

SCRIPTURE STUDIES

ACTS CHAPTER 2:12-47**DRUNKS IN THE STREETS?**

“No! They are not drunk!” But let’s not get ahead of ourselves. Take a step backward and review the sequence of events. Ten days before, Jesus had ascended back to heaven. His followers were meeting in their usual rented meeting place and had been waiting for what He had said would happen next. It was the Pentecost Festival and suddenly the Spirit of Christ had come to live in the believers in Jesus as He had promised. Now these Spirit powered people had spilled out of the building where this had taken place and were telling everybody the Good News. What a day this had been - the world would never be the same!

Why? Because this was the beginning of the Church of Jesus Christ. Acts chapter two is to the church what Genesis is to the world. Genesis is the record of the dawning of the world; Acts chapter two is the record of the dawning of the church. On that day there were four major movements: (1) Divine promises were realized (Acts 2:16); (2) Divine power was released (Acts 1:8); (3) The Divine Person was received (Acts 2:4); (4) The Divine program was the result. (Acts 1:8)

When the freshly charged Christians hit the streets they began to tell the greatest story ever told to the thousands who were gathered there. They told it in languages they had never learned and had never before spoken. The utterances were miraculous! The assembled crowd knew that the speakers were Galileans and were amazed that they could speak foreign languages. *“They were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?”* (Acts 2:12)

Some of the skeptical listeners came to the conclusion that these Christians must be drunk: *“Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine.”* (Acts 2:13) Now the scene is set for the first recorded Christian sermon ever preached. W.H. Griffith-Thomas commented as follows: *“The occasion was without parallel; the substance of the sermon was fresh and startling, and the impression made by it was strange and unprecedented. It is a model of homiletics for all Christian preachers.”* (The Acts of The Apostles)

The first New Testament sermon was preached both as a defense and a declaration. A defense against the charge that the Christians who were ecstatically speaking languages that they had never learned were drunk and a declaration that the Jesus, whom they had demanded be crucified, was the Messiah Who was now alive and could forgive sin. Peter was the preacher. Let us examine this sermon as follows:

HE EXPLAINED THE MARVEL OF THE SPIRIT.

“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. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.” (Acts 2:14-15)

Jews from many different countries and cultures with different languages and dialects, heard the messages the Christians were speaking miraculously, each in his own native tongue. This

strange development charged the air with wonderment and questions. Some asked, "What does this mean?" and some said, "They are full of wine." This prompted Peter to reply to the questions and insinuations and gave occasion for this, the first Christian sermon in the Church era.

Peter stood up and said, "*We are not drunk! It's early in the morning!*" The Jewish day began at 6:00 A.M. It was now 9:00 A.M. and that was the time of prayer and Jews held strictly to the custom of abstinence from wine prior to that time. He then employed the prophetic scriptures from the book of Joel, to explain what was taking place.

Part of what Peter quoted from Joel is as follows: "*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. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy....*" (Acts 2:16-18) He said that what they were seeing and hearing was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy.

HE EXALTED THE MINISTRY OF THE SAVIOR.

Peter's message was Christo-centric. All Spirit-filled preachers and preaching will exalt Christ! Peter, the spokesman for the early Christian church, stood before a vast crowd of not very sympathetic Jews, and with great courage and boldness, not only vindicated the conduct of the apostles but firmly declared the truth about Jesus Christ. He spoke about:

The Credentials of The Christ. (v.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...."

"Miracles, wonders, and signs." These were widely performed and well attested. His enemies knew about them, receiving regular reports from their religious spies. The population at large was the benefactor of such miracles as the feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000 etc. And yet, for all the evidence, Paul wrote, "*blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*" (Rom. 11:25) Although "*attested by God*" He was arrested by men. But that was within the providence of God as the next verse shows.

The Crucifixion of The Christ. (v.23)

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

Even though it all happened in the providence of God, this does not excuse the sin of Judas in betraying Him, or of Pilate in condemning Him, or of the Jews in crucifying Him. God did not force them for they did what they did voluntarily. The liberty of their wills was not violated in the least. These were free moral agents acting out the depravity of their own hearts.

The Crowning of The Christ. (v.24)

"....whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it." Peter continued, emphasizing the resurrection again: "*This Jesus*

God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. 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.” (v.32,33)

The resurrection is the divine differentiation between the world’s religions and Christianity. Only Christianity can boast of the empty tomb, a resurrected Redeemer, an enthroned Savior at God’s right hand!

Peter, who had cowered before a maiden at the enemy’s fire, three times denied that he knew Christ and went out and wept tears of shame, now courageously drives home the sword-point of truth to the hearts of his audience.

HE EXPOSED THE MEANNESS OF THE SINNERS.

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” 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?” 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. 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.” And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” (Acts 2:36-40)

They Were Charged With Their Sin. (v.36)

“... you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death.” (v.23) “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

There are those in some pulpits who try to skirt the issue of human depravity and sin and yet talk about a Savior. If man is not by nature a sinner there is no need for a Savior! Before a sinner will turn to God for salvation he needs to be confronted with his sin. Jesus Christ did not die to save us from our errors, or our mistakes, or our faults, or our bad decisions etc. and leave us sinners. He died to save us from being sinners! We are sinners, that’s why we err, make mistakes, have faults etc. When God deals with the greater problem, the lesser problems are also corrected.

There are two ways to treat physical maladies. One is to treat the symptom, the other is to detect and treat the cause. There are two types of preaching: one addresses the symptoms – errors, mistakes, faults etc. by putting a humanistic band-aid on the symptom. The other gets to the root of the matter and addresses the sin that is causing the symptoms.

Peter’s preaching was no apologetic, soft toned, crowd pleasing speech. Peter swung the ax at the root of the tree; he shot straight from the shoulder. He was not pulling his punches to avoid offending his hearers. The scalpel of truth went to the heart of the matter. Said he, “you, by lawless hands crucified and put to death Jesus Christ!” That kind of preaching may not be popular, but it is accompanied by the power of God and will get the believing sinner saved.

They Were Convicted of Their Sin. (v.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?”

Peter’s listeners realized that if Jesus was Lord and Christ (Messiah) they had greatly sinned and must change their minds. Truth “cuts” – they were “*cut to the heart.*” This was the result of the proclamation of the truth and the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had said previously that when the Holy Spirit came He would, “*convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.*” (John 16:8)

The enthronement of Jesus at the “*right hand of God*” places the responsibility upon every intelligent person hearing the gospel, to purposefully receive Him or reject Him. To receive Him is to receive everlasting life, to reject Him is to receive everlasting death. (II Thess. 1:9) It is no wonder that the Jews, on the Day of Pentecost, urgently exclaimed, “*What shall we do?*”

They Were Converted From Their Sin. (v.38)

“Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Liberalism says that sermons that search the soul and affects the emotions are foolish. Such preaching is frowned upon and avoids using Bible terminology such as “sinner”; “sin”; “hell”; “repent” etc. If truth does not offend untruthful persons it does not accomplish God’s ordained purpose. If the scalpel does not offend the flesh the surgeon does not get at the cancer that is eating away within.

In a weekly prayer meeting at their church, two men usually knelt together to pray. One of the men prayed the same prayer week after week. He prayed, “O Lord, please clean the cobwebs out of my life. O Lord, please clean the cobwebs out of my life.” Finally, after weeks of praying together, the prayer partner could take it no longer. The next week when his friend prayer, “O Lord, clean the cobwebs out of my life” the partner interrupted him and prayed, “O Lord, don’t do it! O Lord, kill the spider!”

Peter preached a “spider killing” sermon. If we expect to see men and women delivered from the spider of sin, we must preach the Word of God without fear or favor.

THE CONCLUSION

What a conclusion to a momentous day and mighty sermon! Three thousand people responded to the preaching of Peter and the other followers of Christ that day and were baptized. The church got off to a glorious start! Notice what followed:

In Acts 2:42-47, we see, in capsule form, the first inner workings of the church of Jesus Christ:

*“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were **together** and had everything in common.*

*Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet **together** in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate **together** with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (niv)*

THE CHALLENGE

Throughout the book of Acts we see that the Christians, in the afterglow of the resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit, did not just casually go about their business in a ho-hum manner. They were daily **“together.”** They met daily – Acts 2:46; witnessed and saw people saved daily – Acts 2:47; cared for each other on a daily basis – Acts 6:1; daily grew in number – Acts 16:15; searched the scriptures daily – Acts 17:11 etc. Why? Because Jesus Christ was real to them, not just a doctrine or a vague Person! Church was not just a once a week place that they visited. They, like yeast, were working in the dough of society seven days a week.

When the church is enthused about Jesus Christ and His Word; when Christian’s lives are entwined with others of like precious faith; when working, praying, giving, praying and witnessing together is a genuinely joyous experience, God will bless that church and it will grow. That’s what happened in the very first church. No, they were not drunk! They were fired up Christians in that first church who spread the fire! Let’s follow their example.

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