriarch David. He asks for their permission to speak with candor that might, without the forewarning, be seen as disrespect for the former king.

Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.
(Acts 2:29)

David is dead. If he were talking about himself his prayer was not answered. Peter says, "Regarding his mention of not allow God's Holy One to see corruption, the dead man's body was in a tomb that is with us to this day. In other words, David's body has already seen corruption. Obviously, then, he was not talking about himself." Who was he talking about then. David, **being a prophet**, was speaking prophetically regarding someone else. Who? Based on the promise of a son to sit on the throne David was speaking about his Son. Solomon? No. **He (David), foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption (Acts 2:31).**

Peter is saying that David, by the inspiration of the Spirit, had put together the promise of a son on the throne (2 Samuel 7:12) and the content of this psalm. David, says Peter, knew that he was speaking about the resurrection of the Christ. It was not logical that the Christ would remain dead. The Christ being held by death does not make sense. His resurrection is the only thing that makes sense!

²¹ Even some rabbis hold this view. Not the majority.

We Are Witnesses to the Resurrected Jesus (Acts 2:32-34)

It is beginning to come together. What seemed like an unrelated digression was actually the point that had to be made. The **Jesus of Nazareth** mentioned earlier has been **raised up** from the dead. The people speaking with tongues are witnesses to that fact.

Jesus is now reigning. He is seated in the heavenlies at the right hand of the Father. From his exalted position at **the right hand of God** He reigns and is able rain down what He has received (the Holy Spirit) upon His people. Peter tells them that what they now see and hear was caused by the exalted Jesus.

The Point: Jesus is the Name of the Lord That You Should Call On (Acts 2:21, 35-36; Psalm 110:1)

David did not ascend into heaven. But David, who had no earthly Lord, said that the LORD had said to his Lord, “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.” He was referring to the descendant that had been promised him. He then summarizes: **Let all the house of Israel know that God has made Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.**

Peter’s sermon has set before the hearers the problem and solution. Salvation is needed so that the day of the Lord is not one of retribution (Acts 2:21). The solution is found in calling on the name of the Lord; that person shall be saved. The name, he has shown, is Jesus.

It is a lot to take in. Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ that they have been waiting for. They had murdered Him. But God raised Him from the dead and exalted the Son of David to His own right hand. The exalted Jesus poured out what had been promised to Him on the people. The Galileans speaking in other tongues were proof. Joel talked about the pouring out of the Spirit and prophesying. He also talked about a day of the Lord and that being saved in that day required calling on the name of the Lord. The name, he tells his them, is *Jesus*.

In the next chapter we look at the result of Peter’s preaching.

Questions for Missional Community Discussion

1. Why does David say that his soul would not be left in Hades? Why does he say that his body would not be allowed to experience corruption. How is this fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth?
2. Jews were waiting on Messiah to deliver them from oppression. What do you think was going through their mind when they heard they had killed him?
3. Why did God allow them to take Jesus with lawless hands, mistreat him, and crucify Him? (Romans 6:23; Isaiah 53:1-6; John 1:29)

Cut to the Heart! - Part 3 of 3 (Acts 2:37-41)

Peter has proclaimed the truth about Jesus. He has been a powerful witness (Acts 1:8). How are the people going to respond to the truth they have heard. Their response is another gracious work of the Spirit that was mentioned by Jesus.

⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me (John 16:7-9, NKJV)

Cut to the Heart (Acts 2:37-41)

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?” ³⁸ 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. ³⁹ 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.” ⁴⁰ And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” ⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*.

The Sermon Makes Sense (Acts 2:37; John 16:5-15)

The Spirit of God caused the message to make sense. The same Spirit who produced the preaching was at work in the hearers enabling them to understand and feel convicted. The words translated **cut to the heart** indicate an injury that stings. When Peter is preaching the Spirit is pushing the matter beyond just intellectual ascension to the facts. He is making it a matter of the heart.

The outworking of the Spirit’s inworking was the question: **Men and brethren, what shall we do?** Notice that the work of the Spirit to both present the gospel and to make it understand. Salvation begins with God’s initiative and is enabled entirely by Him. Salvation is grace!

The Call to Confidence in Jesus as Christ (Acts 2:38-40)

Peter answers their question: **Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.** To repent is the change the mind. Change your mind, says Peter, about Jesus of Nazareth. Instead of regarding him as demon-possessed or deceptive, realize and admit that He is good, that He is God,

and that He is Lord (Acts 2:36)! The blasphemy of saying that His ministry was demonic is an unpardonable sin for the nation. But you as individuals can be saved from this **perverse generation**. And they were. The ministry of the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit that resides today in people that have repented of placing their confidence in something other than Jesus (Ephesians 1:13), made the preaching effective. He will do that through your presentation of the gospel as well.

Questions for Missional Community Discussion

1. How did the people feel about what Peter had said? (Acts 2:37)
2. Was the preaching effective? (Acts 2:37)
3. What caused the result seen in the people? (John 16:7-9)
4. Are you confident that the Holy Spirit can use you to lead people to salvation in Jesus? Why or why not?