

“Jesus continued...to teach”

According to the first verse in Acts, Jesus not only continued to work on earth after ascending to heaven, he also continued to speak. Acts 2:14-41 is the account of the sermon Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. But it is ultimately Jesus teaching through Peter by the Spirit. In this sermon, Peter answers two questions. The first is “What does this mean?”. (2:12) This question was the predominant reaction of the crowd when they heard people speaking in their native languages about the mighty works of God, though those speaking had never learned these languages.

In answering this question, Peter first explains what this doesn't mean. It does not mean that these people are drunk. Then, he explains what it does mean. He begins by explaining this as being the fulfillment of scripture and quotes from the prophecy of Joel. This Jewish prophet had long ago foretold the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days on all of God's people. This would mean all of them, male and female, young and old, and even to the lowest, would receive God's word and proclaim God's word by the Spirit. According to Joel, these last days would also include strange phenomenon in the natural world, as well as this radically new kind of outpouring of the Spirit on every one of God's people. In this new age it would also be true that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Next, Peter turns from the prophecy of Joel and turns to the person of Jesus to explain what this means. He speaks of his miracles, explaining they were God attesting that Jesus was speaking and acting for Him. Next, Peter talks about Jesus' death. He says that it took place as a result of God's plan and their sin. Though the Jewish people were responsible for putting him to death by the hands of lawless Roman men, ultimately this was God's plan for the salvation of those who would call upon the Lord Jesus. Then Peter refers to Jesus' resurrection and argues that it was God vindicating him. He also says that Jesus' resurrection was the fulfillment of prophecy, just as the outpouring of the Spirit had been. Next, Peter speaks of the exaltation and enthronement of Jesus as the direct explanation for what the crowds had seen and heard. The Jesus they had crucified, God had glorified by seating him at his right hand and from there Jesus had received and given the Spirit in this way.

The second question Peter answers comes at this point. It is “What shall we do?”. (2:37) The crowd asks this because they are cut to the heart as they realized they had crucified their Messiah that God had sent. In answer to this question Peter exhorts them to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins and tells them that with forgiveness they would receive the gift of the Spirit. He also exhorts them to save themselves from the crooked generation of which they were a part. They must repent of the prevalent opinion around them that Jesus was not sent by God to save his people from their sins. Baptism would be the prescribed public evidence of their repentance and faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. The world in which they lived, like our world today, was like a sinking ship. They must separate themselves from it by turning from their sins and to Jesus in order to be saved from going down with the ship. The prophet Joel had foretold that whoever called on the name of the Lord would be saved. This lifeboat was and is available to all who call on Jesus to be saved. There is a seat on this lifeboat for anyone and everyone who calls on Jesus' name as they turn from their sin and the world to follow him.

At this point there is a huge response. Three thousand are baptized in the name of the one they had crucified. This was the prescribed way for them to publicly demonstrate they had received Peter's word and were repenting of their disbelief and disobedience and trusting in Christ as their Lord and Savior.