

Bible Studies about Peter

Study 10: Peter and Pentecost

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2008

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Background

In our previous study we learned of Peter's great commission. And so the work that Jesus had begun in Peter begins to bear fruit in this account where we learn of Peter and Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47). We will study Pentecost in more detail in a separate study, but to provide some context the following points are relevant:

- Pentecost was the old Jewish festival of firstfruits, which took place at the beginning of the wheat harvest
- It was some 50 days after the Sabbath of Passover week (Leviticus 23:15-16), the time of Jesus' crucifixion
- Pentecost is called the Feast of Weeks (Deuteronomy 16:9-10), the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16) and the day of firstfruits (Numbers 28:26)

In this study we will be focussing on the address given by Peter to the crowd. Peter, as we know, became the leader of the church, as Jesus had predicted (Matthew 16:13-20).

The Message

What a contrast we have in the Peter who delivers the Spirit-filled address here with the Peter who was so filled with doubt, and uncertainty – so unable to acknowledge his relationship with Christ when asked – the Peter we have come to know so far. But over the last few studies in this series we have seen the transition that has taken place in Peter, as he has steadily grown in faith, and love (see also Acts 1:15). 2 Timothy tells us:

“...for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”¹

Here we see this in evidence in Peter in his courageous confession of and utter reliance in Christ. Through the Spirit, Peter's address covers every possible Jewish objection that could be raised before a declaration that Jesus is the Messiah. When I think of my own experiences, the story of Peter gives me such encouragement and such hope. Time and time again God chooses people who we perhaps would not. He chose Moses who on 5 occasions in a row made an excuse why he could not undertake what God had asked him to do; he chose Peter who knew all too well what it was to utterly fail – but he also knew the restoration and enabling of God; and he established his covenant with a people “not because [they] were more numerous than any other people.”²

In our study on the gifts of the Spirit, we mention that discernment is intrinsically linked with prophecy, and in the same context interpretation is intrinsically linked with speaking different kinds of languages. Peter demonstrates both of these aspects, in providing interpretation of what the crowd had witnessed set in the context of prophecies we may read of in Joel (Joel 2:28-32). Having given this account, Peter does not stop there. He goes on to give incredible

¹ 2 Timothy 1:7-10

² Deuteronomy 7:7

testimony to Jesus (Acts 2:22-41), and the response of the crowd is truly incredible. They were “*cut to the heart*”³, they were utterly convicted – and following Peter’s call to repentance, “*about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*”⁴

The fruit is also in evidence through the type of church that came into being (Acts 2:42-47):

- a) A place of learning
- b) A place of fellowship
- c) A place where communion was central
- d) A place of prayer
- e) A place of reverence
- f) A place of worship
- g) A place where the Holy Spirit was at work
- h) A place of evangelism

There is so much more that we could say about this account in Acts, but in this study we focus on Peter alone – and draw to a close with a series of questions:

Questions

1. Have there been occasions when you have doubted yourself and how the Lord might use you? What do you think when you read this account of Peter, how he spoke with boldness for the Lord, knowing that he was called into service from his job as a humble fisherman?
2. What type of church do you belong to, and what role do you have in it? Are there any ways in which you could help to make the church be more like the church we read of in Acts?
3. Have there been times when you have been filled with the Spirit and enabled to undertake work for the Lord’s glory? What fruit was evident?
4. Meditate on the testimony of Jesus given here, and bring before the Lord those aspects that particularly strike a chord with you.
5. Can you associate with any of the changes that came about in Peter’s life, and how from first reading about a simple fisherman we read of how the empowering of the Spirit he led three thousands souls to Christ?

³ Acts 2:37

⁴ Acts 2:41b-42