

Defending God's Truth

Acts 2:14-41

Last week we looked at God's heart for the nations of the world, as he miraculously provided a way for all the various nations present in Jerusalem to hear in their own language the mighty deeds of God. Yet, there's always a critic somewhere, and the critics that day of Pentecost were mocking and saying that the disciples of Jesus were "*full of sweet wine.*" ([Acts 2:13](#)) Now, there's probably a time to ignore critics and not to engage, and just keep on doing what you know is right. But there are other times in which it would be beneficial to engage, explain, and give an appropriate defense. There are probably many instances over the past several years which, in general, followers of Jesus have shied away from engaging with our culture, and have not offered much resistance in the form of an appropriate biblical response- times where we haven't countered well the world's deteriorating morality with solid biblical reasoning. And now looking back, many are now thinking maybe Christians in general should have been a little more vocal in our viewpoints. And even on a more basic, personal level, more than likely we each can probably recall a time or two (or more), when we probably should have been a little bolder in answering those who criticize God's people and God's truth. Peter obviously could recall a time when he could have engaged better with the critics- the night of Jesus' arrest. That night, Peter chose to deny Jesus instead of entering into a potentially heated debate. Today we're going to look at how much Peter has learned and changed since that dark night. And as we look at his response, may the Lord convict our hearts, and give us the tools and boldness to appropriately engage with others concerning God's truth. Let's look now at [Acts 2:14-16](#)...

Now before we continue reading the scripture from Joel that Peter proclaimed, I want you to notice the way Peter sets up His defense. It is so simple, and so transferable to us even today as we consider how to

defend truth. Peter took initiative and was bold in standing up to engage. He raised his voice, which wasn't out of anger, but his voice was raised just so all could hear him. He then respectfully addressed those listening, *"Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem,"* and now that he had their attention and had respectfully addressed them, he then respectfully voiced his disagreement: *"these men are not drunk, as you suppose,"* then explained why that was not likely: *"for it is only the third hour of the day."* The third hour of the day, according to Roman time was 9am. Now, I know there are those who are in a tough battle with addictions who wrestle with substance abuse even early in the day, but the general principle here is that there were way too many people at one time acting "drunk" at just 9am. That kind of widespread behavior would typically only happen in the bars and parties at night. So, he respectfully disagreed and gave backing to why that assumption was not correct. Then he pointed to scripture (which we're about to read) in order to show the proper interpretation. To sum this up, it appears this equation for entering into a disagreement looks like this: 1. Boldly yet respectfully disagree (doing so in a manner where you are able to be clearly heard), 2. State why the other's assumption is incorrect, 3. Give scripture and properly explain its meaning and significance to the situation. This is a fantastic, simple, 3 step formula for entering into spiritual/moral conversations with critics and mockers. Let's look now at the scripture passage from the book of Joel that Peter uses in his defense, verse 17. ([Acts 2:17-21](#))

Peter quotes from the Old Testament book of Joel, which contains prophecy describing the days of the Messiah. Now, there's something you must know concerning many of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. The days of the Messiah are often described in the Bible as being great and awesome- as in celebrating the fact that the Lord's salvation, provision, and restoration is coming; yet these days are also described as being terrifying and dreadful- as in the judgement of the Lord will come and He will slay His enemies and time as we know

it will end. Those living during biblical times most often anticipated the prophecies concerning the Messiah to one day occur close together- thinking the *blessing* AND the *judgement* would all happen close together as the Messiah came, but we as believers living today have the gift of seeing the broader scope painted by the entirety of the Bible and history, and thus understand Jesus coming as the Messiah ushered us into a season of His blessing (yet still with persecution) as we await the Messiah's return. And His return will end this current season and His judgement will be pronounced on this world, which will result in even greater blessing for His followers in His Kingdom.

With this in mind, let's consider what Peter referenced from the book of Joel. In the last days, in the *season* of the days of the Messiah- God will pour His spirit on mankind. In other words, there will be a special presence of God poured on mankind that will cause many to prophesy- prophesy as in proclaiming what God has said, has done, and what God has said He will do. And this anointing with His spirit won't just be available to the leading priests- no, it will be experienced by sons and daughters; young and old; men, women, and children. And that was what was happening right there in that moment. God's spirit had been poured out; and men, women, children who were gathered together as God's people, began to share boldly with these from all over the world who had yet to hear of the mighty deeds of God. But Peter didn't stop there, he continued reciting from the book of Joel about the signs on earth and in the sky, and of the symbolic language inferring war and judgement and the end of the world as we know it. The life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, and now this miraculous event to the nations of the world- basically kicked off a heavenly countdown that would ultimately end in the return of Jesus, His judgement on those who reject His salvation, and then the creation of a new Heaven and Earth. In the next verses Peter attributes these "Messiah signs" to Jesus, and then he moves on to other scripture in order to defend his

position that Jesus is the Messiah the prophets (including Joel) were expecting, verse 22 and following... ([Acts 2:22-28](#))

Then in the verses that follow, Peter goes on to explain that this passage from Psalm 16 that David wrote wasn't referring to David Himself, but rather his words were referring to the Messiah who would be a *descendant* of David, verse 29 and following... ([Acts 2:29-33](#))

Just in case that's not enough evidence that David was prophetically referring to the Messiah rather than Himself, Peter mentions one more passage of scripture from David's Psalm 110. Verse 34... ([Acts 2:34-35](#))

Basically, what Peter is referring to from this verse is that David was saying, "The Lord God said to the Lord Jesus, 'Jesus sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" He's drawing out that King David knew one would come after him, who would be Lord AND God, in whom God would judge all those who were opposed to His plan of salvation. [Verse 36](#)...

And thus, Peter concludes His 3 point argument: Boldly yet respectfully disagreeing, stating why their conclusion was incorrect, then stating scripture and properly explaining its meaning and significance to the situation. Let me give some short, modern day examples using this same formula:

"No, true Christians are not racist. (disagree) True Christians follow the example of Jesus, and Jesus was obviously not racist. (therefore your conclusion is incorrect) Jesus told His followers to go and make disciples of ALL nations [Matt. 28:19](#), but the Bible says that "*people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, slanderers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, [man this is a long list!] brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of*

God, [now listen clearly to this next part!] *holding to a form of godliness although they have denied its power.* [2 Tim 3:2-5](#) In other words, the Bible tell us that true Christians obey Jesus and are unbiased in how they share God's love and good news with others, but there are those who appear to be "Christian" in some sense of the word (holding a "form of godliness") yet are living in sin and are actually denying His powerful work in their lives." (Scripture and explanation) Here's another example:

"No, I don't agree with you- gender can't be fluid. (disagree) Choosing one's gender is inconsistent with what science shows us. (therefore your conclusion is incorrect) God created people as male and female [Gen. 5:2](#), but people exchange the truth of God for a lie, and worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator, and women and men thus exchange their natural function for that which is unnatural."
[Romans 1:24-27](#) (Scripture and explanation) We as God's people, need to know what God says on the issues facing mankind, and be able to boldly and respectfully point others to the truth of His word. And what was the result of Peter's defense using God's word? Verse 37 and following... ([Acts 2:37-41](#))

Peter's words, or rather *God's word*, pierced the people's hearts. [Hebrews 4:12](#) describes God's word as "*living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*" You and I might be able to make a decent argument, but the real power lies in God's word, in His scripture, in this amazing book we call the Bible. The people's hearts were humbled- they realized after hearing these words, they could not go on living, thinking, believing in the same way as they had before they heard these words. So, they asked, "*what shall we do?*" Peter responded for them to repent- in other words to admit their wrongness and God's rightness, and thus do a 180 turn back to God; and then he told them to

publicly proclaim their repentance/surrender to God/new life accepted, through the symbolic act of baptism. And please don't think that repentance is one thing, and then baptism is another thing, and it's the baptism that grants the forgiveness- no, it's repentance AND the follow through showing that you really have repented and are taking the first step of obedience to Jesus by obeying Him to be baptized. The repentance and baptism go together. Now, also don't take what I said to mean that if someone repents and accepts Jesus on their deathbed and then dies 5 minutes later before they get a chance to get baptized that they aren't forgiven and saved. No, I don't mean that at all. What I do mean is that repentance is what leads to forgiveness, and baptism serves as an outward sign and proclamation that one has repented and surrendered to Jesus. Now if you are here this morning or listening online and you have chosen to follow Jesus, but haven't yet celebrated that decision by getting baptized, please reach out to Pastor Dave or myself and let's work on getting that done.

Repentance, baptism, forgiveness, and then what? The end of [verse 38](#) tells us: You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit- the Counselor, the indwelling presence of God in your life. And then [verse 39](#) reiterates our last week's conclusion that forgiveness, knowledge of God's love and salvation, His gift of the Holy Spirit- is available to *all*. In this setting Peter was referring to those there right in that moment, and even their children back home, and then all those scattered across the face of the Earth. [Verse 40](#) lets us know that Peter's sermon was slightly condensed for the reader here in the book of Acts and that he continued in encouraging the listeners to be saved from their immoral culture, and to thus escape the judgement of the Messiah. And what's crazy is that... they listened! [Verse 41](#) tells us 3000 that day chose to surrender to Jesus, and to immediately publicly profess that surrender through getting baptized.

Now that number of 3000 is extremely significant. I have mentioned before how Pentecost was the Greek word meaning “fiftieth,” it was the 50th day after the Passover celebration, and that specific day was the day to celebrate the harvest of wheat. On the day of Passover Celebration Jesus was crucified as the Passover lamb whose blood saved the people, and 50 days later on the day of Harvest Celebration, 3000 souls were harvested for God’s kingdom. John Piper says that “it’s a shame that the term ‘Pentecostal power’ has for many people become more associated with speaking in *tongues* than with the *harvest* of world evangelization.” The speaking in tongues was not the main event, the speaking in tongues was just the vehicle through which God accomplished in extra-ordinary power His goal of making sure the whole world would know of His plan for salvation. God’s main objective is not empowering individuals with a special personal prayer language, but rather His objective is a harvest of souls, rescued from this world that is heading for judgement in a hurry.

This 3000 number not only contributed to more joy in God’s work during the Harvest Celebration, but I believe that specific number has even more significance. Throughout the Bible we see many parallels and threads woven- tying one event to another. An example of this on a large scale is: the Bible begins with creation and it ends with creation. The first creation in the book of Genesis gives us an idea of the world as God intended it to be, before evil was acted out by mankind. The 2nd creation in the book of Revelation shows us the world God intended will be redeemed and remade in even more brilliance and splendor. And everything in the middle describes the journey between one creation and the other. The first creation points to the second creation. So much of the Old Testament points to the New Testament, so much of the Old Testament sets up what would later be partially fulfilled in the New Testament and also fully fulfilled in the coming Kingdom.

We've talked about the Old Testament significance of the first Passover as God rescued his people from Egypt, and how that pointed to and culminated into the final Passover sacrifice as Jesus hung on a cross. Well, scholars and Jewish tradition tell us that 50 days after the first Passover in Egypt, was when Moses went up to Mount Sinai and received the commandments from God. We read in Exodus 32 that when Moses came back down the mountain, he found that the people had already turned away from wanting to follow God, and had made for themselves a little cow of gold to worship. Of course Moses couldn't believe it, the people had just witnessed God's spirit powerfully coming down on Mount Sinai with smoke and fire, and even so they somehow decided to trade their real creator God for a fake golden calf god. And so anger burned within Moses and he called out "*Whoever is for the LORD, come to me!*" ([Ex. 32:26](#)) He basically drew a line in the sand saying right now decide who you will worship: idols or the real God. After everyone had made their decision, the ones who repented and chose to worship the Lord God, killed everyone else. Now this isn't *prescriptive*, it's *descriptive*- just because it's in the Bible doesn't mean it's an example to follow. Right or wrong, I'm just telling you what happened. And it says that "*about three thousand men of the people fell that day.*" ([Ex. 32:28](#)) 50 days after the first Passover, on the day that would later become the Celebration of Harvest (Pentecost)- on that day 3000 people *died*.

God was one day going to redeem the evil that took place in the garden in the first creation, and God was one day going to redeem the evil that took place leading up to the first Passover, and God was one day going to redeem the evil that took place on Mount Sinai that first day of Pentecost. And here in the book of Acts we have at least a partial fulfillment of God's redemptive work concerning Pentecost. Where there was once death of 3000 people who turned away from the Lord in Egypt- there is now life through 3000 people turning to the Lord in Jerusalem. Concerning Passover- at the end of the gospel books and

entering into the book of Acts we have at least a partial fulfillment of God's redemptive word concerning the Passover Lamb. Where there was once death of a Passover lamb- there is now life through the resurrected Passover lamb Jesus who has ascended into Heaven. And the fulfillments of Passover and Pentecost are the events that pave the way for God's second creation to come into existence. His redemptive work through the good news of Jesus as the Passover Lamb, and His redemptive work through spreading this news throughout the world through Pentecost- this redemptive work will be fully realized in the full installment of His coming Kingdom. It's coming. And right now, we are still in this season of "Pentecost," this season of making sure everyone possible is able to hear of the "mighty deeds of God." ([Acts 2:11](#))

And so my charge to you is to take advantage of the opportunity while we still have it, and to boldly and respectfully speak up and engage with others concerning your faith and your convictions- may you boldly and respectfully speak up concerning God's word. And we'll be praying that your words- God's words- will pierce others to the heart and that your boldness and application of scripture would result in a harvest of many for God's Kingdom.