

Eternity Daily Bible Study - No. 347
Series: The Primal Church - Acts Chapters 1-8
Verses: Acts 2:14-21
Topic: This Is That
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Please note – the following article and diagrams of the Ascension of Jesus Christ will be a big help as we study Acts 1-8 - <http://aibi.gospelcom.net/aibi/ascension.htm>

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Acts 2:14-21 MKJV But Peter, standing up with the Eleven, lifted up his voice and said to them, Men, Jews, and all who dwell at Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to my words. (15) For these are not drunk as you suppose, for it is *the* third hour of the day. (16) But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: (17) "And it shall be in the last days, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. (18) And in those days I will pour out My Spirit upon My slaves and My slave women, and they shall prophesy. (19) And I will give wonders in the heaven above, and miracles on the earth below, blood and fire and vapor of smoke. (20) The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before that great and glorious Day of the Lord. (21) And it shall be *that* everyone who shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

No spiritual experience is self-interpreting. Experience must always be interpreted by Scripture –and Scripture by experience. (If your bible interpretation ends up with the world being flat then you need to check your Scriptural interpretation against reality.)

Christianity is neither all mysticism nor all pragmatism. I like to say that sane faith is mystical pragmatism and combines direct experience of God with hard-nosed reality testing. Pentecost seems all mysticism, all tongues and fire and prophecy but Peter does not stand up and say that he heard voices – rather he speaks from Scripture.

Peter first corrects the wrong interpretation by referring to the obvious facts: "For these are not drunk as you suppose, for it is *the* third hour of the day." The probability of mass drunkenness at 9am is very low. Maybe there is another explanation / interpretation. Peter then gives it to them: But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: "And it shall be in the last days, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh."

"This is that." This experience is that Scripture, that prophecy, that moment in history. Ninety-nine percent of the time people make such identifications they are wrong. Bill Gates is the Anti-Christ, Jesus will return in 2000, the Millennium Bug is the beginning of the Tribulation. The Jehovah Witnesses, I believe, have finally given up on end-times date setting. Go to any psych ward and you will find people who believe they are Jesus or Satan or one of the two prophets of Revelation 11.

But Peter was correct! This was the prophecy come true; this was Joel's outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon "all flesh" – old men, young men, women and male and female servants. This was the spiritual gateway to a new era of Holy Spirit power.

So sometimes we can get it right. Why then do we most often get it wrong? There are two main reasons that I find. The first is what I call "unverified cut-and-paste theology and philosophy". This is where the only reference point is a holy book or books and quotes from these books are taken out "cut-and-paste" fashion and assembled into theories about reality without ever going out and checking on reality to see if things are actually so. People who conclude that everyone MUST be healed by prayer are in such a camp, as are cultists and flat-earthers. The prosperity gospel is also in this category because if it were ever tested against reality it would be found to be most utterly wrong. But it sounds good and it cuts-and-pastes quite well.

The second reason is almost the opposite it involves almost cutting and pasting reality to fit Scripture. Instead of saying the world must fit the Bible like the flat-earthers do, they say the Bible must fit our world and our concerns. It takes our current reality so seriously that it assumes that the Bible must be speaking about Iraq or Russia or Microsoft or whatever and that our nation e.g. the USA and Britain must be in there somewhere with a central role. We assume that the Bible is about us and that if we use the Bible Code and find our name in the equidistant letter spacings we will have discovered a great secret.

The first error constricts reality (to that of the texts) and the second error constricts God's actions (to our concerns). Perhaps this is because on one hand we want to have reality tidily explained by our theory and on the other we want to also be the center of reality and of God's actions. But God will remain God and He will leave us puzzled and bewildered and humbled.

How then can we be saved from error when like Peter we say: "this is not X, this is that – it is Y".

Look at reality: Has the Holy Spirit actually fallen on a large number of people? (which had rarely, if ever, happened since Moses' day).

Look at the Scripture: Is there a Scripture that predicts or explains the Holy Spirit falling on a large number of people?

Look at the spiritual timing: Does the Scripture fit in with these days and times "in the last days."?

Look at the fruits of the interpretation: 3000 people saved in one day and a vibrant spiritual community established.

This last is important – if the interpretation produces rogues and shysters and cults and quacks – then very probably it is not from God.

Blessings,

John Edmiston

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