

Acts 2 v 1 - 13

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Preacher: Stephen Walker

[0 : 0 0] Welcome again. Thank you again for inviting me along today to share with you in worshipping our risen saviour Jesus. Particular thanks to Peter, who obviously not here, but the elders too, for giving me this opportunity to be with you all today.

And for you who haven't already met, I look forward to meeting you later. Now I wonder, if somebody asked you to name a day that changed the history of the world, how would you answer?

What would you pick? What springs immediately to mind? Because there are days, aren't there, in the past that whether you even know about them or realise their significance have changed the course of human history.

So would you pick a day within your own lifetime, perhaps, or even in the last century? This week, D-Day was commemorated. Or would you pick the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, which led to World War I?

Perhaps the beginning of World War II, or the day the A-bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, or 9-11. Or maybe you'd point to a technological event, the invention of the computer, or the internet, or the iPhone, perhaps.

[1 : 1 0] I'm sure as Christians, many of us would say the day that Jesus was crucified, or we'd point to the day of his resurrection. But I wonder, if we were asked by someone on the street later today to make a top ten, to make a list of the top ten big days in human history, would the day of Pentecost make our top ten?

We're going to look today at a significant day in world history known as Pentecost. And so, as we look at Acts chapter 2, our passage begins.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. So what do we mean by the day of Pentecost? Well, the word Pentecost is Greek, meaning 50th.

This was the Jewish Feast of Weeks, which took place 50 days after the Passover. It was an agricultural feast, and it marked the start of grain harvesting. And in first century Judaism, according to their tradition, this feast marked the giving of the law and covenant renewal.

So by this time, the Jews held the view that, according to their traditions, the law was given at Mount Sinai 50 days after the Exodus. That's what they held to, and so for many then, this day not only marked the beginning of grain harvesting, but it was also an anniversary of the law being given at Mount Sinai.

[2 : 3 0] And that's why we see later, in verses 9 to 11, that there are Jews from so many different nations in Jerusalem at this time. This is a big feast day for them. Where were the followers of Jesus at this point?

Well, we're told they're all in the same house together. And by all, Luke is likely not just referring to the 12 disciples, but to all the believers here. So the body of believers, the 120 that are mentioned in verse 15 of chapter 1.

We read on from verse 2 of our passage. This is the start of a big day in world history.

So we read here of the Holy Spirit being poured out on Jesus' body of believers. God himself, just like at the incarnation, God himself comes to rest on his believers and to fill them for their work ahead.

The third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, rushes upon them. God, the true and living God, is one. God exists in three persons. The Father, the Son, that's Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

[3 : 56] Three distinct persons yet united as one. And here is the third person of the triune God, the Holy Spirit, who suddenly comes upon the believers, who rests on them in verse 3 and who fills them in verse 4.

This is a huge day in the history of the world. God himself comes to dwell with his people, though they are naturally sinners and live in a fallen condition.

And as Peter goes on to explain in the rest of chapter 2, the promised Holy Spirit is poured out, fulfilling the words that God spoke through the prophet Joel. And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh.

This is what God had ordained to do. This is what Jesus himself has promised to do. So if you cast your mind back to the last couple of Sundays, how you've been considering the ascension and the truth of Jesus as Lord, the one who reigns at the right hand of the Father.

Jesus is Lord and he reigns with all authority in heaven and on earth. And by ascending into heaven, Jesus confirmed who he was, the Son of God, the Messiah. His resurrection and ascension shows that he's completed the work necessary.

[5 : 17] And now here, sat at the right hand of the Father, he continues his work. He hasn't ascended to leave his believers to their own devices. No, he pours out his spirit to dwell in them.

And that is why his disciples are gathered together here, still in Jerusalem. So if we cast our eyes back for a second to Luke chapter 24, and we see the resurrected Christ with his disciples.

And I will read from verse 45. Then he opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures.

He told them, And as we flip back now to Acts, We get back to Acts.

In chapter 1, Luke repeats in verse 4. On one occasion while Jesus was eating with them, he gave them this command. And moving down to verse 8.

[6 : 59] Jesus says, Jesus says, You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

So Jesus ascends to heaven, to the right hand of the Father. But before he goes, he instructs the disciples to wait in Jerusalem.

He tells them that he himself will send the Holy Spirit that has been promised by God the Father. He tells them that through the Spirit, they will be clothed with power, and his name will be preached to all the nations, from Jerusalem first, and then to the ends of the earth.

And that's what we see here today, isn't it, in our passage. And followers of Jesus have obeyed Jesus' command. They've waited on in Jerusalem, as Jesus instructed.

And the Holy Spirit comes upon them, and they're clothed with boldness, and they begin to preach, and tell of all the amazing wonders of God to all the nations. So these events confirm who Jesus is.

[8 : 04] What he has said will come to pass, has come to pass. He is the risen Lord, by whose name people will be saved. And Peter confirms this to these crowds when he preaches later.

So he says in chapter 2, verse 32, God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. 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.

And that is the first point, that Jesus is Lord, he rules at the right hand of the Father, and he has poured out the Holy Spirit on those who believe in him.

And we see, don't we, that this is a supernatural event. We're told of a violent wind, and what seem to be tongues of fire that separated. So in itself, the visual and the audible experience is a major event in world history.

Notice that Luke describes the phenomena as what seemed to be tongues of fire. Yet again, in scripture, we see the limit of our human language that struggles to describe an appearance of God himself.

[9 : 17] Yet it is consistent, and our minds are taken back to Mount Sinai, where we're told that God descended on it in fire to give the law to Moses. And here in Acts, we're told of the Spirit of God descending from heaven in an appearance of fire.

We see the separated tongues of fire, and we know that God is present. And God is now going to communicate the good news of Jesus Christ for his believers to people of different nations.

And that brings us on to our second point today, that the gospel goes to the nations. Now, language is wonderful, but it can be sometimes with such a barrier, can't it?

So one of the difficulties when you go abroad is the language barrier. So on our first holiday together, Helen and I went to Venice. It was very nice. I had a great time. But I didn't just step off the plane and immediately start talking Italian.

Like every true Englishman, I did my best to get along with my own language. And you see others too, don't you? Raising their voices or speaking slower in the hope of being understood. But most people did speak English there.

[10 : 24] But as time went on, there was enough of a barrier for me to succumb. And I bought an Italian to English dictionary. And we had a little travel guide with us as well, didn't we? That had some useful everyday phrases.

So pretty soon, I was confidently pointing to a football shirt and asking an Italian, when? Or how much? And he was in fact a very gracious shopkeeper as it turned out.

Because he just smiled and told me the price. But later on when we consulted the phrase book, in fact, I'd been pointing to the football shirt and exclaiming, when? When? I think too of a friend's dad who went into a newsagent in Spain to ask for a newspaper in Spanish only to be laughed at and told that he'd just asked for a dozen monkeys.

The point is that even with our trusty phrase books and our Google translators, the barrier of language is so problematic. And it all stems back to another day in the history of the world, at Babel, during the time when the whole world spoke the same language.

Proud men sought to build a tower to the heavens to make a name for themselves. And so the Lord confused their speech, giving birth to different languages, and he scattered the people again across the earth.

[11 : 39] And here now in Acts 2 we see Jews from different nations are gathered together again but by an act of God. And for a time the curse of Babel was nullified. It's not fully reversed but on this day there was no inability to communicate.

The gospel is preached clearly in different languages. And how? Because of verse 4. The followers of Jesus were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

A miracle is required here. The believers didn't need to swat up on their languages. There was no progressive learning. There were no difficulties in pronunciation.

Through the Holy Spirit they began to speak the gospel in different languages instantly and without difficulty. And this clearly amazed the throngs of people because they queried in verse 7 aren't those who were speaking Galileans?

And we know that the Galilean accent was certainly very distinct and perhaps peculiar. We see that don't we in the gospel accounts when Peter's denying Jesus. He denied and he denied but his accent wasn't fooling anyone.

[12 : 50] And we're told that they come up to him and say surely you're one of them for your accent gives you away. Now the crowd here recognised the distinct accents and they wonder how these Galileans can be speaking these other languages.

It would be shocking I'm sure abroad if this summer if all the English tourists spoke the language of the country they were visiting fluently. What a big surprise that would be. If there were no phrase books and nobody was trying to stutter along or speak their own English language.

And if even they're aware of all the subtleties of different local dialects of the places they visited. Why? Because it's not expected of us we're English tourists that's not what we do. Now these Galileans they have an odd accent and they're probably also viewed as being particularly uncultured or ill-educated.

So again we remember from the Gospels for instance Nathaniel on hearing about Jesus he wonders if anything good can come out of Nazareth in Galilee. But this event is far more shocking than tourists being able to speak foreign languages fluently.

Because people would just assume that tourists have gone away and learned the language or educated themselves better. But there's nothing like that here. Because in an instant the Galileans can speak other languages and the crowd know it's not a result of education.

[14 : 10] That's why we're told that they're perplexed and amazed. They wonder in verse 8 how it is that each of us hears them in our own native language. And in verse 12 we're told that they asked one another what does this mean?

What does it mean? It means that the Holy Spirit has been poured out and the gospel is going to go to the nations. Just as Jesus said in Luke 24 which we looked at just a few moments ago repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem.

and it's always been God's plan to bless the nations that the gospel would go out to the world. And that's why he promised Abraham that through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed.

And from Abraham's line comes the Christ Jesus the man that has been crucified to save people from all nations from their sin. The one who is risen and ascended and as Lord at the right hand of the Father he blesses all nations on earth again by pouring out his Holy Spirit.

And on this day people from all over the Greco-Roman world hear the good news of Jesus Christ in their own language. And the gospel will now be passed on in those different languages across the world.

[15 : 30] The gospel goes out across the world. And that's one of the reasons why it's such a big day in the history of the world and why this day affected every one of us here whether we realise it or not.

It meant that as the good news went out to the world it eventually reached a little island like ours. The gospel became known in our language and was taught down the generations until now where we sit with the luxury of God's word written down for us in a language that we can read and God's word and the good news of Jesus Christ taught to us in English.

It means that we know we can know who is the Lord whose name we must call on to be saved. It is Jesus. There is no other name by whom man can or will be saved.

And all of this is because of this day where the disciples as promised are clothed with power on high. The Holy Spirit empowers and equips so that the gospel can be taught.

As well as equipping though the spirit gives new life. Clothed by the Holy Spirit the gospel is preached by Peter. And what's the result? Well we see in verse 37 that when the people heard this they were cut to the heart.

[16 : 48] And then we see in verse 41 a mass conversion. After hearing the message 3,000 people were added to the church that day. They were cut to the heart.

Something that only the spirit can achieve. Only the Holy Spirit can give new life and that is what everybody alive needs in order to enter the kingdom of God. In order to enter the kingdom of God then you must be born again.

That's what Jesus told Nicodemus one of the Jewish council. I tell you the truth no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. So you must turn back from your sin and accept Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life trusting in his death and resurrection as full payment for your sin.

Trusting in Jesus as the one who justifies you who declares you not guilty before God and not looking to yourself. And when you accept Jesus as Lord he will baptise you of the Holy Spirit.

God himself will dwell in you he will give you a heart of flesh he will write his law on your heart he will change you and he will empower you but you must put your faith in Jesus.

[17 : 59] And that's what some 3,000 people did on this day of Pentecost. This is what God had promised hundreds of years before this day in Jerusalem. He had spoken to Israel through the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel and it's telling that the Jews in Jerusalem here in the first century had begun to associate this day at Pentecost with that of law giving and covenant because what happens here for them is what God had spoken through Ezekiel and he said I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Jesus had inaugurated a new covenant for God's people in his death and in this covenant God had promised through the prophet Jeremiah that I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God and they will be my people. So those who are born again then those who have trusted in Jesus as their saviour have the spirit within them.

Their heart is made flesh and they have the law of God written on their hearts so they'll be careful to keep his commands. They're a new creation. Now if you haven't put your faith in Jesus yet don't you want to be a new creation?

And today as the church celebrates the day of Pentecost will you be like those 3,000 souls nearly 2,000 years ago and accept Jesus as Lord? And for those of us who already have let's be struck anew by the fact that God has chosen to dwell in us through his spirit.

[19 : 32] let's be amazed and perplexed by that. God who is eternal and infinite who chose to dwell within the tabernacle among the Israelites who then filled the temple of his glory in Jerusalem and who tabernacled in the body of Jesus Christ this God has now chosen to dwell in us and that has to have an impact on us and the way that we live doesn't it?

And also the way that we view others in church. As Paul wrote to the church in Corinth Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have received from God?

You are not your own you were bought at a price therefore honour God with your body. Did you not realise believer that you are a temple of the Holy Spirit that God himself has chosen to live within you out of all the billions of people that have ever lived on this planet God has chosen to live out of grace in you.

And it should blow our minds it should blow our minds that in a minute when we share lunch with one another after the service we are not just having lunch with people from church no we are having lunch and we are interacting with other people who like us are temples of the Holy Spirit temples of the living God.

so as believers in Christ then as his church we have the Holy Spirit to empower us and what did Jesus commission his church to do?

[21 : 07] Jesus commissioned his church to go and make disciples of all nations baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

As one who has all authority in heaven and on earth he has commissioned his church to go and make disciples but he hasn't left his church powerless he has poured out his Spirit without the Spirit there is no fruit there is no power there is no new life on our own we can't do anything but we are not on our own that is the point Jesus has poured out his Spirit on us if we are on our own how is our evangelism going to be effective at all?

On my own I can't even persuade Helen to watch a couple of overs of Test match cricket with me. How then am I going to be able to persuade somebody that they need to die to themselves and that their desperate need is Jesus?

I can't and we can't but empowered by the Spirit we can. Through the Spirit working in us and of us we can go and we can make disciples of Christ.

The Church can make disciples of all nations and that's what we see in Acts here. The Church has been given the Great Commission they've been clothed with power from on high and now they set to their work immediately not by their own efforts or their own devices they're equipped by the Spirit to speak different languages and they go and make disciples and they go and make disciples through the Spirit who cuts the non-believers to the heart so that they too will acknowledge Jesus as Lord and call on him to be saved.

[22 : 56] So while the people in Jerusalem were celebrating their agricultural feast at the beginning of harvesting a different kind of harvest goes on. The sickle is put in and a great number of souls are harvested for the Lord.

God so let us be encouraged that though we aren't equipped with the miraculous ability to speak different world languages in an instance we are nevertheless equipped we have the same spirit the same spirit empowers us to point others to Christ so let us then mimic the early church let us obey our Lord Jesus and clothed in the Holy Spirit let us go and teach others the good news of Jesus Christ we're going to sing again now we're going to sing him and birth 4 6 4 Jewish and we're going to serve

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