

Sunday June 13th 2010

Petros

Part One

1). Now I am sure we would all acknowledge the significance of the study of the Book of Ephesians for us both on a personal level and on a corporate level and so it would seem good that we might now build on this still further by studying 1st and 2nd Peter as we will see that there is a direct connection between the two. And this, over the weeks that will follow is what we will do.

a). Before we begin on the Books themselves though we will establish a context in which we might more easily place them and a foundation that will support us in our own journey through the scripture.

2). Mt 16:13 ¶ *When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" 14 So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, [Petros] and on this rock [Petra] I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."*

a). We will remember from a previous study some weeks ago that Simon had been given the name Peter/Petros by the Lord at their first meeting, recorded in John 1:42, prophetically pointing to the man that Simon would become and the role he would have in respect of the preaching of the Kingdom of the Heavens. And in our scripture we can see the connection between Peter, the rock man, the revelation that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God and the building of Christ's church on the foundation of this revelation.

b). And as we have already said, it was given to Peter, as the rock man, through the Holy Spirit, to write two letters that would be part of the canon of scripture, 1st and 2nd Peter and that these are letters written to those who are in the process of being built into Christ's Church on the 'petra' of the revelation that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, letters that deal with issues concerning the salvation of the soul.

c). We might also remember from our study of Ephesians that the Christians Peter is writing to, in the historical context, had received thorough teaching concerning the word of the Kingdom from Paul, Timothy and Aquila and Priscilla and had been the recipients of not only the letters of 1st and 2nd Peter, but also the letter to the Ephesians, the Galatians and the Revelation of Jesus Christ from the Apostle John.

d). We are dealing then, historically, with a group of people who were well grounded in the truth; who had every opportunity to go on to maturity in order to receive their inheritance. A group of people then in this respect not dissimilar to ourselves.

e). And yet even though they had this thorough grounding the Holy Spirit takes every opportunity not only to encourage this group but to constantly warn them of the possibility of departing from the faith – a warning that is particularly poignant as we see what Paul writes in connection with the believers in this area in - 2Ti 1:15 ¶ *This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.*

f). And so to continue, in order to fully establish our context, let's look at the beginning of the presentation of the Kingdom of the Heavens following the Lord's ascension and how it is connected with those who would be the recipients of Peter's letters.

3). The first of Peter's letters begins as follows - 1Pe 1:1 ¶ *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,*

a). The opening address here makes it very plain that Peter is writing to those in an area we would know scripturally as Asia, a land mass that borders on the Black Sea, the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean that today we know by the name of Turkey. We would also need to realize that the letter written to the Christians in this area would not stay with one particular group but would be circulated amongst the churches in these various locations.

b). A good example of this is found in Revelation - Re 1:10 *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, 11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."*

c). The Apostle John wrote in a book and then sent that book to be circulated amongst the seven churches.

d). The point being in this is that we are not dealing with a single congregation, but with a significant part of the Body of Christ as it existed at that time.

4). And so in order to see where Peter's involvement with the Christians from this area begins we will go to the Book of Acts and the Day of Pentecost following the Lord's resurrection and ascension - Ac 2:1 ¶ *When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 ¶ And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. 7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? 8 "And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? 9 "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 "Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 "Cretans and Arabs--we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."*

a). What we are witnessing here in Chapter 2 of the Book of Acts is that which had been promised by the Lord - Ac 1:4 *And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me;*

b). Joh 14:26 *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

c). And what we see here is that dwelling in Jerusalem at this particular Pentecost were 'Jews devout men from every nation under heaven'. It was a requirement for Jewish men at this time, no matter where they lived, to make the journey to Jerusalem for the Spring Feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits and Pentecost. The early Jewish historian Josephus estimated that there would be around 2 million Jews in Jerusalem for these feast days in any given year.

d). What we will realize then is that the majority of those present at this Pentecost had also witnessed the events of the Lord's crucifixion and the uproar that had accompanied His resurrection and may well have been in Jerusalem for

these same feasts throughout the 3 years of the Lord's ministry. And many of these came from the very region and locations that Peter addresses in his letters.

e). Now it is without doubt that the event we read about at the beginning of Acts Chapter 2 is quite amazing. The 11 Apostles, all of whom are Galileans, begin declaring 'the wonderful works of God' and every person present hears them speaking in their own native tongue. So amazing was this that the whole 'multitude came together' to witness what was happening. But we will also note that when they came together they were 'confused' as to what was going on.

f). It should have been clear to them what was taking place and they should have recognized the sign that was being given to them through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit manifested in the Apostles and others speaking in tongues.

g). But what we witness here though cannot be separated from the events surrounding the Jewish nation as a whole recorded in the Gospels. Just as there was doubt and rejection of the message and the Messenger by the Jewish nation as a collective whole, so that same doubt and rejection continues unabated with regards to this beginning of signs manifested by the Apostles - Ac 2:12 *So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?" 13 Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."*

5). And it is Simon Peter who stands up with the eleven to make plain for those with ears to hear what is taking place.

a). Ac 2:14 ¶ *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. 15 "For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. 16 "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. 21 And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.' 22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know-- 23 "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; 24 "whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. 25 "For David says concerning Him: 'I foresaw the LORD always before my face, For He is at my*

right hand, that I may not be shaken. 26 Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. 27 For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. 28 You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.' 29 "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 "Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, 31 "he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. 32 "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. 33 "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. 34 "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: '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."

b). Peter begins with the explanation of the event they are all witnessing, ‘this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel’, and then quotes from the scriptures themselves – Joel 2:28-32a.

c). This is the beginning of the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, a prophecy concerning the restoration of Israel within the Kingdom, that could at this time have been brought to its conclusion [a prophecy that still remains to be fulfilled yet future] – but only, just as we saw throughout the Gospel accounts, if the nation as a whole would come to repentance.

d). And it is with repentance in the forefront that Peter draws their attention to the situation the Jews find themselves in - 22 *"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know-- 23 "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;*

e). At the forefront of repentance then must be the acceptance that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God and taking responsibility for slaying their Messiah. This now is at the very heart of the matter.

f). And in order to show from the scriptures the prophetic fulfillment of his assertions Peter, under the direction of the Spirit, turns to David, quoting from Psalm 16 and Psalm 110.

g). Peter makes clear to them that Israel’s Messiah had previously appeared to the nation manifesting signs, wonders and miracles, and through the manifestation of these miraculous signs God had provided visible evidence for the

nation of the authenticity of the Messenger and the message, also pointing to the spiritual healing available to the nation, upon their repentance, within the Kingdom that was being offered.

h). Israel however, as we have already noted, rejected the message and crucified their Messiah, but God had raised Him from the dead and those there with the 11 were witnesses of the this fact – a fact attested to by the scriptures, as we have seen in Psalm 16.

i). Not only had God raised Jesus from the dead, but He was at that very time in the heavens, at God's right hand, waiting. Waiting for the day when His enemies would be made His footstool – a fact attested to by the scriptures in the first verse of Psalm 110.

j). We can see clearly then that the events occurring on this Day of Pentecost had only one focus – Israel's repentance. The Jewish people as a whole were called upon to repent, to change their minds. Only through repentance could the nation bring about Christ's return and bring in the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, resulting in the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel.

k). Ac 3:19 *"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,* 21 *"whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.*

l). It is the call to repentance that brings about the question asked and the answer given in - Ac 2:37 ¶ *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."* 40 *And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."* 41 *Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.*

6). Now let's take a side step for a moment to make sure that we are clear in our own minds concerning what we are seeing here.

a). Firstly, we will of course realize that what is being dealt with in Acts Chapter 2 has nothing to do with issues of eternity as we are dealing with a generation of eternally saved Jews, the same generation that received the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens firstly from John the Baptist and then from Jesus. And so, Peter's audience at Pentecost is entirely Jewish, this same generation, and his message has to do with the Kingdom.

b). God had already determined to take the Kingdom of the Heavens from the Jews and give it to a nation producing the fruits of it. This reached a climax in Matthew Chapter 12 with vocalization given to it in - Mt 21:43 *"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.*

c). And although this statement made by the Lord is absolute its final fulfillment does not come until some 30 – 40 years after this. A fulfillment that we see recorded at the very end of the Book of Acts - Ac 28:28 *"Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"* 29 *And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.* 30 ¶ *Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, 31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.*

d). Throughout the Book of Acts then we will see the Kingdom of the Heavens now being offered to the nation of Israel by those comprising the Church, beginning with the events we have looked at today on the day of Pentecost.

e). That this offering of the Kingdom of the Heavens by the Church for a specific period of time would happen is exactly what we would see in a type from the Book of Ruth – Ru 1:3 *Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons.* 4 *Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years.* 5 *Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.*

f). After the death of Elimelech Ruth and Orpah are married to Mahlon and Chilion for 'about ten years', a complete period of time before Mahlon and Chilion both die, just leaving the two Gentile women and Naomi.

g). It is also what we see in a parable given by the Lord which is recorded in Lu 13:6 ¶ *He also spoke this parable: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. 7 "Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' 8 "But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. 9 'And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.'"*

h). What we will also keep in mind is that acceptance of the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens, both in the Gospels and the Book of Acts, is dependent on Israel's national repentance. The main difference in Acts is that Christ is no longer present and that repentance now has as its central focus the crucifixion of the nation's Messiah.

7). And so keeping the requirement for national repentance in mind let's look again at - *41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.*

a). We will remember that according to the historian Josephus there could have been as many as 2 million Jews in Jerusalem, and this of course would not comprise the entire nation. And so, although 3000 sounds like a lot it is a very small proportion of the 2 million that were present, but is totally consistent with what took place at Kadesh Barnea and the 120 waiting in the upper room.

b). The offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens both in the Gospels and the Book of Acts is accompanied by a call to repentance and is met in both with opposition and rejection by the nation as a whole, but acceptance by a small number of individuals.

c). And it is the small number of individuals who accepted the message, changing their minds about the Christ and the good news of His Kingdom, from Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia who would return to their own regions with the proclamation of this good news who would have been the beginning of the building of the Church in that region. And it is perfectly possible that some of those who received Peter's first letter were personally present in Jerusalem on the day recorded in Acts Chapter 2.

8). And so with the Jews from Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, back in the region they had come from, what we then find recorded in the 18th and 19th Chapters of the Book of Acts is Paul's ministry in this very same region.

a). In Acts Chapter 18 Paul leaves Athens and goes to Corinth. And it is in Corinth that he meets Aquila and Priscilla. And we might just note that Aquila is a native of Pontus, one of the regions in Asia to which Peter writes.

b). Paul then left Corinth to go to Syria and took Aquila and Priscilla with him. When they came to Ephesus Paul travelled on to Caesarea, Antioch, and then later to Galatia and Phrygia - *Ac 18:22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch. 23 After he had spent some time there, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.*

c). But Aquila and Priscilla he left to minister in Ephesus. And it is while they are in Ephesus that they meet a powerful Bible teacher named Apollos. To whom they teach the word of God more accurately.

d). Acts Chapter 19 begins with Apollos, who has now accepted and is teaching the whole counsel of God, having gone to Corinth while Paul goes back to Ephesus through Caesarea and Antioch, through the exact areas addressed in Peter's letters. And this is what we find recorded about Paul's ministry in this region - *Ac 19:8 ¶ And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three*

months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.10 And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

e). Ac 19:20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

f). Ac 19:26 "Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands.

9). And so with all of this detail in place, even if only in an overview, we can see how those who would become the church in this region, whether from the Jews or the Gentiles, were introduced to the word of the Kingdom and were then subsequently ministered to in order to bring them to a place of spiritual maturity that they might receive their inheritance in the coming Kingdom of Christ.

a). And as we reflect on this process I am sure we can see that there is much that is common with our own experience.

b). This being said we will hopefully realize how pertinent it is for us to study 1st and 2nd Peter within the framework of our previous study of the Book of Ephesians.

c). This if the Lord is willing we will continue next week.