

3. ACTS 2: PENTECOST SPEECH

Speeches in the Acts

- 50% of Acts is made up of sermons, discourse and letters.
- Letters.
 - Jerusalem Council to Gentiles (15:23-29); Claudius Lysias to Felix (23:27-30).
- Speeches.
 - 33% is made up of Christian sermons.
 - Peter: 8.
 - Stephen: (7:2-53).
 - Cornelius (10:30-33).
 - James: 2 (15:13-21, 21:20-25).
 - Paul: 9.
 - Gamaliel the Pharisee (5:35-39).
 - Demetrius the silver-smith (19:25-27).
 - Tertullus the lawyer (24:2-8).
 - Festus the governor (23:27-30).
- Peter's eight speeches.
 - Acts 1:16-22; 2:14-36, 38-39; 3:12-26; 4:8-12, 19-20; 5:29-32; 10:34-43; 11:5- 17; 15:7-11.
- Paul's nine speeches
 - Acts 13:16-41; 14:15-17; 17:22-31; 20:18-35; 22:1-21; 24:10-21; 26:2-23, 25-27; 27:21-26; 28:17-20.
- Peter's first speech has a special, foundational importance.

Peter's Speech

- Pentecost (Tower of Babel; harvest / Sinai / Torah).
- Layout.
- Use of the OT.

Narrative context

- Acts 2:1-13.
- Acts 2:37-41.
- Actually, 2:1-47, i.e. the entire Pentecost scene, including the footnote on the expansion of the community.

Layout of Peter's Speech

Styles

- Rhetorical categories.
- History of Salvation / promise-fulfilment patterns.
- OT citations (Peshar style).
- Chiastic (see next slide).

Content

- Early Kerygma.
- Evangelical: God's deeds in Jesus (resurrection) and our response (metanoia).
- Lucan theology of salvation.

Linear

- 1-13 Narrative introduction
- 14-21 What happened?
- 22-36 Jesus is the Messiah
- 37-41 Consequences

Chiastic (vv. 22-36)

- A God raised Jesus
 - B Scriptural proof (David)
 - C Scriptural interpretation
 - D Resurrection / witnesses
 - D* Exaltation / witnesses
 - C* Scriptural interpretation
 - B* Scriptural proof (David)
- A* God made Jesus Lord and Messiah

Commentary

Acts 2:14-15

- The speech is nearly three times as long as the event it explains.
- NB people of Judea and who live in Jerusalem.

- Culturally: ecstasy association with inebriation (e.g. Dionysius; also celebrated in the Holy Land).
- NB voice (2:6) / addressed (2:4); i.e. the Pentecost event is divinely inspired and so is this interpretation so closely joined to it.
- Know this (v.14) and know (v. 36) form an inclusio.
- *Refutatio* even though argument from time of day is relatively weak.
- If not drunkenness, then what?

Acts 2:16

- Pattern: promise / fulfillment
- No distinctions of gender / status / age
- All will be prophets
- Argument from (lightly adjusted) Scripture (*peshet*; “what was spoken through the prophet” i.e. proofs from prophecy)

OT Citation

Joel 2:28 (3:1) After all of this I will pour out my Spirit on all kinds of people.

- Your sons and daughters will prophesy.
 Your elderly will have revelatory dreams;
 your young men will see prophetic visions.
- 29 Even on male and female servants
 I will pour out my Spirit in those days.
- 30 I will produce portents both in the sky and on the earth— blood, fire, and columns of smoke.
- 31 The sunlight will be turned to darkness
 and the moon to the colour of blood,
 before the day of the Lord comes—
 that great and terrible day!
- 32 It will so happen that
 everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered.

Acts 2:17 ‘And in the last days it will be,’ **God says,**

- ‘that I will pour out my Spirit on all people,
 and your sons and your daughters will prophesy,
 and your young men will see visions,
 and your old men will dream dreams.
- 18 Even on **my** servants, both men and women,
 I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.
- 19 And I will perform wonders in the sky **above**
 and **miraculous** signs on the earth **below**,
 blood and fire and clouds of smoke.
- 20 The sun will be changed to darkness
 and the moon to blood
 before the great and **glorious day of the Lord** comes.
- 21 And then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

Acts 2:22-24

- Second appeal to listen.
- In Greek: alliteration and assonance.
- Story of Jesus / the *Kerygma* / God’s plan of salvation.
- Pains / pangs: labour pains (i.e. apocalyptic imagery).
- Somewhat “adoptionist” but cf. Romans 1:1-7.

Acts 2:25-28

- David speaks as a prophet but he cannot be speaking about himself (presently pointed out) as “the holy one.”
- Psalm 16, cited elsewhere in the NT only in Acts 13:35.
- The speaker (through David) is another figure, possibly the Messiah.
- Cf. the last words on the cross in Luke.
- V. 27b is the key; it points to the resurrection of the flesh.

Acts 2:29-31

- David is dead and buried, and therefore cannot be the speaker of the oracle.
- Story of Jesus / the *Kerygma*.
- God’s plan of salvation.
- Cross and resurrection.
- Rhetorical figure of correctio.
- Clinched with a citation.

Acts 2:32-33

- The kerygma again, but thoroughly God-centred: God raised Jesus, he received the promise from the Father etc.
- The sequence is Lucan: raised / witnesses : exalted / pouring out of the Spirit - sequential events in Luke's thought world.

Acts 2:34-35

- Psalm 110 is frequently cited in the NT.
- Luke 20:41 But he said to them, "How is it that they say that the Christ is David's son? 42 For David himself says in the book of Psalms, 'The Lord said to my lord, "Sit at my right hand, 43 until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" 44 If David then calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his son?"
- Rhetorical technique: *synkrisis* (comparison).
- Jesus is superior to David on account of the resurrection.

Acts 2:36

- Final iteration of the central theme, mentioning both cross and resurrection.
- In a way, the peroration of this chiasmic speech.
- Jesus is Lord, on account of Psalm 16.
- Jesus is Messiah, on account of Psalm 110.

Acts 2:37-39

- The reaction triggers the peroratio of the speech, this time in deliberative rhetoric.
- NB early Christian vocabulary: metanoia, baptism, the name, forgiveness of sins, gift of the Spirit.
- The rest of the Acts recounts the fulfilment of this moment.
- NB: we call on the Lord and he calls us as well.

Acts 2:40-41

- Further Christian vocabulary: testified, exhorted, save, perverse generation.
- Summary conclusion, leading to the summary on the community in the vv. 42-47.

Layout of Peter's Speech

Role of the speech in Luke's overall work

- Fulfilment of Acts 1:8.
- Explanation of *xenolalia*.
- Mission and conversion begin.

Functions of the Spirit

1. Power, witness, mission.
2. Incorporation into the true Israel.
3. God's will through prophecy (Jewish and Christian) and community discernment.

Role of the speech in Luke's overall work

- In augural address; cf. Jesus' address in Nazareth (4:16-31).
- Content: cf. Paul's address in Antioch (13:16-47).
- Reaction: cf. the Baptist's address in Luke 3:2-18.

Theological Themes

- The Holy Spirit in the life of the church.
- The church in a non-Christian culture.
- How to become a Christian.
- The church as the continuation of the plan and purpose of God.
- The relations of Christians to the secular world.
- The unity of the one church.

Use in the Lectionary*Sundays*

Acts 2:14, 22-33 (Easter 3A).

Acts 2:14a, 36-41 (Easter 4A).

Weekdays

Acts 2:14-, 22-33 (Easter Monday, 1+2).

Acts 2:36-41 (Easter Tuesday, 1+2).

Potential for Reflection

- Peter becomes the spokesperson for the apostolic faith...and delivers the first Christian homily. It is missionary and evangelistic, i.e. it proclaims the central elements of the Christian faith to people who are not Christians, calling them to repentance and faith.
- In the modern world, most sermons preached in churches are not evangelistic but address those who already profess the faith.
- In an increasingly secular world, the church can learn from the sermons in Acts the nature of evangelistic preaching, which does not presuppose faith but generates it. (Eugene Boring)

Summary

- Pentecost tableau (Noah, Moses).
- Gifts of the Spirit (Joel).
- Homily.
- Story of Jesus.
- Experience of Christians.
- Light of the Old Testament.
- Resurrected Lord and Messiah.
- Outpouring of the Spirit.
- Unmissable at the centre: God's mighty deeds in Jesus

Prayer

Send down, O God, upon your people the flame of your Holy Spirit, and fill with the abundance of your sevenfold gift the Church you brought forth from your Son's pierced side.

May your life-giving Spirit lend fire to our words and strength to our witness. Send us forth to the nations of the world to proclaim with boldness your wonderful work of raising Jesus from the dead.