

# **“Young men will see visions, old men will dream dreams”**

## **Introduction**

### **Reasons for choosing Acts 2:14-21**

We live in a time when we constantly hear news of massacres by terrorists. Many people, especially those living in Europe, are asking themselves where the world is heading for.

I chose this passage because I think the thought of Christ’s second coming crosses the minds of many believers today.

As we begin our annual conference, let us ensure that we listen to His word to discern the signs of the End Time and preach the Gospel powerfully.

### **Summary of this passage**

In Acts 2:1-13, we see how the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples as Jesus had promised.

When the Holy Spirit descended on His disciples for the first time on the day of Pentecost, there were some visible signs as well as loud sounds. And the Spirit-filled disciples began speaking in foreign languages as they were enabled by the Spirit.

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” (Acts 2:4)

This event caused multitudes to assemble around the disciples. They were the devout Jews who had come from all over the world to live in Jerusalem.

When they came to see what was happening, they witnessed something amazing. Each of them heard disciples speaking in their own languages.

In verses 9-11, we can see where the people had actually come from. First, there were those from the northeast of Jerusalem - Parthians, Medes and Elamites. Then there were residents of Mesopotamia, and people from Judea which is near Jerusalem, and those from the northwest of Jerusalem which are Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia. There were also people from Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, and visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans and Arabs.

They were amazed and perplexed not because of the commotion but because of the languages they heard. The disciples were Galileans and yet they were “declaring the wonders of God in their own tongues!” (Acts 2:7 & 11)

We may be able to say this event was prophetic. It echoes what the Lord Jesus said:

(the Gospel will be preached) “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Act 1:8)

In this scene there was another group of people. They were the locals who didn’t understand the languages and thought the disciples were drunk and made fun of them.

With that as a backdrop, Peter stood up with the eleven disciples and gave a sermon.

## 1. Peter explains from the Scripture: It was predicted by the Prophet Joel

Peter first denies that the disciples were drunk. He says:

“<sup>1</sup>These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning!” (Acts 2:15)

In Judea in those days, it was unthinkable to be drunk in the morning. For Jewish people, 9 o’clock in the morning was a time for prayer and they didn’t eat before that time. So, it was impossible for them to get drunk.

After denying that they were drunk, Peter turns to people who were asking each other: “What does this mean?” He explains that this was a fulfillment of what God said through the prophet Joel, but he did not end by explaining what took place that morning.

In his sermon, which was the first sermon of the Christian Church, Peter explains that the event of the Pentecost was a fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy, and Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah whom the Jews had long been waiting for, and that they were the witnesses of the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He tells the Israelites to repent in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins.

Peter says this was spoken by the prophet Joel and begins to cite the book of Joel in the Old Testament. He didn’t say: “I think the event means this.” He quoted the Scripture. He spoke by using the words of the Old Testament.

The prophet Joel was moved when Judea was inflicted by the plague of locusts and said it was the judgment of God. Moreover, the plague indicated the coming judgment on the Day of the Lord. Peter is saying that it was through Joel that God promised the pouring of his Spirit on all people, and it was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.

I’d like to point out that the Bible Peter uses here is not the same as those our translations are based on. The Bible Peter uses is a Greek translation of the Old Testament called ‘Septuagint’. And, Peter himself modifies or rather interprets the passages and speaks in his own words. Let me give you a few examples.

1) The first example is the use of the word “God.”

In the book of Joel the word ‘I’ is used, but Peter changes it to ‘God’ to make sure the reader understand that it’s God who is speaking.

2) The second is the word ‘in the Last days.’ (v.17)

Peter changes the phrase ‘after that’ to ‘in the last days.’ By using the phrase ‘in the last days’ Peter is pointing out that the prophecy of Joel will be fulfilled in the last days, and both Peter and the listeners

were living in the last days. Peter is telling the audience that God has begun his final work of his salvation and it is about to be fulfilled.

3) Next, Peter adds the phrase 'and they will prophesy.' (v.18)

As a result of the pouring of the Spirit, people will prophesy, see visions and dream dreams. Peter adds 'they will prophesy' again to emphasize the importance of prophecy.

4) Another example is the closure. He adds a sentence: "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (v.21)." This seems to be added to support the next passage that talks about Jesus of Nazareth being the Lord.

Now Peter didn't interpret and cite the Scripture to make up his own points. He did so to correctly teach that the prophecy of Joel talked about the descent of the Holy Spirit on him and the others.

## **2. Joel's prophecy: "On the Last Day..."**

I'd like us now to look how Peter used Joel's prophecy to explain what had happened to him and the others that day, and what the prophecy says will happen in the last days.

### **1) The Spirit will be poured on all people (vs 17, 18)**

Peter is saying that on this day, the prophecy; "I will pour out my Spirit on all people" (V17) was fulfilled. During the time of the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came to special people like priests, prophets, judges, and kings. For example, He appeared to Moses, and to one of the Judges Samson, to Saul and to David. However, God said in the book of Joel that his Spirit will be poured on all people. The words we see here, 'sons and daughters,' 'young men and old men' mean He will come to all people regardless of their social standing.

Words such as 'prophesy,' 'see visions,' and 'dream dreams' may remind us of the Old Testament characters like Abraham, Jacob and Joseph. These people received God's messages through prophecies, visions, and dreams, and delivered them to people.

However, in the last days, beginning with the Pentecost, everyone will receive the Holy Spirit, receive God's Word, and proclaim the Good News. And Peter is saying it was fulfilled that day and they were the witnesses to it.

The fulfillment of the prophecy on the day of Pentecost wasn't an event that appeared like a spark and disappeared. The Spirit was poured on all followers of the Lord, and from that time on God's words have been being preached by spirit-filled people. And this sermon by Peter was the very beginning of the proclamation of the Gospel.

### **2) There will be signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth (vs 19, 20)**

Besides the pouring of the Spirit, Peter says there will be signs and wonders in the last days.

In Acts 2:19-20 we read:

“I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.

The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.”

We can see a similar passage in Revelation 6:12:

“I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red.”

The opening of the seven seals by the Lamb in chapter 6 means the judgment of God.

The opening of the sixth seal in verses 12-14 is a description of signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth as well as the judgment of those who don't follow God and His Lamb.

<sup>15</sup>Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. <sup>16</sup>They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! <sup>17</sup>For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?” (Revelation 6:15-17)

If the pouring of the Spirit on all people predicted by Joel was the sign of the beginning of the End, signs and wonders would be the sign of the end of the End Time.

### **3) Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (v 21)**

As I just said, the Last Day will be marked by catastrophe (signs and wonders) and the judgment of God and His Lamb. Peter ends his quote of Joel by the sentence, “And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” According to Revelation 6:15-17, no one can withstand the wrath of God. However, Peter's quote says “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Those listening to Peter's sermon were the Jews and I assume many of them thought they'd be spared since they were the ones who called on the name of the Lord.

It is important here to know why Peter ended his quote by saying “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” In the following verses, he explains who this Lord is. Peter is telling the Jews that it is Jesus of Nazareth who they had just crucified on Calvary, was raised from the dead after three days, that will save them. And this Jesus is the one who poured the Spirit on them that day.

## **Invitation**

### **Challenge to those who wait for the kingdom of God: Read and Preach the Word**

How then shall we apply this passage in our lives? We should first open our hearts to God's Word and then preach the God News.

Let us look at Joel's prophecy again. It says when the Spirit is poured out on people, they will prophesy, see visions, and dream dreams. At the end of verse 18, Peter adds a sentence “and they will prophesy.” He did so to emphasize prophecy.

Peter is saying that in the last days which begins at Pentecost the Spirit will be poured on everyone and they will receive God's Word, and that was fulfilled that day and he and others were witnesses to it.

So, here is the first challenge; it's important to read both the Old and the New Testament. We read about the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies in the New Testament, and we realize they both form the Bible. Those who wait for the coming of the Kingdom of God should continue reading the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation. We should read the Bible because we can say the whole Bible is prophetic and everything God says in it is correct and every prophecy has come true.

We sometimes hear people say, "We need more ability to understand the times." It's the Bible that accurately shows us what kind of time we live in and where the world is headed. We Christians should be aware of this and continue reading the Scripture because it's His Word that guides us and helps us to find out how to interpret what is going on in this world.

Those who wait for the coming of the Kingdom of God should also make it a habit to read and meditate on God's Word daily. It's not enough just to listen to a sermon once a week. In the Old Testament times, God spoke to people through words, visions, and dreams. To us who have entered the New Covenant by Jesus Christ, God speaks through the Bible.

We also read the Bible to share God's messages with others. I officially became an elderly person last year, and I find the sentence in verse 17: "your old men will dream dreams" particularly interesting. I found it encouraging since even old men can continue dreaming and we never retire from reading the Bible. I hope none of us are thinking we have read the Bible enough and there is no need to keep on reading. Don't you want to know more about Jesus whom we love so much? "Young people and old people, let us read the Bible."

The second challenge we receive from Peter's sermon is this; we should preach the Word of God.

The words in verses 17 and 18: 'prophecy,' 'see visions,' 'dream dreams,' and 'prophecy' mean preaching God's Word. This world is heading for the Day of Judgment without doubt. The only way to prepare for the Day is to believe the promise: "everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus will be saved." We who wait for the coming of the Kingdom of God are entrusted with this.

All God's servants, those who are waiting for the Kingdom of God,  
"Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season" (2Tim 4:2)