

LECTURE 4: BIBLICAL APOLOGETICS— PETER

Peter's Testimony in the Book of Acts

Acts 2:14-39 (Pentecost sermon):

“Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

“In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.
Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.
I will show wonders in the heaven 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.
And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ (Joel 2:28-32)

“Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him:

“I saw the Lord always before me.
Because he is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.
Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will live in hope,
because you will not abandon me to the grave,
nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.’ (Ps 16:8-11)

“Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

“The Lord said to my Lord:
“Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.”” (Ps 110:1)

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

Observations on Peter’s Pentecost sermon:

- Appeal to current special manifestations, gifts of Holy Spirit (vv. 15-21)
- Appeal to Jesus’ miracles (v. 22)
- Appeal to Jesus’ resurrection and eyewitnesses (v. 32)
- Appeal to fulfilled Scripture (vv. 16-21, and vv. 25-31, and vv. 34-36)

Acts 3:12-26 (sermon to Jews in temple after healing lame man):

“When Peter saw this, he said to them: “Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.

“Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people’ (Deut 18:15-16).

“Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days. And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

Observation on Peter in Acts 3:

- Same arguments used by Peter as in Acts 2, with different OT passages and a different miracle

Note on apostolic miracles

Many passages in Acts show Peter (and later Paul) performing miracles through the name of Jesus. Some miracles brought judgment, but many more were of healing or raising someone from the dead. These miracles obviously had great apologetic value, and the apostles spoke of them as evidences of the truth of the gospel (cf. the disciples’ prayer in Acts 4:29-30). Reaction to these miracles, however, is recorded as mixed, either inspiring belief or confirming unbelief. They were designed to accredit the apostles and their message (cf. Rom 15:18-19; 2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:3-4); however, miracles by themselves are insufficient to prove God’s truth (cf. Matt 24:24; 2 Thess 2:9; Rev 13:13-15).

Acts 10:34-43 (sermon to Cornelius):

“Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached —how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

“We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He

commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Observations on Peter’s sermon to Cornelius:

- Appeal to Jesus’ miracles (v. 38)
 - Especially exorcisms of demons (v. 38b)
 - Note eyewitnesses to miracles (v. 39)
- Appeal to Jesus’ resurrection (v. 40)
 - Again, eyewitnesses (v. 41-42)
- Appeal to OT prophecy about Jesus (v. 43)

Acts 11:4-17 (report to Jerusalem believers):

“Peter began and explained everything to them precisely as it had happened: “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles, and birds of the air. Then I heard a voice telling me, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’

“I replied, ‘Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’

“The voice spoke from heaven a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’ This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again.

“Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man’s house. He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.’

“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?”

Observations on Peter’s sermon to Cornelius:

- Appeal to direct revelation in opening church to Gentiles and fellowshiping with them

- Vision of animals in sheet
- Message of Spirit to accompany men to house of Cornelius
- Cornelius' household baptized by Holy Spirit

Peter's Testimony in His Epistles

1 Peter 1:10-12

"Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things."

Observation:

- Inspiration of Scriptures led to predictions of Christ, fulfilled in NT times and confirmed by evidences of Spirit in preaching of the apostles

1 Peter 2:12, 15

"Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. . . . For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men."

Observation:

- Christians' godly conduct is an apologetic against ignorant attacks against Christianity

1 Peter 3:1-2

"Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives."

Observation:

- Wives' godly conduct results in winning over unbelieving husbands

2 Peter 1:16-21

“We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

“And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

Observations:

- Appeal to Peter’s eyewitness account of transfiguration (vv. 16-18)
- Appeal to “more certain” word of OT prophets (vv. 19-21)
 - Not from human origin (prophet’s interpretation of events in his day)
 - Men spoke from God
 - Men “carried along by the Holy Spirit”

2 Peter 3:3-9

“First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

Observations:

- Appeal to God’s providences in the past (vv. 3-7)

- Argument against exclusive uniformitarianism
 - Earth destroyed before, by flood
 - Earth to be destroyed, by fire
 - (Argument by analogy)
- Appeal to nature of God and time (vv. 8-9)
 - Christian “world-view”: time a creation of God; God above time (cf. Ps 90:4)
 - God’s mercy a reason for delay of judgment

Peter’s influence in the gospel of Mark

According to the testimony of the early Christian writers, Peter was the main source Mark used to compose his gospel. As a matter of fact, it is asserted that Mark’s gospel is a summary of the preaching of Peter concerning the life of Jesus. This agrees with the content of the gospel itself; the outline of Mark agrees closely with the testimony of Peter in Acts 10.

Mark appears to be directed to the Gentile world. It emphasizes the miracles and good deeds of Jesus. Likewise, it emphasizes his passion under the Romans, as instigated by the Jews.

Another emphasis of the gospel is the abrogation of the Jewish ceremonial laws, especially the dietary laws. Mark alone of the gospels contains the editorial statement that “in saying this, Jesus declared all foods ‘clean’” (Mark 7:19; see the Greek and modern translations). This agrees with Peter’s own concerns as shown in his dealings with Cornelius (Acts 10-11), his statements at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:10), and with his conduct and controversy at the Antioch church (Gal 2:11-21; note his agreement with Paul, evidenced not only by Paul in Galatians, but by himself in 2 Pet 3:15-16). This emphasis in Mark is directed to protecting the church against inroads by Judaizers or legalists.