



Winning This Present Generation!

BETTER

Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1
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Acts 2:14–21 (NKJV)

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.'

The Church Witnessing to the Lost

(Acts 2:14–41)

- Peter did not preach in tongues; he addressed his audience in the everyday Aramaic that they understood.
- The message was given by a Jew, to Jews (*Acts 2:14, 22, 29, 36*), on a Jewish holy day, about the resurrection of the Jewish Messiah whom their nation had crucified.

The Church Witnessing to the Lost

(Acts 2:14–41)

- The Gentiles who were there were proselytes to the Jewish religion (*Acts 2:10*). Peter would not open the door of faith to the Gentiles until he visited Cornelius (*Acts 10*).
- There are three explanations in Peter's sermon.

- He explained what happened: the Spirit had come *(vv. 14–21)*.
- He explained how it happened: Jesus was alive *(vv. 22–35)*.
- He explained why it happened: to save sinners *(vv. 36–41)*.

1 He Explained What Happened:

The Spirit Had Come

(vv. 14–21)

- The joyful worship of the believers was not the result of too much wine; it was the evidence of the arrival of God's Holy Spirit to dwell in His people.
- Orthodox Jews did not eat or drink before 9 A.M. on the Sabbath or on a holy day, nor did they usually drink wine except with meals.

1 He Explained What Happened:

■ The Spirit Had Come

(vv. 14–21)

- Peter did not say that Pentecost was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28–32, because the signs and wonders predicted had not occurred.

Joel 2:28–32 (NKJV)

28 “And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on **all flesh**; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.

29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

30 “And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke.

31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.

32 And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the **Lord Shall be saved**. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the Lord has said, **Among the remnant whom the Lord calls.**

- When you read Joel's prophecy in context, you see that it deals with the nation of Israel in the end times, in connection with "the Day of the Lord."
- However, Peter was led by the Spirit to see in the prophecy an application to the church.
- He said, "This is that same Holy Spirit that Joel wrote about."

- **“He is here!”** Such an announcement would seem incredible to the Jews, because they thought God’s Spirit was given only to a few select people.

Numbers 11:28–29 (NKJV)

28 So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, one of his choice men, answered and said, “Moses my lord, forbid them!”

29 Then Moses said to him, “Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the LORD’s people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!”

- But here were 120 of their fellow Jews, men and women, enjoying the blessing of the same Holy Spirit that had empowered Moses, David, and the prophets.

- It was indeed the dawning of a new age, the “last days” in which God would bring to completion His plan of salvation for mankind.
- Jesus had finished the great work of redemption and nothing more had to be done except to share the Good News with the world, beginning with the nation of Israel.
- The invitation is, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (*Acts 2:21*).

2

He Explained How It Happened:

Jesus Was Alive

(Vv. 22–35)

Acts 2:29–35 (NKJV)

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.” ’

- News travels fast in the East; and probably most of the adults in Jerusalem, residents and visitors, knew about the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth.
- They also had heard rumors of an “official announcement” that His followers had stolen the body of Jesus just to make people think that He had kept His word and been raised from the dead.

- But Peter told them the truth: Jesus of Nazareth had indeed been raised from the dead, and the Resurrection proves that He is the Messiah! Peter gave them four proofs of the resurrection of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and then he called on them to believe on Christ and be saved.

His First Proof Was The Person Of Jesus Christ (vv. 22–24)

Peter’s audience knew that Jesus was a real Person from the town of Nazareth and that He had performed many signs and miracles. *(On “Jesus of Nazareth,” see Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 10:38; 22:8; 26:9; also 24:5.)* It was clear that God’s hand was on Him. They had heard Him speak and had watched His life. They had even seen Him raise the dead, yet they could find no fault in Him—and these things were not “done in a corner”! *(Acts 26:26).*

- It was incredible that such a Man should be defeated by death.
- From one point of view, the crucifixion of Jesus was a terrible crime (*Acts 2:23*).
- But from another point of view it was a wonderful victory (*Acts 2:24*).

- The word translated “pains” means “birth pangs,” suggesting that the tomb was a “womb” out of which Jesus was “born” in Resurrection glory.

Acts 13:33 (NKJV)

God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’

Peter's 2nd Proof Was The Prophecy Of David

(Vv. 25–31)

- He quoted Psalm 16:8–11, verses that obviously could not apply to David who was already dead and buried.
- Being a prophet of God, David wrote about the Messiah, that His soul would not remain in *hades* (*the realm of the dead*) or His body in the grave where it would decay.

The 3rd Proof Was The Witness Of The Believers

(V. 33)

- After His resurrection, Jesus did not appear to the world at large, but to His own followers whom He had commissioned to give witness to others that He was alive (*Acts 1:3, 22*).
- But were these people dependable witnesses? Can we trust them? We certainly can!
- Prior to Christ's resurrection, the disciples did not even believe that He would be raised from the dead; and they themselves had to be convinced (*Mark 16:9–14; Acts 1:3*).

Mark 16:9–14 (NKJV)

9 Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.

10 She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept.

11 And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

12 After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country.

13 And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either.

14 Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.

Acts 1:3 (NKJV)

to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

- They had nothing to gain by preaching a lie, because their message aroused official opposition and even led to the imprisonment and death of some of the believers.
- A few fanatics might be willing to believe and promote a lie for a time, but when thousands believe a message, and when that message is backed up by miracles, you cannot easily dismiss it.
- These witnesses were trustworthy.

Peter's 4th Proof Of The Resurrection Of Christ Was The Presence Of The Holy Spirit

(vv. 33–35)

- Follow his logic. If the Holy Spirit is in the world, then God must have sent Him.
- Joel promised that one day the Spirit would come, and Jesus Himself had promised to send the gift of the Holy Spirit to His people (*Luke 24:49; John 14:26; 15:26; Acts 1:4*).

Luke 24:49 (NKJV)

“Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

John 14:26 (NKJV)

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

John 15:26 (NKJV)

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.

Acts 1:4 (NKJV)

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me;

- If Jesus is dead, He cannot send the Spirit; therefore, He must be alive.
- Furthermore, He could not send the Spirit unless He had returned to heaven to the Father (*John 16:7*); so, Jesus has ascended to heaven!
- To back up this statement, Peter quoted Psalm 110:1, a verse that certainly could not be applied to David

Psalm 110:1 (NKJV)

The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”

Matthew 22:41–46 (NKJV)

41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,

42 saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” They said to Him, “The Son of David.”

43 He said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying:

44 ‘The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool” ’?

45 If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?”

46 And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

Peter's Conclusion Was Both A Declaration And An Accusation:

- Jesus is your Messiah, *but you crucified Him!*

Acts 2:23 (NKJV)

Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;

- Peter did not present the cross as the place where the Sinless Substitute died for the world, but where Israel killed her own Messiah!
- They committed the greatest crime in history! Was there any hope? Yes, for Peter gave a third explanation that was good news to their hearts.

He Explained Why It Happened: To Save Sinners

(vv. 36–41)

Acts 2:36–41 (NKJV)

36 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

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 Holy Spirit took Peter's message and used it to convict the hearts of the listeners. *(In Acts 5:33 and 7:54, a different Greek word is used that suggests anger rather than conviction for sin.)* After all, if they were guilty of crucifying their Messiah, what might God do to them! Note that they addressed their question to the other Apostles as well as to Peter, for all twelve were involved in the witness that day, and Peter was only first among equals.

- Peter told them how to be saved: **they had to repent of their sins and believe on Jesus Christ.**

- They would give proof of the sincerity of their repentance and faith by being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, thus identifying themselves publicly with their Messiah and Saviour.

- Only by repenting and believing on Christ could they receive the gift of the Spirit (*Gal. 3:2, 14*), and this promise was for both the Jews and the “far off” Gentiles (*Eph. 2:13–19*).

- It is unfortunate that the translation of Acts 2:38 in the *King James Version* suggests that people must be baptized in order to be saved, because this is not what the Bible teaches.
- The Greek word *eis* (which is translated “for” in the phrase “for the remission of sins”) can mean “on account of” or “on the basis of.”
- In Matthew 3:11 John the Baptist baptized on the basis that people had repented. Acts 2:38 should not be used to teach salvation by baptism.

- If baptism is essential for salvation, it seems strange that Peter said nothing about baptism in his other sermons (*Acts 3:12–26; 5:29–32; 10:34–43*).
- In fact, the people in the home of Cornelius received the Holy Spirit *before they were baptized!*
- (*Acts 10:44–48*) Since believers are commanded to be baptized, it is important that we have a clean conscience by obeying (*1 Peter 3:21*), but we must not think that baptism is a part of salvation. If so, then nobody in Hebrews 11 was saved because none of them was ever baptized.

- Acts 2:40 indicates that the Apostles continued to share the Word and to urge the people to trust Jesus Christ.
- They looked on the nation of Israel as a “crooked generation” that was under condemnation (*Matt. 16:4; 17:17; Phil. 2:15*).
- Actually, the nation would have about forty years before Rome would come and destroy the city and the temple and scatter the people.

- History was repeating itself. During the forty years in the wilderness, the new generation “saved itself” from the older generation that rebelled against God.
- Now, God would give His people another forty years of grace; and on that day, 3,000 people repented, believed, and were saved.