

THE BEGINNING OF
THE LAST DAYS
ACTS 2



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

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The Beginning of the Last Days: Acts 2
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Introduction to Acts 2

Acts 2 brings us into the new era of human history, the era in which we live, the era of the Kingdom of God, the era Peter referred to as the last days.

The coming of the Holy Spirit – the promise of the Father – establishes a beachhead of grace and truth in the world. The apostles and others, gathered in that upper room, served to *sign* the Kingdom's coming and became, as a community of believers, an *outpost* of its ongoing advance.

Now the proclamation of Christ as Lord and Savior, and the coming of His Kingdom, must go forth in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the world. The first believers wasted no time getting about the business of the Kingdom, beginning in their own lives, and in their life together as the Church.

In Acts 2 a template begins to emerge by which we may study the progress of the Kingdom throughout all ages, and evaluate the work of our forebears in Christ, as well as our own lives and callings in Christ.

We're happy to offer a series of brief videos to introduce each portion of this study. You can view each one *by [clicking here](#)*.

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We hope you find this study of Acts instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 The Promise Delivered

Pray Psalm 104.24-30.

O LORD, how manifold are Your works!
In wisdom You have made them all.
The earth is full of Your possessions—
This great and wide sea,
In which are innumerable teeming things,
Living things both small and great.
There the ships sail about;
There is that Leviathan
Which You have made to play there.
These all wait for You,
That You may give them their food in due season.
What You give them they gather in;
You open Your hand, they are filled with good.
You hide Your face, they are troubled;
You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.
You send forth Your Spirit, they are created;
And You renew the face of the earth.

Sing Psalm 104.24-30.

(Creation: [*The Spacious Firmament Above*](#))

How many are Your works, O Lord, which You have created by Your Word!
The earth and sea with creatures teem – they look to You to care and feed.
You give to them, they gather all; You hide Your face, they fail and fall.
You take their breath, they gasp and die; You send Your Spirit, they revive.

Read Acts 2.1-4.

Preparation

1. How did the Promise come to the disciples?
2. What was their first indication of His having arrived?

Meditation

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon and into the assembled believers carries several layers of significance, the most important of which Peter will explain in just a bit. This is the promised “circumcision of the heart” foretold in Deuteronomy 30.1-10 and Ezekiel 36.26, 27. The coming of the Spirit upon and within the believers marks the beginning of the last days and the launching of the ongoing work of Jesus. By His Spirit, Jesus is transforming His followers into His own image (2 Cor. 3.12-18); and through them, He is building His Church, advancing His Kingdom, and restoring the world to its pristine state for the glory of the Lord (2 Cor. 5.17-21; Rev. 21.5).

We note that the “fire” of the Spirit divided itself, yet remained the same “fire.” Each believer receives the same Spirit of God with the same fullness, albeit with different expressions of that fullness, depending on our station and calling in life (1 Cor. 12.7-11). The speaking with other tongues has both a practical and symbolic significance. Practically, this spiritual gift would have facilitated the effort that was about to ensue among the many visitors in Jerusalem. Symbolically, here we see God “reversing” the judgment at the tower of Babel, where He created many languages to separate the nations. With the outpouring of the Spirit He is creating one “spiritual language” – life in the Spirit and Kingdom of God – to unite people of many languages in the Tower which is our Lord Jesus Christ and His Church.

This passage also recalls the event in Joshua 5 where the new generation about to inherit the land of promise was circumcised first, so that they would be a people fit to receive the covenant blessings of God. Here the “new generation” of the new people of God is circumcised in their hearts before they undertake the “conquest” of the earth (Acts 1.8).

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Promise of the Father, marks the beginning of an entirely new phase of human history. A new Kingdom has come, with a new power to advance it, and a new people through whom it comes on earth as it is in heaven.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

There they were. Sitting. Praying. Waiting... “all with one accord in one place” (Acts 2.1).

Quietly. Reverently. Waiting.

And then the sound of a tornado, a derecho, a hurricane, a rushing mighty wind. Deafening.

But only the sound. Not the destructive force.

It was the Spirit! The Delivered Promise.

It was just as Jesus had said.

“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (Jn. 3. 8).

As with everything else that had already happened with Jesus and the disciples, He had told them beforehand what would happen and what it would be like. (Mk. 13.23).

The thing is, though, that what we imagine will happen is never as amazing and powerful as what actually does happen! When the Holy Spirit is involved. “‘For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways’, says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts’” (Is. 55.8, 9).

“For who is like Me?” (Jer. 49.19; 50.44)

“Great *is* our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding *is* infinite” (Ps. 147.5).

“O LORD, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep” (Ps. 92.5).

Because our thoughts are not His thoughts nor His ways our ways, we can get ready for an exciting life being filled with the Holy Spirit’s power. For He does not always speak to us through a roaring wind. It is often very different. We can learn an important lesson from His exchange with the prophet Elijah: “‘Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD.’ And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, *but* the LORD *was* not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, *but* the LORD *was* not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire; and after the fire a

still small voice. Suddenly a voice *came* to him, and said, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’” (1 Kgs. 19. 11, 12, 13).

God speaks. We listen. However it is delivered.

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5.25).

And walking in the Spirit requires daily seeking the Lord in His Word and through prayer. (It may not always be a whirlwind, but it will be His voice nonetheless.)

Then taking up our cross daily we follow Him (Lk. 9.23) into “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14.17). Into our Personal Mission Field. “Launching the ongoing work of Jesus.”

Abundant Life! (Jn. 10.10)

For reflection

1. The Spirit gives life (Jn. 6.63). What would you say are the primary attributes of life in the Spirit?
2. What are the primary evidences indicating the Spirit is at work within us (Phil. 2.13)?
3. Where would you most like to see increasing evidence of the Spirit’s work in your life?

Upon the feast day, wherein a great multitude was wont to resort to Jerusalem, was this miracle wrought, that it might be more famous. And truly by means hereof was it spread abroad, even unto the uttermost parts and borders of the earth. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Acts 2.1, 2*

Pray Psalm 104.31-35.

Praise and glorify the Lord for the gift of His Spirit. Ask Him to fill you with His Spirit, and go forth from prayer to walk in the Spirit throughout the day.

Sing Psalm 104.31-35.

(Creation: [*The Spacious Firmament Above*](#))

Lord, let Your glory long endure; rejoice! His works are ever sure!

He looks on earth, it quails and quakes, as we our songs of praises make.

Lord, let our meditation rise and bring great pleasure in Your eyes.

Consumed shall sinners ever be; O, bless and praise the Lord with me!

2 Full of New Wine?

Pray Psalm 67.1, 2.

God be merciful to us and bless us,
And cause His face to shine upon us,
Selah
That Your way may be known on earth,
Your salvation among all nations.

Sing Psalm 67.1, 2, 3.

(Solid Rock: [*My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*](#))

O bless us, Savior, by Your grace, and shine upon us with Your face,
That we Your way may loud proclaim and tell to all the earth Your fame!

Refrain v. 3

Let all the peoples praise You, Lord, rejoicing in Your holy Word!
Rejoicing in Your holy Word!

Read Acts 2.1-13; meditate on verses 5-13.

Preparation

1. How did the Spirit move the believers?
2. How did the people in Jerusalem respond?

Meditation

All these diverse people were Jews or proselytes (Gentile converts to Judaism, v. 11) who had assembled in Jerusalem for the feast of the first fruits. The giving of the Spirit adds another layer of meaning to this feast, since His coming fulfills the promise inherent in the feast of first fruits. On this first Christian Pentecost, the first fruits of the ongoing work of Christ were being gathered. The miraculous power of the Spirit was at work in the disciples as well as in those who heard them.

This is not a miracle of “hearing” though, as some have supposed; we’ve already seen that the disciples were speaking in tongues as the Spirit enabled them. It must have taken a bit of time for people to find their way to someone speaking “the mighty works of God” (v. 11) in their own language, and this would only have multiplied the excitement and the wonder.

Naturally, people wanted an explanation: “What does this mean?” It’s human nature to seek an explanation of things we can’t readily grasp, even if that explanation is a dismissive one (v. 13). God uses people’s natural curiosity to open hearts and minds to spiritual truths, but for that curiosity to be piqued, some remarkable evidence of spiritual life is required. The disciples proclaiming the Good News in languages they’d never learned were not drunk. But they were, indeed, filled with the new wine of the Spirit (Matt. 9.17).

The ongoing work of Christ involves the Spirit filling the Church, the Church going to the world, and the Lord of the harvest bringing in the sheaves of His people’s sowing. This is the work to

which we are called as witnesses for Jesus Christ.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine”” (Acts 2.13).

Seriously? If you are full of new wine, you are probably not able to make much sense at all. But isn't that just like those who don't want to believe? They have a negative response to an amazing act.

Reminds one of the Egyptian magicians, no? Talk about being perplexed, their situation always amazes me.

Moses and Aaron have called down horrific plagues onto the people of Egypt. And what did the magicians do? They replicated the horrors. Go figure. They made more bloody water. And they filled the land with an extra dose of frogs. But then when they tried to make more lice. Ooops. Their powers were gone. (Ex. 7.22; 8.7, 18) And the people rejoiced. Does their behavior make sense to anyone? Does the response of the naysayers in Jerusalem?

God was doing an amazing and perplexing work and their hearts should have been filled with awe! The unschooled disciples were speaking in at least 15 different languages or dialects. Pretty impressive.

And what were they speaking? They were speaking of the wonderful works of God! (Acts 2.11). We are being shown the power of the Holy Spirit, and the negativity of unbelieving man.

It is a fair warning to all concerning what life in the Kingdom will look like. Amazing joy, and maybe persecution. Jesus beforehand said, “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5.11, 12).

Responses to us will be about the same. We should be ready for that. And we must be ready for the question “Whatever could this mean?” (Acts 2.12) “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed” (1 Pet. 3.15, 16).

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, others may accuse us of being full of new wine; or they might be unkind to us, or worse. And yet it is the exciting work that we have been called to do. And do it we can and must. We have been forewarned that people's responses toward God and His righteousness have historically been perplexing. Jesus has told us that it may be so. But “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1.7).

Not the least bit woozy; but fully filled and sound!

For reflection

1. Is there any good reason for believers to fear what unbelievers might think about them? Explain.
2. Why should we expect unbelievers to be sometimes antagonistic toward our faith?
3. How does the Holy Spirit work to help an unbeliever hear and believe the Gospel?

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The visitors to Jerusalem probably expected the apostles to use Aramaic or Greek, but instead they heard their own dialect. The visitors were astonished because they knew this was most unlikely unless the speakers had come from their land. This was a sign from heaven, a supernatural event. Earl Radmacher (1931-2014) NKJV Study Bible Notes on Acts 2.5-11

Pray Psalm 67.3-7.

Pray that God will use you today to share in the ongoing work of Jesus, as He brings the Good News of His Kingdom to the world.

Sing Psalm 67.3-7

(Solid Rock: [*My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*](#))

Let all the nations gladly sing and joyous praise before You bring;
You judge them by Your holy worth and guide the nations of the earth.

Refrain v. 3

Let all the peoples praise You, Lord, rejoicing in Your holy Word!
Rejoicing in Your holy Word!

The earth in full its bounty yields – the blessed harvest of the fields.

We gather blessings from Your Word that all the earth may fear You, Lord.

Refrain v. 3

3 The Beginning of the Last Days

Pray Psalm 66.1-4.

Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth!
Sing out the honor of His name;
Make His praise glorious.
Say to God,
“How awesome are Your works!
Through the greatness of Your power
Your enemies shall submit themselves to You.
All the earth shall worship You
And sing praises to You;
They shall sing praises *to* Your name.”
Selah

Sing Psalm 66.1-4.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)
Shout for joy to God, all people, sing the glory of His Name!
Give Him glorious praise and say, “How great Your pow’r and great Your fame!
All the earth shall worship gladly as they praise Your glorious Name!”

Read Acts 2.1-21; meditate on verses 14-21.

Preparation

1. How did Peter explain what was happening?
2. What passage of Scripture was he quoting?

Meditation

Peter dismissed the crowd’s explanation for the events of this Pentecost morning: Nobody is drunk this early in the morning (1 Thess. 5.17).

On to the real explanation. Or, rather, on to the Word of God. Peter immediately turned to the Scriptures, not to some eloquent explanation of their *experience* – “And you can have it, too!” He wanted these people to know that what they were seeing exactly corresponded to what God Himself had revealed centuries before. God’s *Word* is sure, not Peter’s *experience* (cf. 2 Pet. 1.19-21).

We note also that Peter announced the beginning of the “last days”, the days in which the ongoing work of Christ has been proceeding for nearly 2,000 years now. The “last days” are not, as some suppose, a brief period at the end of time just before Jesus returns. They are now, and have been since the Spirit was first given; and whatever the Scriptures say about those last days refers to the ongoing work of Christ and the work we as Christ’s followers should be pursuing in our day.

That work is a work of *proclamation* (vv. 17, 18), both by words and life. Whatever “wonders” may accompany that proclamation (vv. 19, 20) will be, like Pentecost itself, the Lord’s doing. Our duty is

to proclaim, and the duty of those who hear is to “call upon the name of the Lord” and be saved (v. 21). And what we are to proclaim is the rule of King Jesus.

Peter’s announcement of the Good News hangs on three pegs: the teaching of the Old Testament, the life and work of our Lord Jesus, and the Presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The objective of his preaching was to call men to submit to and obey Jesus as Christ and King. Here is a template or pattern for all believers and their churches in all these last days.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Let’s step back just a few minutes before Peter began to speak.

What had happened? Those who were filled with the Holy Spirit began to speak...of the wonderful works of God (Acts 2.4, 11). And everyone understood, because all heard it in their own language.

The followers of Christ have been given a work to do, and “that work is a work of proclamation, both by words and life.” And that is exactly what the Holy Spirit came to enable us to do (Acts 1.8).

The Holy Spirit gives us the power to communicate (Acts 2.8).

And we are to communicate the Good News of Jesus. In Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1.8). Most of us will only be called to speak in one language; but, if necessary, we will be given the ability to learn to speak in whatever language God calls us to speak. Although, the lesson here, more than the many languages, is that God wants us to talk about Jesus in our own sphere. Communicate.

To communicate means to share or exchange information, news, or ideas. Even to pass on, as in a communicable disease (sans the germs).

Synonyms for communicate are convey, tell, impart, relay, transmit, pass on, hand on, transfer, make known, announce, report, recount, relate, set forth, present, divulge, disclose, mention, spread, disseminate, circulate, promulgate, proclaim, broadcast, and make public.

There is some means here for everyone to use.

“My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long...” (Ps. 71.24).

Plus, our lives will be full of unspoken acts of love to convey and relay His love to others.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5.16).

For reflection

1. Why do we need the Holy Spirit to enable us to be witnesses for Jesus?
2. Effective communication of the Good News requires both words and deeds. Explain.
3. How can you prepare each morning for a day of communicating Jesus and His Kingdom?

... nothing was more forceful than to argue with them from prophecy, which was even more forceful than facts. For when Christ performed miracles, they often contradicted him. But when Christ adduced the prophet, saying, “The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand,” they were silent, and “no one was able to give him an answer.” John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 5

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Pray Psalm 66.17-20.

Be sure to confess any sins to the Lord, then call on Him to bless you with His mercy and send you out into your Personal Mission Field as a channel of grace to your world.

Sing Psalm 66.17-20.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

When we cried to You, You answered, filled our mouths with highest praise.

Let not sin abide within us, lest we languish all our days.

Bless the Lord, Who hears our pleadings and preserves His love always.

4 The Sovereignty of God in the Gospel

Pray Psalm 2.7-10

“I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
‘You *are* My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
Ask of Me, and I will give *You*
The nations *for* Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.
You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.”
Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.

Sing Psalm 2.7-10

(Agincourt Hymn: [O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High!](#))

Proclaim the message far and wide, that God has exalted the Crucified!
From heav’n He sent us His only Son, Who has for us salvation won!

To Christ the Lord be given all who humbly embrace Him and on Him call.
Be wise, be warned: His judgment comes to break the prideful, sinful ones.

Read Acts 2.1-28; meditate on Acts 2.22-28.

Preparation

1. What did God accomplish by raising Jesus from the dead?
2. How did those who murdered Jesus fit in God’s plan?

Meditation

Peter continues his explanation of the events of that first Pentecost morning. It is as the Old Testament says: These are the last days, the Spirit is upon us, and we His servants and witnesses proclaim the Kingdom because God has raised His Holy One from the dead.

We note Peter’s emphasis on the historicity of the events of the Gospel – Jesus’ works and wonders, His passion, and His resurrection. This account is neither myth nor delusion: All this was attested to by the apostles and known to those present.

God is sovereign in all aspects of the work of the Gospel, sending and empowering Jesus (“Holy One” v. 27), ordering the events of wicked men according to His Word, raising His Messiah from the dead, overcoming the pangs of death (a striking image: death giving birth to life), and now sending His Kingdom to the world. In that Kingdom, He has commissioned His Spirit-filled servants to proclaim the Good News (Acts 1.8). The ongoing work of Christ is underway with a vengeance.

The walls of Jericho fell with a mighty shout. The walls of men's hearts were about to fall under the simple proclamation of an undeniable truth: Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, and He is Lord! We are privileged to be entrusted with this mighty Word, like the apostles and first believers.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

All the people present at Pentecost knew about Jesus. They had either seen first-hand His miracles, wonders, and signs; or they had heard about them. "...as you yourselves also know" (Acts 2.22).

Peter could speak to them from the vantage point of their knowledge of Jesus.

In our day, it seems as if people no longer know about Jesus. But to believe that we would be mistaken. Paul wrote in Romans 1. 18-21, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened."

God in His mercy and grace, through the Holy Spirit's power, sent someone to tell us the wonderful works of God. And we, in turn, have been sent to do the same. "Remember that the people with whom you are dealing either already have the salvation of Christ, and should be encouraged in it, or they are susceptible to being saved, and need to be led toward Him." (see *Crosfigell* for 20 January 2022, T. M. Moore)

We daily see the miracles, wonders, and signs that God has wrought when we read His Word.

We see His grace and love in our own lives, and experience His mercy continually.

We see His majesty and glory in the created heavens and earth. "There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their sound has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Ps. 19.1-4) We have an abundance of good to tell our world about.

We have the very same Good Word to share in our own Personal Mission Field, that the angel shared with the shepherds: "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Lk. 2.10, 11).

A Sovereign God planned this Gospel for people from the very beginning.

"For God so loved the world..." (Jn. 3.16)

For reflection

1. What is the Gospel? That is, what is the Good News about Jesus and His Kingdom?
2. Have you mapped out your [Personal Mission Field](#)? Are you working it daily?
3. Does it encourage you to know that the people you know already *know God*? Explain.

His death is considered as God's act; and of wonderful grace and wisdom. Thus Divine justice must be satisfied, God and man brought together again, and Christ himself glorified, according to an eternal counsel, which could not be altered. And as the people's act; in them it was an act of awful sin and folly. Christ's resurrection did away the reproach of his death; Peter speaks largely upon this. Christ was God's Holy One, sanctified and set apart to his service in the work of redemption. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Acts 2.22-28

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Pray Psalm 2.11, 12.

Ask the Lord to give you an opportunity today to encourage fellow believers in their walk with and work for Him, and to talk with an unbeliever about Jesus.

Sing Psalm 2.11, 12

(Agincourt Hymn: [O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High!](#))

Rejoice with fear in Jesus' grace, and worship before His exalted face!

Beware His anger and judgment grim: How blessed are all who rest in Him!

5 Lord and Christ

Pray Psalm 93.1, 2.

The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty;
The LORD is clothed,
He has girded Himself with strength.
Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved.
Your throne is established from of old;
You are from everlasting.

Sing Psalm 93.1, 2.

(Trinity: [*Come, Thou Almighty King*](#))

The Lord in majesty reigns, girded and clothed in strength!
Earth stands secure: Nor shall it e'er be moved;
God on His throne above set it in place with love –
His reign is sure!

Read Acts 2.1-36; meditate on verses 29-36.

Preparation

1. How did Peter use the Old Testament in these verses?
2. What must we believe about Jesus?

Meditation

Peter's sermon, while provoked by events, was based on Scripture: Joel, Micah, the Psalms, and a reference to 2 Samuel. The story of Jesus, *concealed* in the Old Testament is *revealed* in the New by the power of the Holy Spirit. Scripture alone has explosive power to implant the Good News in the soul of a lost one, but only when we who believe make proper use of it. The enemies of God at Jericho fell by a word – the shout of God's people; and now many of the enemies of God are becoming His friends, by a Word – the proclamation of the Good News.

And the Good News is that Jesus is not simply Savior (Christ); He is Lord (v. 36). We must not proclaim Him except as both; and we may not receive Him in any other way than as Savior from our sins *and* Lord of our lives and of all things.

This Good News is only *good* against the backdrop of the *bad* news: God holds all men accountable for the death of His Son. Either we accept His death and its benefits, or we reject it and find ourselves trampled underfoot. Those who will not receive the Good News are enemies of God (v. 35). We were at one time such enemies (Rom. 5.10), but the proclamation of the Good News has made us children of God (1 Jn. 3.1).

The Gospel is the Good News about Jesus and His Kingdom. It has its roots in the Old Testament and was fulfilled in Jesus' life, words, and work; it was loosed into the world by the apostles, and now is being proclaimed for all to hear by the faithful followers of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Look at Peter! What a change the Holy Spirit has made in his life!

Only a little more than a month before this occasion, Peter had vehemently denied even knowing Jesus. Luke, the author of Acts, wrote in his gospel account of Peter's responses: "Woman, I do not know Him." "Man, I am not [one of them]!" and "Man, I do not know what you are saying [that he was with Him]!" (Lk. 22.57, 58, 60)

Peter is a victorious example to us of how to repent and be forgiven. He was not going to let his previous sin cripple his future ministry and calling. He was moving on with his life, courageously, and unfettered by his past.

Listen to him speak. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2.36). Whom. You. Crucified.

While the disciples were waiting, they were remembering, repenting, and getting ready to go forth. And wow! Go forth they did. And with the proper message. It was not the message we hear today of "love, love, love" and "grace, grace, grace" and "you can live however you want because well... "love and grace".

The Gospel, of course, is good news of love and grace, most assuredly, but it is also the good news of turning away from our old lives and going forth to serve Jesus as Lord and Christ. No equivocating about Whom we are serving. Or what we have done to need our Savior, Lord, and Christ. We crucified Him just as surely as all those listeners on the Day of Pentecost.

But just like Peter, we can move forward, unfettered by our guilt and sin, because we, too, are forgiven. We are loved by the "God-Who-Forgives" (Ps. 99.8) and He "forgives all our iniquities" (Ps. 103. 3).

Luke wrote about the woman who washed the Lord Jesus' feet with her grateful tears. He wrote that Jesus said of her, "Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little" (Lk. 7.47).

We are forgiven, when we repent, just like Peter and this woman.
And we have been forgiven much, so we will love much.
Will we go forth to live grateful, powerful, obedient lives?
Will we boldly serve our Lord and Christ?

We are all witnesses. (Acts 2.32)

For reflection

1. What does it mean to say that Jesus is both Lord and Christ?
2. How do enemies of God become children of God? What is our role in this transformation?
3. How did the Good News of Jesus come to you?

... the apostles declared themselves to be witnesses of the very ascension spoken of in this psalm, the ascension of Jesus. Based on these points, Peter's conclusion is clear: Jesus, the One who had been crucified, is both Lord and Christ. Earl Radmacher (1031-2014), NKJV Study Bible Notes for Acts 2.25-36

Pray Psalm 93.3-5.

What challenges are you facing today? Thank Jesus for your salvation and give your challenges to Him, claiming sweet promises from His Word to sustain and guide you.

Sing Psalm 93.3-5.

(Trinity: [Come, Thou Almighty King](#))

What, though the floods arise, raising their voice to the skies?
Strong though they be, God on His mighty throne,
drowns out their fearsome drone, hasting to save His own,
eternally.

Almighty God on high, Your Word can never lie!
Your truth is sure – holy and just are they
who tread Your holy way; Yours shall they ever stay,
Lord, evermore.

6 The New Community

Pray Psalm 48.1-3.

Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised
In the city of our God,
In His holy mountain.
Beautiful in elevation,
The joy of the whole earth,
Is Mount Zion *on* the sides of the north,
The city of the great King.
God *is* in her palaces;
He is known as her refuge.

Sing Psalm 48.1-3.

(Cwm Rhonda: *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*)

Great is God, now greatly praise Him in the city of the Lord.
Holy she, His lovely mountain, great and glorious by His Word!
God her King is great within her, He, her Stronghold ever sure!
He, her Stronghold ever sure!

Read Acts 2; meditate on verses 37-47.

Preparation

1. How did the people respond to Peter's message?
2. How would you characterize the new community that was coming into being?

Meditation

A new era, a new Spirit, and a new life demand a new community to sustain and advance them. The writer of Hebrews tells us that faith involves "evidence" of the unseen things we have come to believe and in which we hope (11.1). Here is the evidence of the ongoing work of Christ: People joining together in fellowship, sharing their goods with one another as each has need, learning and praying together, rejoicing in the Lord, and having favor with all their neighbors. This was real. This was new. This was *proof*.

Those who heard Peter were "cut to the heart" (v. 37), showing the power of God's Word to burst through reasons, fears, doubts, priorities, predispositions, and every other defense of the soul, to begin the ongoing work of Christ in the lives of even the hardest of men (Heb. 4.12). Peter was clear that people must repent and publicly identify with Jesus as proof of the Spirit's *initial* work in their lives. Peter also foreshadowed the further reach of the Gospel to the Gentiles, echoing Acts 1.8, by his mention of "all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (drawn from Joel 2.32). Ultimately, some three thousand souls declared their submission to Jesus. A glorious first harvest, indeed!

No wonder many more were being added daily as they saw what the Spirit was doing in the lives of

their neighbors and friends. Let's not misunderstand verse 45: The sense of the Greek here is that the people *would sell their possessions and distribute the proceeds* when a need became known. They did not do this all at once and give everything to the apostles. People who were being restored to the Lord were also being restored to one another as the Spirit expressed His *ongoing* work in their lives. A new community of restoration was fulfilling the promise of Micah 4.1-8, and the evidence of the reality of Jesus Christ being risen from the dead was increasing on every hand. The Gospel's conquest of the world is a communal effort, and it brings the community of restoration to ever-increasing fullness as the Kingdom expands. And all this is happening from the inside-out, because of what we read in verses 42 and 43.

The Church is a *sign* that the Kingdom has arrived. It is also an *outpost* from which the Kingdom advances in the world. When we proclaim the Gospel in its fullness, using the Word of God skillfully and with love, God can use it to break down walls of defense and open hearts to His saving love.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Why is all of this happening?

What is the endgame?

Who is supposed to be doing this work?

Where are we going?

When are we empowered?

In a nutshell—the answers:

This is happening so that we will share the Good News with others (Acts 1.8).

So that we can live in community together now, rejoicing in the Kingdom, and (Acts 2.42-47), encouraging each other to good works so that others will join us (Eph. 2.8-10).

We are going into the Kingdom here and now, and there and then (Matt. 6.10, 13).

We are empowered to do this when we repent from our sins, (Acts 2.38; Rom.3.23), claim the forgiving death and resurrection of our wonderful Savior (Jn. 3.16; Rom. 6.23), and are then filled with the Holy Spirit's power (Acts 2.38, 39; Jn. 16.13, 14).

This is the Good News we were saved by.

This is the Good News we are to share so others will be saved by it.

This is the Good News that guides our daily lives.

This is the Good News Community that we live in now.

When the people of God are living in this way, then the Church truly becomes “the joy of the whole earth” (Ps. 48.2).

“When we proclaim the Gospel in its fullness, using the Word of God skillfully and with love, God can use it to break down walls of defense and open hearts to His saving love.”

For reflection

1. Why do you think many churches are failing in their witness in our day?
2. How important is it that we work as hard to *be* witnesses as to *do* witnessing?
3. What are the hallmarks of the New Community Jesus is building in His Church?

Above all, however, that heavenly Spirit produced mutual benevolence and concord in all he inspired. Certainly Jesus had bidden his disciples to be recognized by this special sign, that love for one another held them together. For all who had believed the gospel frequently-gathered together in one place and exhorted and comforted themselves by mutual discourse. Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), Paraphrase of Acts 2:42-47.4

Pray Psalm 48.4-14.

Thank Jesus Christ, that He is building His Church, and the gates of hell will not be able to prevail against it. Pray for your church, the churches in your community, and churches around the world, that the Body of Christ may become a source of beauty, joy, and holiness throughout the earth.

Sing Psalm 48.4-14.

(Cwm Rhonda: Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah)

Earthly kings, amazed and wond'ring, look upon the Church with fear.
See them flee in dread and anguish, knowing that the Lord is near.
For the city of the Savior God will keep forevermore!
God will keep forevermore!

For Your grace and lovingkindness we proclaim Your matchless worth!
As Your Name is, great and boundless, let Your praise fill all the earth.
Let Your people sing rejoicing for the judgment of Your truth;
for the judgment of Your truth.

Walk about the blessèd city, see her beauty, see her power.
Count her ramparts, filled with glory, look on ev'ry mighty tower.
Tell her glory to the nations: God will guide her evermore;
God will guide her evermore!

7 First Things for the Last Days

Pray Psalm 143.1-4.

Hear my prayer, O LORD,
Give ear to my supplications!
In Your faithfulness answer me,
And in Your righteousness.
Do not enter into judgment with Your servant,
For in Your sight no one living is righteous.
For the enemy has persecuted my soul;
He has crushed my life to the ground;
He has made me dwell in darkness,
Like those who have long been dead.
Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me;
My heart within me is distressed.

Sing Psalm 143.1-4

(Divinum Mysterium: [*Of the Father's Love Begotten*](#))

Hear my earnest prayer, O Lord! Give ear to my pleas for grace!
In Your faithfulness and righteousness, look upon me with Your face!
Enter not to judgment with Your servant, Lord, with Your loving servant, Lord:
None can stand before Your Word.

See, the enemy pursued my soul; he has crushed and cast me down.
He has made me sit in darkness, Lord, like those dead and in the ground.
Thus my spirit faints within me, Lord, faints within my weary soul,
and my heart is no more whole.

Read Acts 2; meditate on verses 14-16.

1. How does Peter here compare with Peter on the night of Jesus' trial?
2. What did Peter announce in these words?

Meditation

The Peter who stepped forward here to inaugurate the last days was not the same man who cringed before a servant girl on the night Jesus was tried. Something happened to Him. What?

He saw Jesus, alive from the dead, and knew the thrill and relief of forgiving grace. He understood and embraced Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God. He waited on God to fulfill His promise and send His Spirit into the world. He yielded to the Spirit, submitted to the Word of God, and stepped forth in obedience to proclaim the Good News of salvation and the beginning of the last days. The now-indwelling Spirit provided the courage and words Peter would need.

Thus Peter shows us the first things we must do to be fruitful followers of Jesus in these last days.

And look at the results: As Peter and other obedient disciples – men and women, probably young and old – spilled out into the streets talking about Jesus, the Spirit opened lost hearts, wrenched more than 3,000 people out of the grip of Satan, conveyed them into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and established the New Community with its new orientation, new economy, and new power to turn the world rightside-up for Jesus.

Peter cringing, Peter courageous.

Which Peter are you? Get your first things right, and you won't have to worry about your answer in these last days.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Sometime in between Jesus' resurrection and the gathering of disciples in Jerusalem, Peter and some of the other disciples decided to go fishing. It is a time when the shock of Jesus' horrible death, the guilt of their denial and desertion of Him, and the equally shocking but glorious resurrection had taken place. They were no doubt numb with exhaustion and defeat. So, they went to their comfort zone. Fishing.

They went through the motions of fishing, but they caught nothing. All night. No success. Then a Man appeared on the shore, told them to cast the net on the other side of the boat, and they caught 153 fish. No broken net, just a lot of fish. A miracle. At this John said, "It is the Lord!" And the Lord it was, there to prepare breakfast for them, and there to give them an opportunity to repent and recover.

After they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to cringing Peter, "Do you love me more than these?"

Peter answered, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You."

Then again, "Do you love Me?"

Peter again, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You."

Then a third time, "Do you love Me?"

And the third response, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You."

And each time Jesus gave Peter something to do to prove his love:

"Feed My sheep." "Tend My sheep." "Feed My sheep."

Then Jesus ended the conversation with a final means of proof: "Follow Me." (Jn. 21.1-19)

We, too, have been given the opportunity to come face to face with our own sin.

And we, like Peter, can declare our sorrow for our sin, repent and turn away from it; and then declare our desire to go forward in love with Jesus. Seeing Him, and not our sin. Declaring our love for Him and doing what He commands us to do to prove it. We are to feed and tend to God's sheep. And we are to follow Jesus.

But we cannot do this without being filled with the Holy Spirit.

It is what happened to Peter. It is what changed him from cowardly to courageous.

The tender love that Jesus showed to Peter began the change.

The Spirit finished it off.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit will do the same for you!

"Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He *is* the One

who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you” (Deut. 31.6; Heb. 13.5).

For reflection

1. How can we draw on the power of God’s Spirit to empower us for bearing witness to Jesus?
2. In Acts 2 we see the beginning of the ongoing work of Jesus. How is that work proceeding in your life?
3. Write a prayer that you can use to remind you of your daily calling to be a witness to Jesus.

The Holy Spirit arrives, fills the entire house, but this was not frightening. For he immediately entered into their hearts, not as gilded flames but living, fiery flames! The Holy Spirit revealed himself in the wind in order to make them strong, steadfast and courageous, who were earlier hiding themselves. And so in this way he rested on each and every person... Martin Luther (1483-1546) Sermon on Pentecost Monday in the Afternoon (1545).1

Pray Psalm 143.5-12.

In prayer, remember all that Jesus has done for you. Call on Him to shine His face on you, to hear your prayer, and to show you how to follow Him courageously as His witness. Shelter in Him and let Him teach you the ways of His Kingdom.

Sing Psalm 143.5-12.

(Divinum Mysterium: [*Of the Father’s Love Begotten*](#))

I recall the days of old; on Your works I meditate –
all the wonders of Your mighty hand, works both small, O Lord, and great.
Lord, my thirsty soul cries out to You! To You, Lord, I reach my hand
in a dry and weary land.

Answer quickly, O my Lord! Do not hide from me Your face!
For my spirit fails and I am like those who do not know Your grace.
In the morning let me hear Your steadfast love; Lord I trust You, show my way!
I lift up my soul and pray!

Rescue me from all my enemies! Lord, I refuge seek in You.
Let me know Your will, O Lord my God; make me know what I must do.
Let Your Spirit lead me on to level ground; save my life! Preserve my soul!
Rescue, Lord, and make me whole!

The Beginning of the Last Days: Acts 2

For reflection or discussion

1. What is the Gospel? What Scriptures would you include in your presentation of the Good News? How would you make sure to include a call for repentance?
2. These days it is unusual to see preachers, believers, or churches boldly proclaiming the Gospel out in public. Why do you suppose this is so? Is this public reticence concerning the Good News what we ought to expect? Explain.
3. Do we really believe people will repent and believe the Gospel? Explain.
4. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is the best rating you could give, to what extent does your church resemble what we see in Acts 2.42-47? Why did you choose that number?
5. What's the most important insight or lesson you've learned from Acts 2?

For prayer:

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