

Peter's sermon at Pentecost: the Old Testament passages

1. Review
2. Peter's speech in Acts 2:14-41
3. The Old Testament passages - an overview
4. The Old Testament passages - a closer look
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Review

1. Last week we "observed" this passage, to see what happened and what it says. This week we're looking closer at the Old Testament passages, to try and make sense out of how and why Peter chose these passages to include in his sermon that day.

Peter's speech (sermon) in Acts 2:14-41

1. Acts 2:14-41 [SLIDES]

The Old Testament passages - an overview

1. Peter's sermon can be divided into two parts
 - a. An explanation of the coming or gift of the Holy Spirit, which his listeners heard and saw evidence of, and it is what brought them to him and the other apostles
 - b. Proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Christ
2. Peter uses the quotation from Joel to interpret and explain the coming of the Holy Spirit
3. In **2:36** Peter proclaims Jesus as both Lord and Christ.
 - a. He uses **Psalm 16** to show that Jesus is the Christ
 - b. He uses **Psalm 110** to show that Jesus is the Lord
 - c. In verses **22-35** he also makes allusion to other Old Testament passages without directly quoting them, so we'll look at those also
 - i. Webster defines "allusion" as an implied or indirect reference especially when used in literature"
 - ii. When I Googled "allusion definition" Google came back with "an expression designed to call something to mind without mentioning it explicitly; an indirect or passing reference."
 - iii. The website literarydevices.net defines "allusion" as "a brief and indirect reference to a person, place, thing or idea of historical, cultural, literary or political significance. It does not describe in detail the person or thing to which it refers. It is just a passing comment and the writer expects the reader to possess enough knowledge to spot the allusion and grasp its importance in a text."
 - iv. The United Bible Societies (UBS) version of the Greek New Testament has two helpful tools in the back:

1. An “Index of Quotations” in both Old and New Testament Order
2. An “Index of Allusions and Verbal Parallels
3. They may not be entirely exhaustive, but they’re close!

The Old Testament passages - a closer look

1. Acts 2:17-21 (quote) [SLIDES]

- a. **Joel 2:28-32** (LXX)
- b. Purpose: to “interpret and explain the gift of the Spirit [that happened in **2:1-13**]” (Peterson, 147)
- c. Exposition
 - i. This quote by Peter, recorded by Luke, “includes several variations from the LXX and the Hebrew original. Most of these modifications serve to demonstrate the relevance of the text to the situation being addressed.” (Peterson, 141)
 1. Is this a problem?
 - a. No
 - ii. “in the last days” (**17**)
 1. When are the last days?
 - a. Peter said in verse **16** that “this is [that]” which Joel prophesied would happen, so the “last days” are happening now (at that time, and...)
 2. When did they begin?
 - a. With the coming of the Messiah (the Christ) - i.e. the birth of Jesus
 3. How long will they continue?
 - a. Until Jesus returns again - “the day of the Lord” in verse **20**
 4. Peter, as quoted by Luke, has changed this slightly from what you’ll find in your English version of **Joel 2:28** [SLIDE]
 - a. “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;”
 - b. Peter is making it clear that what Joel prophesied is happening now (at that time), in their presence
 - iii. “I will pour out” (**17**)
 1. Commentators have pointed out that the verb “pour out” suggests “an unprecedented deluge” (Peterson, 141), or as Stott says, “The picture is probably of a heavy tropical rainstorm, and seems to illustrate the generosity of God’s gift of the Spirit (neither a drizzle nor even a shower but a downpour), its finality (for what has been poured out cannot be gathered again) and its universality (widely distributed among the different groupings of humankind.)” (74)

- iv. “all flesh” (17)
 - 1. Every single person? Or on God’s people gathered from all ages, genders, social classes, and nations?
- v. “sons and daughters shall prophesy” (17 and 18)
 - 1. Compare **Numbers 11:24-29** where Moses said, “Would that all the LORD’s people prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!” [SLIDE]
 - 2. What is meant by “prophesy”? Predict the future?
 - a. What was the main job or mission of the Old Testament prophets?
 - i. To communicate the word of the Lord to Israel
 - ii. To warn people of their sin and encourage them to repent and turn to the Lord
 - iii. In other words, to get (convince?) God’s people to know God
 - 1. See **Hosea 6:3** [SLIDE]
 - a. “Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.”
 - 2. And compare that to **John 17:3** [SLIDE]
 - a. “And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”
 - iv. Sometimes this involved making prophecies about the future, as in this passage from Joel...but not always.
 - b. Stott put it like this: “If in its essence prophecy is God speaking [through people], God making himself known by his Word, then certainly the Old Testament expectation was that in New Covenant days the knowledge of God would be universal, and the New Testament authors declare that this has been fulfilled through Christ. In this sense all God’s people are now prophets, just as all are also priests and kings.” (74)
- vi. “see visions” and “dream dreams” (17)
 - 1. Probably a subset of prophesying, as in part of but not the main method of communicating God’s word to people
 - 2. In Acts, visions and dreams play a very minor part compared to speaking in speeches, sermons, teaching, or dialogue between people.
- vii. “wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below” (19-20)

1. Remember, the “last days” started with the birth of Jesus and continue until he comes again.
 - a. The star that the wise men saw (**Matthew 2:1-2**)
 - b. The sun going dark when Jesus died (**Luke 23:45**)
 - c. The curtain of the temple being torn in two (**Luke 23:45**)
 - d. The earth shook and rocks split in two (**Matthew 27:51**)
 - e. The book of Revelation tells of signs and wonders still to happen before Jesus returns again
- viii. “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”
 1. Perfect transition into the rest of Peter’s sermon

2. **Acts 2:24** (allusion) [SLIDE]

- a. “loosing the pangs of death, because it was **not possible** for him to be held by it”
 - i. “pangs” is a word that normally refers to birth pains, and “provides a mixed metaphor in which *death* is regarded as being ‘in labour’ and unable to hold back its child” (Peterson, 147)
- b. **Psalm 18:4** [SLIDE]
 - i. “The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of destruction assailed me; the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me.”
- c. See also **Psalm 116:3** [SLIDE]
 - i. “The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish.”
- d. The point? Since Jesus is the Christ (Messiah), it was impossible for death to hold onto him and keep him there. :)

3. **Acts 2:25-28** (quote) [SLIDE]

- a. **Psalm 16:8-11** (LXX)
- b. Purpose: to “prepare for the claim [in verse 36] that Jesus is the Christ” (Peterson, 147)
- c. Side note: Paul also uses this passage in a sermon, in **Acts 13:35**
- d. **Psalm 16** does speak about David’s personal experience, but Peter explains in **Acts 2:29-31** that David was also prophesying about Jesus [SLIDE]

4. **Acts 2:30** (quote [GNT] or allusion [commentators])

- a. “Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,”
- b. Question: Did David understand what he was prophesying about?
 - i. To some extent, but Peter also wrote in **1 Peter 1:10-12** that the prophets did not know all the details, such as who the Messiah would be specifically, and when he would come to Israel. [SLIDE]

- c. **Psalm 132:11 (ESV) [SLIDE]**
 - i. “The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: ‘One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne.’”
 - d. See also **2 Samuel 7:1-17**, especially **7:4, 12-16** for the back story
 - e. See also **Psalm 89:3-4, 35-37**

- 5. **Acts 2:31 (quote) [SLIDE]**
 - a. **Psalm 16:10 [SLIDE]**
 - b. Peter is showing how Jesus fulfilled the prophecy in Psalm 16:10

- 6. **Acts 2:33 [SLIDE]**
 - a. Not a quote or allusion, but notice the connection with **Acts 2:17**, showing the triune (trinity) relationship of God, and declaring that Jesus is God, since Jesus is who poured out the Spirit as predicted in **Joel 2:28. [SLIDE]**

- 7. **Acts 2:34-35 (quote) [SLIDE]**
 - a. **Psalm 110:1**
 - b. Purpose: to show that Jesus is the Lord
 - c. See **Hebrews 1**, especially verse **13**, for how the author of Hebrews used this Psalm as part of his defense of Jesus as God.
 - i. Side note: Hebrews 1 is a great passage to use when speaking about the deity of Jesus with groups like the Mormons or Jehovah’s Witnesses.
 - d. Most quoted and alluded Psalm in the NT
 - i. Eight quotations
 - ii. Fourteen allusions or verbal parallels
 - e. Jesus quoted this psalm in **Luke 20:41-44**, indicating “that a messianic interpretation was already known to the teachers of the law in his day.” (Peterson, 151) **[SLIDE]**
 - f. The critical point in this Psalm? How can David’s son (descendant) be his Lord?
 - i. Because his son (descendant) is the promised Messiah

- 8. **Acts 2:39 (allusions) [SLIDE]**
 - a. **Isaiah 57:19 [SLIDE]**
 - i. “‘Peace, peace to the far and to the near,’ says the LORD.”
 - b. **Joel 2:32 [SLIDE]**
 - i. “And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall

be those whom the LORD calls.”

9. Acts 2:40 (allusion) [SLIDE]

- a. “And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.’”
- b. **Psalm 78:8** [SLIDE]
 - i. “and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.”
- c. Every generation is a “crooked” or wicked generation, and those who are in it need to be called out from it.

The take-away for us

1. Hopefully we’re encouraged when we see the connections between the Old Testament and New Testament, and how God is sovereignly working out his plan.

Resources

1. *The Acts of the Apostles*, F. F. Bruce
2. *The Book of the Acts*, F. F. Bruce
3. *The Acts of the Apostles*, David G. Peterson
4. *The Message of Acts*, John Stott
5. *The Acts of the Apostles*, Ben Witherington III
6. <https://literarydevices.net/allusion/>
7. *The Greek New Testament: Fourth Revised Edition*, United Bible Societies