

Acts 2

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[0 : 00] So here is God's faithful and wonderful word. 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 had 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've made known to me the paths of life. You'll fill me with joy in your presence. Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day.

[1 : 18] 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.

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, the promises for you and your children, and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call.

[2 : 34] With many other words, he warned them, he pleaded with them, Save yourselves from this corrupt generation, those who accepted the message were baptized. About 3,000 were added to their number that day.

I wonder if you've ever had the thought, you'd like to have born of a noble family. Perhaps you've seen some of these folk on telly with their great estates, and their lots of money, and all these sort of things.

I wish I'd been born a lord, or a lady, or something, or with a title like a baron, or a viscount, or one of those sort of things. Well, even if you weren't born to a noble family in that sense, with a title, you can now buy one online.

Starting as low as £18.95, you can call yourself lord, but going up to hundreds of thousands of pounds for a real lordship, you can have the title, lord of so and so and such and such.

However, though you can use that title, and you can put it on your headed note paper, and you can introduce yourself with the name lord, and so on, or lady. You don't get a place, or a seat in the house of lords, and you don't have any power over anybody at all.

[4 : 09] In other words, you're just a lord in name only. Now, the lord Jesus Christ has both the name, and the power to exercise that title he bears.

At his ascension, he was declared to be lord. We read there from Acts for that very reason. Verse 33 of chapter 2, exalted to the right hand of God, and there we're told, verse 36, let all Israel be assured of this.

God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both lord and Christ. The position and the name that the lord Jesus Christ has is his by right.

He hasn't purchased it, or been given it. If I can put it that way, in an inherited way. Rather, he has received that title because it is his, and it was that which belonged to him throughout all of time, and his declaration to be lord was the fulfillment of the promise that Peter speaks of here in Psalm chapter 110.

The lord said to my lord. At one time in Jesus' life, he turned to those Jews who were questioning him, and he said to them, let me ask you a question. How can the Messiah, the Christ, be the son of David when he says, the lord said to my lord?

[5 : 34] They were completely stumped. They didn't want to acknowledge that Jesus was saying, he is the lord. He is the Christ. He is the one who is now seated at the father's right hand in glory.

Now, last Sunday, as I mentioned, we began thinking about the ascension, about what it means that the lord Jesus is at the right hand of God in heaven, and what it means to us who put our faith in him as saviour.

And we saw very briefly that because Jesus was ascended, it confirmed who he wills, who he claimed to be, the son of God. He returned to heaven because it was his home, showing that he belonged there and his king and lord there.

It showed us as well that he had ascended because it meant that he'd completed the work on earth that he would come to do, completed that work of salvation for us in bearing our sins and rising again.

And it also assured us that he is continuing that work. Acts chapter 1, Luke writes, I told you, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and to teach.

[6 : 43] And so we know that Jesus is continuing his ministry and work from heaven. So that's him as saviour. But I want us to think this morning and look a little deeper into the ascension of the Lord Jesus for those of us who acknowledge him as our Lord, Lord and saviour.

This act of commitment to Jesus as Lord of our lives is vital to becoming a Christian. It's not a secondary matter. It's essential to becoming a Christian.

Paul, in writing to the Romans, says this, if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

That confession and acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord is vital. But that confession from the mouth that Jesus is Lord is not simply just a pretense.

It's not simply just saying the words like a magic spell. If you say Jesus is Lord enough times that will make you a Christian, no, it's evidence of a real work of God's Holy Spirit in your heart and life.

[7 : 47] For again, Paul writing, 1 Corinthians 12, this time, no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. So only when God's Holy Spirit comes into our hearts and lives and we are born again of the Spirit that we are gladly acknowledged not only Jesus as the Saviour who bore our sins but the Lord of heaven and earth and of our own lives as well.

And so when you read the New Testament almost without exception the writers there give to Jesus that title the Lord Jesus Christ or our Lord Jesus Christ whenever they start their letters or speak or refer to him.

That title is paramount. And the truth of course is this that there will come a day when every human being who has ever lived will acknowledge Jesus as Lord.

Every person will see and recognize perhaps what they never saw before perhaps what they denied all their lives before that Jesus Christ is indeed the Lord of heaven and earth.

Paul writing to the Philippians reminds them of that wonderful day when Jesus comes again. For God has exalted him that's Christ to the highest place gave him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and there in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

[9 : 18] So there's a day coming when Jesus returns when everyone will bow the knee everyone will see and declare and confess he is Lord.

But what about us today? What about those of us who are Christians here this morning? Those of us who believe that Jesus is Lord and call him Lord of our lives.

What is it that he has power to do now as Lord having ascended to the right hand of God's power and glory? Well one thing is very clear Jesus has all authority over all of the world.

in Matthew in chapter 28 and verse 20 as Jesus was about to bid farewell to his disciples commissioning them to go out with the gospel he said to them this all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

He doesn't just say some authority or an authority but all authority. That's his declaration that's his statement that's the statement he left ringing in the ears of his disciples as he returned to heaven all authority.

[10 : 35] The Lord Jesus Christ has been given by God all authority to rule and to reign in every aspect of this world and in the lives over all people.

Again Paul writing in Ephesians in chapter 1 makes this very clear to us. Ephesians 1 verses 19 and following. He's speaking about the power of God which raised Jesus from the dead.

He said this power is like the working of his mighty strength which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.

That's what we're thinking about this ascension. Listen far above all rule and authority power and dominion and every title that can be given not only in the present age but also in the one to come. Now God can't make it much plainer than that can he? He can't make it much clearer than that statement that the Lord Jesus Christ is ruler over all things.

[11 : 37] So no government no dictator no empire no regime in this world is not beneath the rule of the Lord Jesus Christ. All of them are under his authority and his reign.

And that's very important for us to grasp dear friends in a world in which we live. It means practically that although these earthly rulers governments and so on think that they are in control of their countries think that they are directing their people's destinies and maneuvering their countries as they choose and they decide the reality is that they only have that authority because Christ has allowed them to have it for this time but more than that all that they do is subject to his will and his purposes alone.

Now this evening when we continue in Colossians chapter 1 those of you who have been with us we're going to think more about this. There's an advert to come back again this evening. Colossians chapter 1 we're going to think more about what the reality of this means that Jesus is Lord over all things.

Now this is a truth that the Bible is steeped with that oozes from the pages of the scriptures that declares to us that Christ is the one who has absolute rule over this world even though we don't see it.

We don't see it. And that's where we struggle isn't it if we're honest. When we look around us in the world today we seem to be looking at a world which is out of control.

[13 : 15] A world which is in the control and the manipulation of powers and forces and dictators and emperors and all sorts of people. And we hear on the news of these authorities and these powers that they seem to be doing things which are so contrary to the teaching of God that it seems as if God is removed and surely God hasn't got a place and the Lord Jesus isn't in control.

That's why we struggle with it. That's why many Christians even deny it sometimes. But it's a reality. It's the powerful reality of Scripture. But how do we explain what's going on?

How do we explain the fact that when we look at the world it seems that Christ is not in control but when we read the word we see that he is in authority. Well there's a very old and very simple illustration which I'm sure many of you have heard before.

It's the illustration of a tapestry. One of those great pieces of woven fabric that hang in stately homes of people who really are lords and ladies. And when you look at the front there's this picture but if you look behind there is an indescribable mixture of colours and threads with no discernible picture at all.

They seem to be almost haphazard jumbled. They seem to have perhaps no real reason. But on the front of course there is a magnificent picture. A picture which has been beautifully and intricately designed and produced by skillful hands.

[14 : 45] We are those who look at the world from the back of the tapestry. We look and we see something that doesn't seem to have order to it. That's the earthly view of what's going on in the world around about us.

But the heavenly view of what's happening in this world is looking at the front. From heaven the Lord Jesus and God and those who are with him look to the front and they see what God is doing.

They see that picture that we shall see one day. We shall see in awe as we look over history from that heavenly viewpoint one day. And we shall see the beauty of what Christ has been doing in every circumstance and situation.

We shall see where those threads go in our lives and in the lives of others as well. We shall see how God has brought out something for his glory which seemed to us to be such a tangled web. We don't see that finished work. And in fact that work isn't finished yet. Christ is still at work. Still weaving together through his authority and power that plan, that design, that beautiful thing which only God knows about.

[15 : 57] But though we cannot see what God is doing, there are two things that we can see, two things that we know that Jesus is doing as Lord of all, that Jesus is working to bring about and to accomplish and to effect from that place of authority at the Father's right hand.

And the first is this, he is working to bring his church to salvation. He's ruling over all these things to bring his church to salvation. I read there from Ephesians 1, part of the prayer of Paul when he spoke about the reality of Christ.

Let's listen to what he goes on to say immediately following. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Everything that Christ has done, everything that he is doing, and everything that Christ continues to do in this world and will do until that day he returns is for the sake of his church, his people, to gather them in, to keep them safe.

Notice that, everything for the church. That's the wonderful thing. All of history and all of time and all that's going on, the Lord Jesus is working in it for your sake and mine, for the church that he loves, the church that he bled and died for, the church that he delights in.

[17 : 26] Now when we read through the Old Testament, when we read through the scriptures, up until that point of Jesus' coming into the world, we can see that. That's why it's so important we do read the Old Testament and do study the Old Testament, because you can see God operating and working through the history of time.

We see how from creation he has ordered things, undirected events and people to gather together a nation for himself. People like Abraham, inner of the Chaldees and the knowledge of God, the Lord God comes and speaks to him and takes him into a new land and begins a new people, a people that belong to God.

Moses, directed, spoken to from that burning bush when he's just a shepherd, to go and to be the instrument of God's salvation. David the king, to bring together the peoples of God into one nation and to direct them.

And so we see others as well, moved by God, directed by God, kings and politicians and mighty men and people, all to bring a church, a people in covenant relationship with God to know him and his salvation.

But when you read the Old Testament you don't just read about the godly leaders. You don't just read about Moses and Abraham and David and others. You read about others like Pharaoh in Egypt, like Nebuchadnezzar the king of the Babylonian empire and Cyrus the ruler of the Persian empire.

[18 : 55] These were godless and pagan men. These were men who had their own agenda. These were men who pursued their own purposes and yet God used them against their will at times to bring about his purposes and promises to his people in the Old Testament to protect them and to fulfill all that he had promised for them.

Here's Ezra, the very beginning of Ezra in chapter 1. It tells us that this king Cyrus, what he did. In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, remember he's not a Jew, he's not a believer in the Lord, he's somebody who's got his own empire, the mightiest and most powerful man on the planet at that time.

King Cyrus of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus, king of Persia, to make a proclamation throughout his realm and put it in writing. And that declaration was that God's people who had been taken away from their homeland into exile for 70 years should be allowed to return. God had promised that 70 years earlier and many years earlier than that as well.

And here he moves a godless pagan king. Do you see? Throughout history, God was doing that. And then when we come to the life of the Lord Jesus, what do we find happening there?

[20 : 18] We see men of authority and power who themselves are opposed to God's will and God's kingdom. Evil men like Herod the Great who sent out soldiers to kill Christ and ended up massaging those baby boys.

We think of Herod the Tetrarch who had John the Baptist have his head chopped off. Think of Pilate, the Roman governor, who was only looking out for his own skin. Only looking out to keep in favor with the Roman emperor.

Think of the Jewish ruling leaders who didn't want to lose their power. All of these men working against the things of God, so it seems. But what do we find?

We find that unwittingly and thinking they were in control, they did and accomplished what the Lord had purposed. We read that, didn't we, from Acts chapter 2, verse 23.

This man, Jesus Christ, was handed over to you, but 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.

[21 : 25] Was God, did God approve, if I can put that way, and say, yes, the Roman governor and the religious leaders, they were doing good things in crucifying Christ. No, they were wicked men.

They were disobeying God and rejecting him. Yet, the purpose of God was that Christ should die to bear our sins upon the cross. It was his plan. The end result of these men's actions was that the Lord Jesus Christ triumphantly secured the salvation and rescue of his chosen people.

They were all doing their own thing. They were watching their own backs. They were looking out for their own little empires and kingdoms. But God was over all. And so, Peter, as he preaches later on, in Acts chapter 4, he speaks about how this man was healed.

Remember the lame man at the temple gate. Beautiful. He says this, Isn't that amazing? Wonderful. Why did Jesus do that? Why did God order that? Why did he overrule all their behavior and actions, even though they thought they were doing what they wanted, for you and for me, for our salvation, that we might be born again, that we might be forgiven, that we might come into the church of Jesus Christ?

[23 : 08] And now, dear friends, please, let's make the clear and logical and reasonable link. If that is how the Lord worked all through the Bible, times, and history, why do we think he's changed?

Has he? Is he different? Are the politicians of this day wiser, stronger, more in control than any of them were before?

Of course not. Can our Lord Jesus Christ, who is now in his ascended place, of authority and power, be less powerful, less in control, than he was throughout the whole of history?

No. Of course not. To secure our everlasting peace, to secure our relationship with God and eternal life, the Lord Jesus Christ has authority now, as he always did, to bring all things about in accordance with his will and purpose.

So even as we look at the world around about us, even as we see the wickedness of men and women, which God detests, let's make that clear.

[24 : 25] God does not approve of wickedness. He's bigger than wickedness, and he's bigger than sin, but he doesn't approve of sin. We can know that in all these things, the Lord Jesus Christ is still building his church, is still saving his people for whom he died, is still watching over you and I and keeping us when we are close to falling, and will bring us ultimately to that place where we shall be eternally secure in heaven with him.

Because he has all authority. And notice, of course, that that authority that we've been thinking about, we've been looking almost entirely at a material and earthly perspective, but let's lift it a little. Let's realize that this authority that Jesus speaks about is all of heaven and earth, not just earth. In other words, the spiritual realms, the realms in which Satan is at work, the realms in which his demonic forces are at work in this world.

The world doesn't see them or recognize them, but as Christians we know that they're there, because they again are clearly declared in the scriptures. There is an enemy to God's church.

There is an enemy to your soul and mine.

There is an aggressor and an adversary who is doing all that he can to counter you. But, he will never succeed, because he has not got all authority.

[25 : 55] Now, there's a lovely illustration of this found in Pilgrim's Progress. And those of you who know the book will know that a Christian pilgrim is taken into the interpreter's house and shown many things.

One of the things he's shown is a fireplace. Not a gas fire, a proper fireplace. And on one side there's a man with buckets of water throwing them over the fire to try to extinguish it. But the fire doesn't go out. It just keeps burning brightly. And he gets another bucket and he throws it over. And so the interpreter tells Christian, that's the devil.

He's trying to put out the fire of life in the heart of the believer, the Christian. He's trying to extinguish it. And he'll continue to keep doing that. And so, of course, Pilgrim actually says, well, how on earth can this fire keep burning?

How can this light not go out? And so the interpreter says, come with me. And they go through a door around to the back of the fireplace. And at the back of the fireplace is somebody else.

[27 : 06] And that person is pouring oil, or petrol he might put, onto the fire. So that it keeps burning. And it keeps light. And he says, who is this person?

This person is Christ. And so the reality is this, dear friends. In the spiritual realms, in your walk and mine, though there are times that we surely do feel strongly the buckets, as it were, water wanting to douse the faith, and to extinguish that faith.

Yet there is always the Lord Jesus, who has greater power than has the oil, the fuel that keeps the fire lit. And so we need not fear the days ahead.

We need not be afraid of what's around the corner. We may not be afraid of what the next general election will bring next year. We needn't be afraid of this party or that rising to power. We needn't be afraid of what Europe does.

We needn't be afraid of the powers of Soviet Russia that seem to still seem to have their claws into countries. We needn't be afraid of materialism and the rise, again, of atheism.

[28 : 18] None of these things need fear us. Why? Because we have the Lord Jesus Christ. He is on his throne and he has all authority and he is at work in his world.

He isn't an absentee landlord, but one whose hands have always been stuck in, involved in the very nitty-gritty of the creation he made. And he's doing all these things for you, dear Christian.

He's working for you. He's never been against you. He never will be against you. He never will make it difficult for you. He will always smooth the path and help you, even though you're still looking at the back of the tapestry, even though it doesn't make sense to you rationally.

Dear friends, this is where we come back to living and walking by faith. For faith declares Jesus is Lord. And faith says, if Jesus is Lord, then I fear nothing else.

That's why, dear friends, we have confidence to take the gospel, the good news of Jesus, out to the world. Remember when we looked at Matthew 28, Jesus says, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

[29 : 34] Therefore, because this is true, because this is so, go and make disciples of all nations.

We are called to take the gospel to the people of our street and our nation and our town and wherever we may be and to take it with confidence.

Confidence because Jesus has all authority and is at work for his church. So as we take that gospel, incredibly and wonderfully, the Lord Jesus, with his power and authority, takes that word that we speak and stutter to speak and he lays it to people's hearts so that those for whom he died are saved and brought in.

We have confidence because Jesus is Lord that we shall make disciples. Jesus doesn't say, therefore, go and try and make disciples. Go and, in one sense, you will make disciples.

We're here as evidence of that, aren't we? And the church worldwide is evidence of that. That people will be added to the church. That those for whom Christ died will be saved.

That there will not be one missing seat or empty seat at the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven. All will be gathered in. That's the church.

[30 : 53] He's working all things for the church. He has all authority for working for you. And for me. And so we go with confidence. But, I said there were two things and the second thing's shorter.

What about those people who do not submit to him as Lord? What about those people today, perhaps even here this morning, who will not acknowledge Jesus as the Lord of all and certainly not the Lord of their lives?

What is he doing? What is he doing? What is he doing? What is he doing? Well, the reality is this. He is working to bring all of them to submission before him.

That's why we read there in Psalm 110. It doesn't just say that he is Lord. Sit at my right hand.

He says why he is Lord. Why? Because we read this. Until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. The Lord will extend your mighty scepter. You will rule in the midst of your enemies.

[31 : 58] And again in 1 Corinthians, Paul makes it very clear. That's exactly what has happened in the ascension of the Lord Jesus. For he, speaking of Jesus, must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

He is ruling and reigning in spite of those who set themselves up against him. He's ruling and reigning no matter what Stephen Hawking or Richard Dawkins have to say about it.

He is ruling and reigning. And just because he has not yet called those who are his enemies to judgment does not mean that he won't. Just because they are still able, they think, to do exactly what they want and live exactly how they like and say what they like does not mean they will be able to do that always.

For he is working towards that day, that tremendous day for the church, that terrifying day for the unsaved, when all will bow before him as Lord. Remember we read there from Philippians 2.11, every knee, every knee, Richard Dawkins' knee, Stephen Hawking's knee, all the most militant atheists, those who oppose Christ, those who would kill Christians even now in Sudan and other places in the world.

They must all acknowledge that he is the ruler over all. But dear friends, how foolish they will seem to themselves to be on that day, that they ever opposed him, that they ever rejected him, that they ever despised him.

[33 : 29] You see, the sad truth is this, that on that day when Christ comes, when he brings his enemies under his feet completely and utterly, it will be too late when they confess him as Lord, because it won't be to salvation, it won't be to forgiveness, it won't be to peace with God, it will be simply to acknowledge that they are now under his hand to do with them as he chooses, according to his justice and judgment and righteousness.

Dear friends, we read there of Peter, we're told that after he'd finished preaching, he did this, he warned them and pleaded with them. And let me say this to you, and plead with you, if Jesus Christ is not your Lord today.

Let me plead with you, bow the knee now. Don't put it off, don't say, no, I will not have him as my Lord. No, I will not confess him.

I will live my life as I choose. I will live my life on my terms. I will live my life as I see fit. Dear friend, let me assure you, Jesus will reign until he brings you under his feet. Either you will come to his feet and acknowledge him as your saviour and your Lord.

Or you will bow before him as your Lord and your judge. And that day will be the most terrifying and awful day in all of history for you. Because then you will receive what your sins deserve.

[34 : 52] Will you not come to him today? Will you not bow to him today? He is willing and ready to forgive you. He is willing and ready to wash away all those sins and to forget them.

He is willing to wipe the slate clean. He is willing to have you and to make you his child. He is willing that you should come and receive of the peace that he alone can give. Peace to face life in each day.

In the assurance that God is for you and not against you. You have not got your destiny in your hands no matter what you think and what you're told.

Your destiny is in his hands. He rules over it. He is Lord, not in name only, but in reality and power. Will you? For the love of God and for the love of your own souls. Not make him now your Lord. Not take him now. For he will take you.

[35 : 49] He's done everything at the cross for you. He's proven his love for you. He's working now so that you can be saved. We're told that when Peter preached and pleaded, save yourselves from this corrupt, in other words, this doomed, doomed generation, there were those who accepted the message.

Don't accept the message because of me. Accept the message because it's God's message to you. Accept him and receive him. And know that he is Lord of all.

Let's pray briefly. It's a tremendous and awesome thing that you, Lord Jesus, have all authority and power.

It's a tremendous comfort and peace bringer to our hearts to know that you are Lord over this world in which we live and all of its chaos, so it seems.

But Lord, how wonderful to know you as the Lord of our lives. Lord, where our hearts are still stubborn and proud, where we are still unwilling to give to you that proper place that is yours. [37 : 10] Lord, rest it from us. Lord, loosen our grip. It's not a real grip. It's fantasy to think that we somehow have control. But Lord, how better to have you, to have you with all of your great power and grace.

Please, Lord, deal with us. Those of us who are Christians who still will not bow the knee fully and completely. We want to hold on to this part of our lives or that part of our lives. And Lord, we ask that we may be fully submitted to you. For those of us who will walk out this room, our hearts perhaps even harder when we came in, saying, I will not have this God to rule over me. Please, oh Lord, show us the great folly and the great disaster that we are bringing on ourselves and make us to be a people who gladly receive and know your salvation. We ask these things again, Lord Jesus, in your name. Amen.