

SPEECHES IN ACTS

Should The Book Really Be Called

The Words Of The Apostles?

Class Two – Peter Kicks Things Off

PETER KICKS THINGS OFF

- We see in Peter's speeches the putting into action of the great commandment given by Jesus:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will **be my witnesses in Jerusalem**, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." *Acts 1:8 (NRSV)*

- Luke records this development by giving us an account of how the Gospel message was carried by witnesses from Jerusalem and outward
- We will see more of this in each of the future classes

HIGHLIGHTS

There are five messages of Peter recorded for us in Acts.

- Pentecost (2:14-39)
- The healing of the lame man (3:11-4:4)
- Speech to the rulers (4:8-12)
- Teaching in the name of Jesus (5:29-32)
- Visit to Cornelius (10:34-48).

PETER'S SPEECHES IN ACTS

- Typically, we tend to do Bible study on a chapter-by-chapter or verse-by-verse basis
- This can be a very helpful approach, especially to look for echoes, types and cross-references
- However, it can lead to missing out on over-arching themes, structures and meta-developments – “forest vs. trees” difficulties
- We will take a different tack with our study in Acts, starting with Peter

PETER'S SPEECHES IN ACTS

- Want to summarize the action and context of each speech
- Set up a parallel structure to compare the message in each one
- Highlight common themes to make them clear
- Helpful technique to analyze material spread out across many chapters
 - The speeches have been divided into parallel sections
 - Key phrases in each passage are highlighted in **bold** typeface
 - Second sets of parallel phrases are set in ***bold italic***
 - References to common themes of 'witness' and 'testimony' are identified by underlining

PETER'S SPEECHES IN ACTS

Pentecost Acts 2:14-39	Temple Beggar Acts 3:11-4:4	First Arrest Acts 4:8-12	Second Arrest Acts 5:29-32	Cornelius Acts 10:34-43
<p>Peter is preaching to a Jewish audience on the day of Pentecost. The miracle of tongues has just occurred.</p>	<p>The location is the temple, with a Jewish audience. Peter and John have just healed a man lame from birth, who is now leaping and praising God.</p>	<p>The rulers have arrested Peter and John, who now address the Sanhedrin.</p>	<p>Having been freed miraculously by an angel, once again they are before the council because they refuse to stop preaching.</p>	<p>Peter has gone to Caesarea as a result of a series of supernatural events, and Cornelius has just reported his vision to Peter. His friends and close relatives (Gentiles) are gathered.</p>

OUTLINE OF PETER'S SPEECHES

- Introduction: an issue is raised
- You have crucified Jesus
- But God has raised him up again
- And exalted him to a position of power.
- So repent so that your sins may be forgiven and you may receive the promise!

INTRODUCTION

Peter usually begins his speeches with an address like “Men of Israel” and then states the issue giving rise to the speech

- On the first three occasions, a miracle had just happened and the issue was the explanation for the miracle
- On the fourth occasion, the issue was “whom should they obey?” - there was a prior miracle (release from prison), but there’s no direct mention of it
- The fifth speech takes up the issue “whom does God accept.”

INTRODUCTION

As might be expected, the introductions have more variations, but more so in the fifth speech – but that is the most different setting (more on this point later)

- Not in first few days following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but much later
- Not in Jerusalem, but in Samaria
- Not to Jews, but to Gentiles

INTRODUCTION

Peter always picks issues which lend themselves to declaring the Jesus is now exalted and demands our repentance

- In the first three, a miracle make for an ideal segue to the Message
- In the fourth, a miracle is indirectly referenced, but the real issue is “authority,” providing an effective link to the Message

INTRODUCTION

The fifth is a bit different – he is “preaching to the choir” as it were, and his audience is eager to hear his Message of what it takes to be accepted by God:

... So now all of us are here in the presence of God to listen to all that the Lord has commanded you to say. *Acts 10:33 (NRSV)*

He does not force himself on his listeners, but always uses an issue in which they are already interested

INTRODUCTION: AN ISSUE IS RAISED

Pentecost Acts 2:14-39	Temple Beggar Acts 3:11-4:4	First Arrest Acts 4:8-12	Second Arrest Acts 5:29-32	Cornelius Acts 10:34-43
<p>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.</p> <p>¹⁵ "<i>For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.</i> ¹⁶ "But <u>this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:</u></p>	<p>Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed. ¹² So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?</p>	<p>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: ⁹ "<i>If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well,</i></p>	<p>But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "<i>We ought to obey God rather than men.</i></p>	<p>Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that <i>God shows no partiality.</i> ³⁵ "<i>But in every nation whoever fears him and works righteousness is accepted by him.</i> ³⁶ "The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ; he is Lord of all;</p>

“YOU HAVE CRUCIFIED JESUS”

- The name of Jesus is proclaimed and the Jews are accused of murder
 - Three times it's “Jesus of Nazareth” – was there another?
 - Was this for emphasis – or disparagement (“Galilee of the Gentiles”)
- Very strong words used to accuse the Jews
 - Manner of death mentioned in 4 of 5 speeches
 - Hung on a tree – “... for anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse...
Deuteronomy 21:23 (NRSV)

“YOU HAVE CRUCIFIED JESUS”

Peter emphasizes the culpability of the Jews and the injustice of the punishment:

- “lawless hands,” “you murdered” (not “executed”)
- “you denied the Holy One and the Just”

Even Pilate was determined to let Him go

The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. *Acts 3:13 (NRSV)*

Peter’s condemns their actions in contrast to God’s vindication through resurrection

“YOU HAVE CRUCIFIED JESUS”

Pentecost Acts 2:14-39	Temple Beggar Acts 3:11-4:4	First Arrest Acts 4:8-12	Second Arrest Acts 5:29-32	Cornelius Acts 10:34-43
<p>"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man <u>attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves also know;</u> ²³ "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;</p>	<p>"The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate when he was determined to let him go. ¹⁴"But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵"and killed the Prince of life,</p>	<p>"let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified,</p>	<p>Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.</p>	<p>that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: ³⁸ "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ "<u>And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem,</u> whom they killed by hanging on a tree.</p>

“BUT GOD HAS RAISED HIM UP AGAIN”

The declaration that “God raised him up from the dead” is one of the strongest structural features in Peter’s speeches

- It occurs in almost identical form at the same point in all five speeches
- There is a close linkage between the crucifixion and the resurrection:
 - YOU hung him on a tree but GOD raised him up

There are very strong parallels between Peter’s words in Acts 3 and the Suffering Servant section in Isaiah

- “delivered up” “glorified my/his servant” “the righteous one” “his Messiah should suffer”

“BUT GOD HAS RAISED HIM UP AGAIN”

Pentecost Acts 2:14-39	Temple Beggar Acts 3:11-4:4	First Arrest Acts 4:8-12	Second Arrest Acts 5:29-32	Cornelius Acts 10:34-43
<p>²⁴ "whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it. ²⁵ <u>"For David says concerning him: [quotation from Psalm 16]</u> ³² "This Jesus God has raised up, <u>of which we are all witnesses.</u></p>	<p>^{15b} whom God raised from the dead, <u>of which we are witnesses.</u></p>	<p>^{10b} whom God raised from the dead,</p>	<p>^{30a} "The God of our fathers raised up</p>	<p>⁴⁰ "Him God raised up on the third day, and <u>showed him openly,</u> ⁴¹ <u>"not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with him after he arose from the dead.</u></p>

“AND EXALTED HIM TO A POSITION OF POWER”

- All five speeches follow the fact of the resurrection with some statement about Christ’s new position and tie it back to the issue which prompted the speech
 1. The Holy Spirit has come because Jesus poured it out
 2. & 3. The lame man was healed by the exalted power of Jesus
 4. Jesus is to be obeyed because he sits at the right hand of the Father
 5. Jesus is the judge of every nation
- More on how Peter rounds the speech off this way later

“AND EXALTED HIM TO A POSITION OF POWER”

Pentecost Acts 2:14-39	Temple Beggar Acts 3:11-4:4	First Arrest Acts 4:8-12	Second Arrest Acts 5:29-32	Cornelius Acts 10:34-43
<p>³³ "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father <u>the promise of the Holy Spirit, he poured out this which you now see and hear.</u></p> <p>³⁴ "For David did not ascend into the heavens, <u>but he says himself:</u> 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, ³⁵ Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" ³⁶ "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."</p>	<p>(v.13 the God of our fathers, glorified) ¹⁶ "And his name, through faith in his name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through him has given him this perfect soundness <u>in the presence of you all.</u></p>	<p>by him this man <u>stands here before you whole.</u>¹¹ "This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'</p>	<p>³¹ "Him God has exalted to his right hand to be Prince and Savior,</p>	<p>⁴² "And he commanded us to <u>preach to the people, and to testify</u> that it is he who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.</p>

“SO REPENT ... ”

- All speeches end with an appeal to respond to the message. The appeal is based on God’s vindication of the one whom they condemned

Elements in the Speech	1	2	3	4	5
Repent / Be Converted	X	X		X	
Believe					X
Be Baptized					X
Sins Are Forgiven / Salvation	X	X	X	X	X
Gift of the Spirit / Promise / Blessing	X	X		X	X

- The most consistent feature is the offer of forgiveness of sins
- Message seems to be fully developed by speech five

“SO REPENT ...”

Pentecost Acts 2:14-39

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?" ³⁸ 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.** ³⁹ *"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."*

Temple Beggar Acts 3:11-4:4

¹⁷ "Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸ "But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all his prophets, that the Christ would suffer, he has thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ **Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that *times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,*** ²⁰ ***"and that he may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,***
.....
and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And ***in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.***' ²⁶ "To you first, God, having raised up his Servant Jesus, ***sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.***"

First Arrest Acts 4:8-12

¹² **"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."**

Second Arrest Acts 5:29-32

to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² **And we are his witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom ***God has given to those who obey him.***"**

Cornelius Acts 10:34-43

⁴³ **"To him all the prophets witness that, ***through his name, whoever believes in him will receive remission of sins.***"**

INTRODUCTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

It is very striking how Peter ends his speeches on the same issue with which he began

1. Miraculous tongues? – the long-prophesied promise has been fulfilled and the Spirit has come
2. Lame walking? – the blessing that has come is available to all
3. Who cured the lame? – it was Jesus whom you crucified
4. Who to obey? – God rather than men – God bears witness to us, not you
5. Who is acceptable? – all those who believe

THE THEME OF “WITNESS” IN PETER’S SPEECHES

Personal witness six different times:

- ... for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did ...
Acts 10:38-39 (NRSV)
- This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. *Acts 2:32 (NRSV)*
- ... whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. *Acts 3:15 (NRSV)*

THE THEME OF “WITNESS” IN PETER’S SPEECHES

Personal witness six different times:

- **God** raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to **us who were chosen by God as witnesses** ... *Acts 10:40-41 (NRSV)*
- He **commanded us** to preach to the people and **to testify** that he is the one ordained by **God** ... *Acts 10:42 (NRSV)*
- **God** of our ancestors raised up Jesus ... God exalted him at his right hand ... **we are witnesses** to these things ... *Acts 5:30-32 (NRSV)*

What leaps out from the page is that, without exception, what the **witnesses** are testifying to is **what God has done**

THE THEME OF “WITNESS” IN PETER’S SPEECHES

- This personal testimony is supported by the testimony of the Spirit in five places:
 - ... a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you ...*Acts 2:22 (NRSV)*
 - ... the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear. *Acts 2:33 (NRSV)*
 - ... in His name, His name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know *Acts 3:16 (NRSV)*

THE THEME OF “WITNESS” IN PETER’S SPEECHES

This personal testimony is supported by the testimony of the Spirit in five places:

- let it be known to all of you ... that this man is standing before you in good health... God raised from the dead. *Acts 4:10 (NRSV)*
- And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit ... *Acts 5:32 (NRSV)*
- Is this why Peter insisted on “... one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.” *Acts 1:22 (NRSV)*
- Did Peter (and Luke) have in mind the Mosaic idea of two or three witnesses (Dt. 19:15)?

“WITNESS” FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

Peter also appeals to the Old Testament as a witness:

- No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: *Acts 2:16 (NRSV)*
- For David says concerning him ... *Acts 2:25 (NRSV)*
- For David ... himself says ... *Acts 2:34 (NRSV)*
- Moses said ... as many as have spoken, from Samuel and those after him, also predicted these days ... *Acts 3:22-25 (NRSV)*
- This Jesus is 'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.' *Acts 4:11 (NRSV)*
- All the prophets testify about him ... *Acts 10:43 (NRSV)*

CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF WITNESSING

This emphasis on witnessing is important in two respects – First:

- Puts the greatest possible focus on the factual basis for the content of the speeches
 - The initial preaching stresses what actually happened
 - It relies on eye- and ear- witnesses to Jesus, his teachings and his resurrection

CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF WITNESSING

This emphasis on witnessing is important in two respects – Second:

- Provides proof of the authority of Peter and that the message was sanctioned by God
 - Acts 1:1 (“all that Jesus did and taught”) is confirmed by credible witnesses
 - It is not just the great deeds done, but the proclamation of them, which are part of God’s plan of salvation.
- Acts isn’t just biography or history – it is the evidence of the certainty of the Truth

LUKE'S "TWO WITNESS" CONCEPT

- Many commentators have noted Luke's "doubling" of witnesses, both in his Gospel and the Book of Acts (itself a form of "doubling")
- It is obvious that in these five speeches of Peter, the first and second are very similar in both setting and content:
 - Public addresses to Jewish Crowds
 - Reported at length
 - Old Testament quotations
 - "Thousands" of believers

LUKE'S "TWO WITNESS" CONCEPT

- Likewise the third and fourth speeches:
 - Brief defenses before the Jewish rulers
 - Confrontational
 - Negative outcomes
- Hard not to see these as additional "doubling" by Luke
- But if so – what about the fifth speech at the home of Cornelius?
- More to come in a later class

SUMMARY

- Peter begins the work of witnessing – first in Jerusalem, then in Samaria, with groups of speeches (five in all – with one unpaired)
- We looked at the structures underlying all five speeches
- Noted the similarities in the messages – crucifixion, resurrection, exaltation, conversion
- Noted the repeated use of witnesses to bolster the message

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