

Acts 2 - The Spirit, the Son, and the New People of God

He is Risen! He is risen indeed.

This morning, even as we are unable to gather together as a church, we are celebrating together the most monumental point in human history: the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I want us to turn to **Acts 2** as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God this morning. We're turning to the book of Acts for 2 reasons. First, because in Acts 2 we have the first recorded explanation about what the death and resurrection of Jesus means. Acts 2 is the day of Pentecost - a feast that the Jews celebrated 50 days after Passover - 50 days after Jesus died. Jesus has been raised and taken into heaven where he reigns. And Peter explains why all of that matters to us.

Which is important because a lot of people know that Jesus died on a cross. They know that he rose from the dead. But they don't know the significance of his death and resurrection. They don't know what a man dying and rising from the dead 2,000 years ago has anything to do with them, certainly not on a daily basis. Here, Peter explains why Jesus's death and resurrection matter.

The second reason we're turning here is because when the apostle Peter explains what happened, he does so by quoting from the prophet Joel. If you've been following along with us over the last couple of weeks you know we've been studying the book of Joel. And at the end of Joel chapter 2 there is this amazing promise of God that he's going to do something in what he calls the last days that will turn the world upside down. And everyone will know that God has done this work because God will pour out his Holy Spirit on all flesh. So we're tying our study of Joel and the promises in Joel into our celebration of the resurrection of Jesus.

So let's back up and get the big picture here in relation to Acts. Jesus died on the cross 50 days prior to Acts 2. All the disciples were sad because they didn't understand that that was the plan the whole time. Then that Sunday - 3 days later by Jewish reckoning - he's alive! Like alive, alive. Eating, talking, people are seeing him everywhere. And he's beginning to explain what happened.

About 40 days goes by and Jesus is still hanging out with the disciples even appearing to huge crowds of 500 people. Then at beginning of the book of Acts he's talking one day and says "You'll receive power in a few days and then you'll go proclaim to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the whole earth about me." Then he ascends into heaven and the disciples are just standing there wondering what in the world happened. Where'd Jesus go?

So an angel appears and says he'll come back just like he left. Now go. And that's it. Nothing more. Now what?

Well the 11 disciples - remember Judas hung himself - and about 110 other followers just start reading their Bibles and praying. They pick a man to replace Judas - but for 10 days it's just reading and praying.

Then Pentecost happens. They're all in this room together, flames start appearing over peoples' heads and there's a sound like a massive wind storm and the disciples start doing something really weird. They start speaking in languages they've never learned before. Languages from all over the world. That's what **2:5-12** is talking about. They're speaking Egyptian and Libyan and Media and language specific to different islands.

So here's all these country folks from Galilee speaking foreign languages like they're double agents from the CIA - polyglots (multi lingual) - with a command of at least 13 languages. Now, if you're a normal Jewish guy who usually speaks Aramaic and Greek and you hear all these Jewish country folk speaking in languages you don't know, what it sounds like is babble. Even though it's 9am, what it sounds like is they've been getting into the sacramental wine a little early. It sounds like you're drunk. **Read 12-15**

So what's crazy is the out-of-towners - the people not from Israel - hear the Galilean-country disciples speaking in their own native languages - from all over the world. But the local Jewish folks don't catch that.

They hear babble and think the disciples are drunk. Peter says, “No, we’re not drunk” - it’s only the third hour, 9am. What’s happened is that there’s been a massive shift in how God now deals with people.

And from here, Peter is given the opportunity to explain to people exactly what’s on. Why are people speaking in these languages and what does all of this have to do with Jesus and his resurrection?

Now, this sermon that Peter gives in **Acts 2** is just a summary of the original sermon. These are the 11 o’clock highlights - the most important points.

And here’s the gist: the reason that these guys are speaking in all these languages is because God has poured out his Spirit on all flesh just like he promised in the OT. And remember that guy Jesus? The one who did all those miracles and taught us all - the guy you guys crucified? Well, he didn’t stay dead, he rose again - just like the Scriptures said he would. So he died, he rose and he ascended into heaven and sat down on God’s throne because he is God. And it’s actually Jesus who sent this Spirit that’s causing all these amazing things to happen. If you want to be part of the OT promise of God to have the Spirit, you better repent and call on Jesus as the risen, exalted Lord of the universe.

So I hope that makes sense: God promised the Spirit. But he also promised a Savior who would die and rise for the sins of his people. And that Savior - Jesus Christ - is the one who has sent this Spirit that people should want part of. And it is to Jesus that one day every single person will give an account.

So let’s break this down into 3 easy parts: The Promise of the Spirit, the Promise of a Risen Savior, and the Command to Repent and Believe.

1) The Promise of the Spirit. **Read 16-21**

So Peter starts off with this quote from the book of Joel. And you might be wondering: Why are we talking about the Holy Spirit? Isn’t this Easter? Aren’t we celebrating the resurrection of Jesus? The answer is yes we are, just like we celebrate the resurrection every Lord’s Day. But the Bible views the death, resurrection, ascension of Jesus and coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost as kind of one big package deal. All of them are critical and they all function together.

It’s like when you buy a car: what’s more important the gas pedal or the brake pedal? What more important the steering wheel or the tires? You need them all! The doesn’t car go - or shouldn’t go - unless you have all of those things: they’re a package deal.

In the same way the death, resurrection, ascension of Jesus and coming of the Spirit are a package deal that God promised. And here Peter says that God promised through the prophet Joel that he would send his Spirit in the last days.

The last days, according to the Bible, began on the day of Pentecost. The last days are not the time right before Jesus comes again. The last days, biblically speaking, is the entire time period between Jesus’s first and second coming. And Peter says we know that it’s the last days because the Spirit has been poured out on **all** flesh.

In the OT the Spirit was given primarily to kings and prophets and high priests and a few others. But the average person didn’t get the Spirit. But there’s this place in Joel 2 where God promises to send out his Spirit on all flesh - all his people: men and women and children and kings and slaves and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord. Peter says this speaking in foreign languages: is what’s going on. The last days have begun because God has poured out his Spirit. That’s what this speaking in foreign languages signifies.

He also mentions wonders like the sun turning dark, moon to blood, so on. There was nothing going on in the sky on the day of Pentecost. What God was saying in Joel - what that phrase means - is just that God is bringing judgement and turning the world upside down.

The pouring out of the Spirit was a judgment on unbelieving Israel - those who rejected Jesus. And God was now shifting his focus from the Jews only, to everyone in the whole world. Anyone - Jew or Gentile - who

believed in Jesus would receive the promise of the Spirit. In **Vs. 21** he says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved - the Lord that Peter has in mind is Jesus. Call on the crucified and risen Jesus and you will be saved.

And that's the connection he makes next. That Jesus's death and resurrection were not an accident. They weren't a back up plan from God. The Father wasn't sitting in heaven watching the trial with Pilate happen going "Oh my goodness, they're going to kill him, how am I going to fix that?!" No, this was the plan all along - God had even promised it in the OT.

Which brings us to the next part of Peter's sermon. So God had promised his Spirit to all who called on the name of the Lord. The second part is the Promised Risen Savior. You get the promised Spirit by calling on the promised risen Lord.

2) The Promise of a Risen Savior. **Read 22-24**

This section here actually goes through **Vs. 32** but let's just take this step by step. Peter turns from God's promise of the Spirit for a moment to turn attention to Jesus. What he wants to show is that God had always planned for the murder of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus. And then he'll tie the resurrection Jesus and the coming of the Spirit together.

So he starts us off in **Vs. 23** with the age-old difficulty of responsibility of sovereignty. Jesus was delivered up and according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. God was sovereign over the death of Jesus. Just 2 chapters later the disciples say God planned and predestined Jesus to be killed.

Isa. 53:1-10 says he was slain by God and it was the will of God to crush him.

Jesus said in **John 10:18**: No one takes my life from me, I lay it down of my own accord.

Jesus told Pilate in **Matt. 26:53**: "Do you think I cannot appeal to my Father and he will not at once send me more than 12 legions of angels?" A legion was 6,000. Jesus could ask the Father and in an instant have 72,000 angels bring destruction on the planet the likes of which the world has never seen. In the OT one angel destroyed 185,000 Assyrian troops in a single night. Nobody is taking anything from Jesus, certainly not his life. Jesus lays his life down of his own will.

This was the definite plan of God. It was **foreknown** which is just another way to say fore-planned. God didn't just know that it was going to happen, he planned it. Yet at the same time the Jews who murdered Jesus were guilty, weren't they? **Read 23**

Jesus was crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. They're guilty! But I thought it was God's plan? Yes. God's plan was to use lawless men to put his innocent Son to death to pay for the sins of his people.

And yet Jesus rose from the dead because it's not possible for death to contain him. Peter uses this imagery of death as a prison guard that has power over all people. Once dead, no one returns. Except Jesus. Death can't hold Jesus because Jesus conquered death. And he conquered death for all who trust in him. Although everyone will die, the Christian hope is that one day our physical bodies will be raised from the dead in glory for all eternity just like Jesus was raised from the dead in glory.

And it was impossible for Jesus to stay dead because God had promised a risen Savior. Peter shows this by quoting **Psa. 16** which was a Psalm written by David. Most people thought that in this Psalm David was talking about himself. But Peter points out that David was clearly talking about the Messiah, the Christ - who is Jesus. **Read 25-28**

So it was impossible for Jesus to stay dead. Why? Because God had promised that the Messiah, the Lord, would be raised.

Psalm 16 is what is called a Messianic Psalm. It's a psalm written 1,000 years before Jesus but when you read it you realize it refers to Jesus. In fact, the 16th psalm is written from Jesus's perspective.

So watch how this works: David writes this psalm 1,000 years before Jesus and most people think it's talking about David. But David in the psalm says God will not abandon his body to Hades or let his holy one see corruption. Kings were holy ones. What's the problem with that? Well the problem is David's body was still in a tomb in Israel decayed. You could go look at the bones. So what Peter says is that David wasn't talking about himself because David's body decayed. **Read 29-32**

Do you see his logic? David wasn't talking about himself in **Psa. 16** because his body is still sitting decomposed in Israel. It still is to this day. David was talking about the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus was in the grave for such a short time his body didn't even begin to decay. He was there 3 days by Jewish reckoning. Some of Friday, all of Saturday, some of Sunday. He was in the grave on three days and rose again before his body even began to break down.

So all that to say, in the OT God foretold through David that the Messiah would rise again.

And a resurrection assumes what? A death. Can't rise without dying. So Christ died for sins according to the definite plan of God. Christ rose according to the definite plan of God. Christ also ascended according to the plan of God.

Now, notice, this is where Peter puts the pieces of the puzzle together: God promised the Spirit to those who call on the Lord. God sent Jesus who died, rose and ascended and sits on the throne of God. And because Jesus sits on God's throne **he** is the Lord that people need to call on to be saved. **Read 33-36**

So he brings all the pieces together. It's Jesus, God the Son, who has been exalted to the right hand of God the Father in heaven. And it's Jesus who sends the Spirit on those who call on him to be saved. And Peter quotes another Psalm. This was no secret that the Messiah would sit on the throne of God. You know who sits on the throne of God? God does. Jesus was not merely a man. He was God come in the flesh to die for his people's sins, rise to overcome death, ascend to his throne in heaven and pour out his Spirit on all who believe in him.

Peter says in **Vs. 33**: you are literally seeing that happen right now. And so Peter concludes. **Read 36**

He's saying mark this down! Jesus - the guy you murdered - is Lord and Christ. Look back at **Vs. 21**. How is a person saved? **Read 21**

You want salvation? Call on the Lord. What Lord? The Lord Jesus Christ.

Now you have to understand this was the ancient version of the mic drop. Just 57 days ago on Palm Sunday all of Jerusalem was calling for Jesus to be king. Just 5 days later they were screaming for his death. Now 50 days after that they've largely forgotten about him. And Peter just connected all the dots.

They crucified the Lord who God had sent to save them and through whom the Holy Spirit would come.

You ever done something and thought "no big deal"? You deleted an email, threw away a letter you thought didn't matter? And then later realized - oh, that was a big deal.

I was listening to a podcast a year or so ago about Bitcoin which is a cryptocurrency - digital dollars, basically. Well, when Bitcoin first came you could buy 1 bitcoin for \$.30. No big deal. And bitcoin went up and down and over time people forgot their bitcoin passwords or even threw away computers that had access to bitcoin on them because it was so cheap for so long.

Well, one bitcoin is now \$7,200. If you were to have bought \$100 in bitcoins in 2011, you'd have \$2.4 million right now. A lot of people realized that they had bought Bitcoin but either lost their password to access it or threw the computer away that had their information. Never to be retrieved. They lost massive fortunes that they only realized much later.

Peter is saying: You remember a couple of months ago when you screamed for that guy Jesus to be murdered? Yeah, turns out he's God. And you will stand before him one day in judgment.

Now at this point, they get it. They get what they've done. Which leads to the 3rd section:

3) The Command to repent and believe. Read 37-41

What do you do when you realize you just crucified the Son of God? What can you do? Peter says repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus.

Now, something we need to keep in mind is that not every person hearing Peter actually was calling for Jesus's death. Not everyone was there that day. Certainly they weren't part of the council that handed him over to the Romans. They weren't the soldiers who nailed him to the cross.

But they were guilty nonetheless. They hadn't worshipped or given glory to the Son of God as he deserved. Their sins - however much or little they participated in Jesus's crucifixion - were the reason Jesus was crucified. He died for the sins of his people. And he will hold all people to account.

So Peter says you want forgiveness? You want salvation? Turn from your sins and follow Jesus.

The first step is to repent. Repentance is not just acknowledging what you've done is wrong or just feeling bad about it. It's ceasing to do it, turning from it, and pursuing a life that pleases God. And repentance isn't just a one time thing. Martin Luther said that when Christ calls a man to repent, it is a call to a life of repentance. Your whole life becomes a constant realigning yourself away from sin and in line with God's commands.

The second thing Peter calls for is baptism. How would a person show that they actually believe Jesus is the Lord and is the Christ? How do you show that you are living a life of repentance and following him? Peter says get baptized. Baptism isn't magical. It doesn't save anyone. But baptism is a picture that you are identifying with Jesus; that you are now a Christian. Only calling out to Jesus in faith for forgiveness saves a person. You go under the water as picture that you have died with him and you come out of the water as a picture that he has given you new life. It's the way that the Bible says you declare to everyone "I'm with Jesus!" He's my Lord!

Baptism is the sign you've done that.

And this promise of forgiveness is for everyone whom God calls. It's a play on words. Call on the Lord for forgiveness. Who calls on the Lord? Those whom the Lord calls to himself. Again, the great paradox of God.

But this truth stands today as we are reminded of centrality of the resurrection. Why could Jesus so confidently lay down his life for sins? He knew the resurrection was coming. Why could he ascend into heaven where he reigns even now? The resurrection happened.

Why does he call all people to repent and turn to him? Because there's another resurrection that will happen. One of all humanity who has ever lived. Those who don't follow Jesus, who don't live a life of repentance and faith and obedience will rise to face the wrath of Jesus forever. Those who do repent and trust in Jesus will be raised in glory just like he is in glory.

So I say to you what the apostle Peter said to that crowd many years ago: Turn to Jesus and save yourself from this crooked generation. Call on the risen Lord Jesus for forgiveness and be saved.

Pray

