

"What Does This Mean?" Part II

Acts 2:14-36

Acts 2 is one of those pivotal chapters in the Bible that deserves our full attention. We're taking 3 messages to get a grasp of this passage and how it applies to us and then we'll even come back to it in late May when we explore what the Feast of Weeks/Pentecost meant historically, agriculturally and prophetically.

A few weeks ago we looked at 2:1-13, the coming of the Holy Spirit on those in the Upper Room and the subsequent proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ in tongues. Tongues, we defined from Acts 2 as speaking a **known language** that you had **no ability to speak before** for the purpose of **helping people understand the message of forgiveness of sins through Jesus**. The people understood what the apostles were saying because they heard them speak in their native language. The recipients knew that the apostles were Galileans who had a very unique dialect and did not know these other languages.

"Amazed and perplexed they said, What does this mean?" (v.12) In the first 13 verses we showed that Pentecost affirms for us that

We Can Trust Jesus' Words

Jesus promised this would happen just as everything He said would happen happened exactly as He said. Jesus instructed His disciples in 1:4-5 to stay in Jerusalem and wait for a few days because the Holy Spirit would come and empower them to be His witnesses (1:8) in 2:4 we read *"all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit they began speaking in tongues as the Spirit enabled them"* and v. 12 tells us *"they were declaring the wonders of God"*.

Similarly, the Spirit still empowers us to be His witnesses too. We can trust Him that He will enable us to serve Him and share His words with those around us who need Jesus.

The Feast of Pentecost occurs seven full weeks from the day of First Fruits which was when you brought your first grain offering to God before you had any for yourself. God said if they did that then He would bless them with a greater harvest. Since Jesus rose on First Fruits, God's first and best, God assured them of a spiritual harvest of souls 50 days later. So Pentecost also means that a

Harvest of Souls is always Ready

We'll return to that on Pentecost Sunday. We also saw that from the whole panorama of God's plan as it unfolds in Scripture that the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost signified

That the Curse of Babel was Now Reversing

God was starting to reverse the curse of Babel now by miraculously empowering His people to speak in different languages to speak the one message of the gospel, so that the world would come together. Because the tower of Babel was when the world defied the command of God to fill the earth and wanted to establish a name for themselves as one people of one language who could reach heaven on their own. So God confused their languages forcing them to fill the earth.

And we haven't even heard Peter explain what was going on yet! So how does Peter explain this event? He quotes three passages of Scripture (the Old Testament) to help explain what this means. First he explains then he quotes a passage and does this 3 times. He explains that this is not drunkenness because its 9:00 am. 9:00 am was the first of the 3 times for prayer for the Jew. Peter is saying this is a spiritual, God-directed event, controlled and orderly. Which is rather ironic since in some places where tongues is said to be used it is very uncontrolled and more about people than God. Peter then quotes Joel 2:28-32 in vv.17-21 which is a prophecy about the end times when God will bless Israel in the land by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on His people and bring judgment on those who refuse to believe in His Messiah when He returns. While it's quite clear at Pentecost that the end time cosmic signs of judgment wrath mentioned in Joel (blood, fire, smoke, sun turning dark, moon turning red) did not happen at this time, what Peter is saying however, that the coming of the Spirit is a sign that ...

We are Now in the 'Last Days' **(2:14-21)**

Just as the final outpouring of the Holy Spirit with all the ominous signs in the sky will mark the end of life on earth as we know it, so the first outpouring of the Spirit marks the beginning of the end. Peter says from Scripture that we can know we are in the last days ...

When we see the Spirit working miraculously through God's people (vv.14-18)

Prior to Jesus' first coming the Spirit's empowering ministry was limited to a few individuals, usually prophets and Israel's leaders. The big difference that Pentecost introduced was that the Spirit would be poured out on sons and daughters, young and old, servants and 'all people' including Gentiles. You and I are evidence that we are in the last days and have been since Pentecost meaning God's prophetic clock is closer to the end than it had been before Jesus came the first time.

God will display a number of miraculous signs of the work of His Spirit in the founding years of the church as we'll see through Acts, so that people knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that this was of God. But if we're feeling less spiritual because we're not prophesying or having prophetic dreams, we need not because we often overlook the most powerful miracle of all at Pentecost. Peter and the other apostles. Less than two months ago Peter was cowering when a servant girl accused him of having been with Jesus. How come all of a sudden he spoke up? I don't remember reading the apostles threw lots or had a committee meeting to decide who would be their spokesperson when the Spirit came on them. No, Peter was moved by the Spirit to do exactly as Jesus said, be a witness and the Spirit of God was reminding him of things Jesus said as well as what the Scriptures said and he boldly, by the Spirit told these people about Jesus. In the temple square. Within ear shot of the religious leaders. In full view of the Antonia Fortress, the Roman tower of the guards that stood at the southeast corner of the temple and could see everything from there.

When you and I allow the Spirit of God to boldly use us to share Jesus with someone, we are a sign that the last days are upon us and Jesus' coming is not far off. And that anyone can call on the name of the Lord to be saved.

When Peter ends his quote of Joel here, he actually leaves out the last part of that verse. The full verse says,

³² *And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls.*

3 *“In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, ²¹I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel, for they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land. ³They cast lots for my people and traded boys for prostitutes; they sold girls for wine that they might drink.*

Remember, when the NT quotes the OT the reader and listener understand he is involving the surrounding context as well. Peter’s listeners knew the rest of that verse and what preceded and followed. Most of Joel is about judgment. But Peter is reminding the people that there is hope for everyone now, even gentiles. However, we are now beginning the last days and the last days will only last

Until the ‘Day of the Lord’ arrives (vv.19-21)

The cosmic signs of darkness and blood ominously will warn the world that God’s time of judgment has come. That people will have had enough time to repent and turn to Him. That Jesus’ return is very soon. The Day of the Lord is both negative (judgment on those who oppose God) and positive (deliverance for Israel). The part of v.28 Peter didn’t quote doesn’t mean it won’t happen (a NT writer cannot change the OT), the reader knows this part and is encouraged to think seriously about their relationship with God.

That’s what being a witness for Jesus means, just as Peter is doing. Telling those around you not only that hope and salvation is found in Jesus but that ignoring Jesus has eternal consequences. Peter will move toward this as he continues.

‘Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. The Joel quote is a reference to God but Peter is going to swing things around to Jesus as Lord. And so he explains more about Jesus:

²²“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. ²³This 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. ²⁴But 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. ²⁵David said about him:

And then Peter will affirm Jesus resurrection through more Scripture this time a well-known Messianic passage from Ps. 16:8-11, perhaps one of the best gospel presentations in the OT. Peter ended his Joel quote talking about the Day of the Lord and instead of talking about how Jesus is Lord and judge, he first presents the gospel and explains why we need Jesus.

People Need to Know Death has Been Conquered **(2:22-31)**

To call upon the Lord and be saved is to be saved from the penalty of unforgiven sin which is eternal separation from God after one dies. Peter points out that we have this hope because of Jesus. Watch how he gives the gospel. People don’t need to fear death because Jesus conquered death. How?

Through Jesus who became one of us (v.22a)

Jesus of Nazareth was his human identity. He was fully man. He was born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth. But He was also fully God. How do we know?

Confirmed His deity through miracles (v.22b)

a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

Jesus had God's power working through Him because He was God's Son. Fully human, fully God. The miracles confirm His deity. Wonderful, except

He was crucified by men as God planned (v.23)

²³ *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.*

Peter very openly puts blame on the leaders for putting Jesus to death and yet also admits it was all God's plan. How can it be both? That's one of the mysteries of God. Human will and divine foreknowledge are two sides of the same coin that we as humans can't quite grasp.

Can you see His gospel presentation. Jesus was a man yet fully God, sent by God to die on the cross for our sins. And why? Now he quotes Ps. 16 to show us He died

To rise from death and offer us hope (vv.24-31)

He quotes Ps. 16 because in it David speaks with confidence that his own death will not result in separation from God. Ps. 16 is a lament psalm where David prays for deliverance from an unnamed enemy. He knows God will be with him and he won't be shaken, even if his life ends abruptly. He knows he has a delightful inheritance (v.6) and here in v.8 he knows his body will rest secure and that God will not abandon him in death. David believed that he would be in God's presence when he died. At this point David, probably unaware by the Spirit, was speaking prophetically about Jesus more than himself when he said

because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

David was actually the Anointed or Holy One of God at the time, (anointed by Samuel the prophet at God's direction and recipient of a covenant promise from God that his line would have a ruler on it and ultimately the Messiah would come from him), as the chosen king Prophetically, as Peter used the passage here, it speaks of Jesus' body not seeing decay because he would rise from the dead proving He destroyed the power of death. He died as our replacement even though He never sinned Himself. And so David rightly says, 'You have made known to me the path of life.' Trusting in God and His Word is the path to life; a blessed life now (In your presence is fullness of joy) and eternal happiness in glory (at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.)"

So the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost signified we are now in the last days and therefore we must tell people the message of hope, that Jesus God's Son, became one of us, died for our sins and conquered death. When we confess our sinfulness and profess Jesus as Lord we receive the Spirit and the hope of eternal life. And in case we're still thinking about it, Peter reminds his hearers that they were eyewitnesses to the resurrected Jesus (v.32) and as the one who conquered death

This Same Jesus [is Lord and] Will Return to Rule **(2:33-36)**

³³ 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. ³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

“The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand ³⁵ until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Jesus ascended to heaven, not David. So Peter uses the most often quoted OT verse about Jesus in the NT, Ps. 110:1 Written by David when he wrote ‘Yahweh [God the Father] said to my Adonai/Lord [Messiah-Jesus] , sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’ Even Jesus used this verse to refer to Himself when He questioned the Pharisees about why did David have two Lords?

Peter unashamedly claims Jesus is Lord. This is dangerous talk because the term ‘Lord’ was reserved for the emperor. Peter is not ashamed of his Lord and Saviour now. With Holy Spirit led boldness he speaks truth in the public space of the temple court, risking crucifixion himself.

Is he arrested? Will there be a riot? Will he be stoned to death? No. The people were cut to the heart and they said ‘Brothers, what must we do?’

As a believer, we pray for opportunities to be Jesus’ witnesses. No matter how many times we have shared our faith there’s always a little bit of uneasiness and even fear. If we’re honest we don’t expect people to listen but sometimes a few do and they get it. They understand who Jesus is, what he has done for them and that all of us must answer to Him one day. If He died for the world then He died for you and me. And we praise God when someone asks us ‘What must I do?’

Peter’s words (and there were more words he spoke, v.40) were Spirit led words whereby he led with Scripture and made Jesus the central point. He unashamedly presented the gospel and was willing to profess Jesus was His Lord and Messiah. We too, are His disciples with the power of the Spirit dwelling in us. Let’s pray for opportunities, trust His leading, have important gospel related verses memorized at our disposal and help people know that there is hope and joy now through a relationship with Jesus Christ and a future assurance of pleasures at His right hand.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at oliviet@rideau.net