

# Acts 2:1-12 - Part 1

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[ 0 : 00 ] As Wes said, we are beginning in Acts chapter 2. If you turn there with me to Acts chapter 2.

And as you're getting there, I hope that you take opportunities to thank all of the musicians in our church. We have so very many that share the stage and swap out so graciously together.

I'm especially thankful for the way in which they prepare. They are here earlier than most of you, which likely means they got up earlier than most of you to get this together.

The guys that have to come and run the technology. I keep mentioning we have this new board. We're still sorting it out back there and figuring out all the technical intricacies of it.

I'm thankful that Wes and Liz worked to find us new, Christ-centered, God-honoring songs to sing together. So if you don't, be sure to take some time at some point to thank them.

[ 1 : 05 ] It's not why they do it, but let's affirm them and keep them moving on in that process. Our text for this morning is Acts chapter 2, verses 1 through 12.

And this morning we have the great privilege and joy before us to observe a significant watershed moment in the life of the church.

Everything changes after this. If you have placed your faith in the personal work of Jesus Christ, this is part of your history.

And it has great significance for your life in Christ. We have before us the day in which God unlocked the power of the Holy Spirit and gave it to the church.

Beloved, this is God's Word to us. It was written for His glory and for our good. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and to obey its commands.

[ 2 : 08 ] And I begin reading in verse 1 of chapter 2.

And how is it that we hear each of us in his own native language?

We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.

And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, What does this mean? Now before we pay close attention to today's text, I want you to recall so far in Luke's record what has happened. Chapter 1, verse 3. We get a little summation of Jesus' post-resurrection ministry. He presented Himself alive to them after His suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

[ 4 : 03 ] So He has been with them, going out from amongst them and telling them more. He's teaching them about the kingdom of God. And then a command comes to them, verses 4 and 5, to stay and to wait.

While they were staying with them, He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which He said, You heard from Me. For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

And then verse 8. We see the promise of power for the fulfillment of their purpose. And that is the gospel to the ends of the earth.

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

And then verse 9. We witness the ascension. And when He had said these things as they were looking on, He was lifted up and a cloud took them out of their sight.

[ 5 : 06 ] So we talked last week about the time in between Jesus' ascension. What were they doing? They were together and devoting themselves to prayer. And they had a concern for what the Scriptures had to say.

They cared about apostolic authority. They replaced Judas with Matthias in this time. And then 10 days later, we see chapter 2, verse 1.

The day of Pentecost arrives. And Pentecost means 50th. This celebration is also known as the Feast of Weeks.

And for them, it was a yearly feast. Happened all the time as subscribed by Leviticus chapter 23. We now know it as the day of Pentecost.

We don't continue to celebrate Pentecost the way they did, but it's a day in the history of the modern church. And what a day this was.

[ 6 : 07 ] Now, there is so much to consider in this text. And so I've decided I'll deal with it this week and next.

And if you're here with us last week, I really said to you, I expressed to you, I really hope not to get off the preaching schedule that I set out for the year. We're already off the schedule. There's just too much in this text to deal with it well, to aptly talk through it in a single week.

And so next week, we will look broadly at what is meant by being filled with the Holy Spirit and the exact nature of its implications for us today.

There's a lot there. I came to my study of it this week with certain assumptions that I found to be true, but boy, did I find a lot of other understandings of this particular text.

And I really think we need to take some time to work through that. What does it mean to be both baptized by the Holy Spirit and filled with the Holy Spirit?

[ 7 : 12 ] And so let me just say to you, this week, you ought to be studying and prayerfully considering what these things mean. And then I'll do my very best by grace to speak about it next week.

There's so much here. And I fear if we don't get it right here, we're going to get very confused as we work our way through the rest of the book. Okay, so I'm preparing notes.

I've got, as I have gotten fairly good at looking at pages of notes and calculating that into minutes of preaching, this morning, I said, whoa, this is an hour and 45 minutes by my quick estimation.

And so what I'm going to do this morning, or what I did frantically at 5 a.m. is I stripped out the historical context. Okay, so I'm pulling that portion of the text out.

So we're going to look at verses 1 through 12 in that way, and then we'll pick up and look at it in light of the filling of the Holy Spirit, and that works specifically next week. So hopefully that'll make this a much shorter sermon, but still an important one.

[ 8 : 19 ] So don't hear me saying I'm taking out unimportant details and just throwing you historical context so that I don't have to talk about it next week. It's still very important because in those historical details, we can see God's sovereign reign over redemptive history.

So that's what I want. That's the goal of today. The one thing I want us to see together from verses 1 through 12 of chapter 2 is God's sovereign reign over redemptive history.

He has always been in control of redemptive history. He is in control of redemptive history here in Acts chapter 2, and He still is in control of redemptive history.

We find here this event that happens, like the sending of, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

However, the disciples did not fulfill some special sort of requirements in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

They hadn't worked out some type of equation, and then they were filled. This is entirely a divine act, a work on God's part.

[ 9 : 30 ] Now, you remember that Jesus commands them in verse 4 and 5. They were commanded to stay and wait. They're not commanded to pray that the Holy Spirit will come.

They're commanded simply to stay and to wait. Now, certainly in between time, we find that they're doing some praying, but that is not what Jesus commands them to do. I think it's wrong to assume that that is what they were doing.

They're praying for other things. They're praying the way that Jesus taught them to pray. They're praying that God's kingdom would come, and God sends the Spirit. Verse 2, It being the Spirit, the sound of the Spirit fills the entire house where they were sitting.

So they're gathered again in a house. We can assume it's the same upper room that they've been part of in the end of Jesus' ministry, and in these in-between days waiting for the day of Pentecost. But we don't know exactly what they're doing. But what we can know is that they weren't at this time praying. The positions of prayer in their day were to stand, to kneel, or to lay prostrate on the ground.

[10:47] Luke records it for us in this way. He's clear to say in the house where they not just were, but where they were sitting. They could have been having a meal. They could have been discussing the Scripture.

They could have been discussing their morning and how it had gone. We don't know what they were doing, but they weren't praying. And I'm pressing at this with you, not to mitigate the importance of prayer at all, but to say they weren't working something out on their own.

The sending of the Spirit of God was not synergistic. It was monergistic. The pouring out of the Spirit was divinely decreed. Let me further make the point to you.

The beginning of verse 2, Luke records, and suddenly, which is to say it was a surprise to them.

They hadn't sorted out the equation. They weren't doing the right things.

And then He came, and suddenly there came from heaven. They'd been waiting, and here He is.

And it came from heaven. He emphasizes their surprise and the source.

[11:50] Their surprise and the source. This is going to have much later significance into next week as we talk more about the filling of the Holy Spirit.

So, the day of Pentecost arrives, and they were together in one place. Now, in order to see God's sovereign reign over redemptive history, that He sent the Holy Spirit at this particular time, in a particular way, to show His sovereignty over redemptive history, we must first understand, as 21st century Christians, the significance of Pentecost.

As a matter of fact, it would be helpful to understand the feasts outlined in Leviticus chapter 23 as they present for us a New Testament timetable.

This is very cool, beloved. The way that God set forth the feasts in order to fulfill in Christ what those feasts were meant, what they prefigured for us, what they represented.

So, if you'd like to turn to Leviticus chapter 23, you can. I'm not going to read much of it. So, if you'd like to be there just to see what I'm talking about, but for further study, at very least, write down Leviticus 23 and go and look at this.

[13:06] First, God prescribes the Passover. The Passover feast. And the killing of the Passover lamb pictures the death of Jesus Christ, our Passover lamb.

And this was when Jesus was crucified. The Passover. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 5, last half of verse 7, Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

So, Passion Week ends there with Passover. Jesus Christ is crucified. The second is the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

And it celebrated the day after Passover. It was an offering of the first fruits of the grain harvest.

They came together and feasted and made an offering.

Leviticus 23, 15 commands that it be celebrated the day after the Sabbath. Now, in Jesus' day, the popular interpretation of that command meant that the offering would always be on a Sunday.

[14:14] There were some competing interpretations between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, but the observed interpretation was that of the Sadducees. So, the Feast of Unleavened Bread would have always been on a Sunday, and it would have coincided with Jesus' resurrection.

Tracking the timeline? This pictures Jesus as the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Raised from the dead just as we are raised from the dead in Christ. 1 Corinthians 15, 20, Paul writes, But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Right? To the audience he's writing to, they get this. They're very aware of this system of feasts that the Jews celebrated. The third outline in Leviticus 23 is Pentecost.

Right? The Feast of Weeks. It's a nether offering of first fruits. And let me read to you now from Leviticus 23, 15 and 16. You shall count seven full weeks.

[15:27] That's why it's called the Feast of Weeks. Seven full weeks. Seven days. Right? From the day after the Sabbath. From the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering. You shall count 50 days to the day after the seventh Sabbath.

Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the Lord. So, Jesus sends the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost as the first fruits of the believer's inheritance.

Are you catching the significance of the timeline that was set forth in Leviticus 23 and that God now is following in these events in redemptive history? He sent the Holy Spirit on the 50th day because it was the day of Pentecost.

It's not because the apostles got something right. Right? It's monergistic. He had already decided this is how this will happen.

Right? Praise God for His sovereignty in all of these things. Right? Jesus sends the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost as the first fruits of the believer's inheritance.

[16:36] Ephesians 1, 13 and 14. Paul writes, So, God decrees that the Holy Spirit be sent to the disciples on the day of Pentecost.

Isn't that incredible? That just the very history of it speaks so much of who God is to us in Christ. And when he does this, there's some audible evidence of it.

Verse 2 says, And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Now, I don't think it's proper for us to understand that there actually was a rushing wind.

Right? All of their hair got incredibly messed up. I don't think that's what's happening here. But Luke is grasping at metaphor. He's trying to explain what it sounded like. And he says that.

And it's there in the Greek, like. And later on, as he describes the divided tongues, he says, as of fire. Doing the very best that he can with the language at his disposal to help us to understand what was happening here.

[18:01] In both Hebrew and Greek, the words for wind and spirit are the same words. And wind is often used as a picture of the Holy Spirit.

Do you recall Jesus' explanation to Nicodemus in John 3.8? The wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.

So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. You see that symbolism there and the Spirit comes and you can audibly hear Him coming like a mighty rushing wind.

There's also visible evidence. Verse 3. And divided tongues, as of fire, appeared to them and rested on each one of them.

That was very commonly understood that fire was symbolic of light. And that may be a little difficult for us because very few of us ever see much of anything by fire anymore because we have all this technology around us that generates light in a much different way.

[19:11] But for them, this would have been the only source of light apart from the sun and the reflective properties of the moon and the stars. And so, the fire itself was symbolic of light.

The Holy Spirit illuminates, gives light to, the truth of God. Jesus said in John 14, verse 25 and 26, These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

So, the Spirit of God comes in this way and consistent with the promise that Jesus made concerning Him. And this same Spirit is ours today, although He comes to us in a much different way, not like mighty rushing wind and with divided tongues as of fire.

This amazing transitional event happened here. We receive the Spirit in a much different way, but yet we still have His power and His illuminating purpose for the Scripture.

[20:27] Verse 4 says, And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Now catch, they're doing this as the Spirit empowers them for it. They're not doing it of their own accord. They're doing it under the guidance of the Spirit of God. and they're speaking in other tongues.

Now we are going to get to the complexity of what that could possibly mean in other texts. But all it means in this text is that they've spoken other known spoken languages.

Here. For sure. Without a doubt. That's what it means. Verse 6, 7, and 8. And at the sound of the multitude came together. So all of these people were gathered around at this mighty rushing sound. It's my presumption that the disciples, not just the apostles, but all of those that are there gathered, come out of the house and begin to speak in these varying known languages.

[21:30] And they were bewildered because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And that is to say they're all from the same region, which is that they would have spoken the same language, but also Galileans were not intelligent people.

Lay people, right? These weren't sophisticated city people. Like, how could they possibly know all of the languages? That's what they're suggesting. Aren't they all Galileans? Like, how is it even

possible that Galileans would know so many known languages?

And how is it that we hear each of us in his own native languages? Right? So they're speaking in these known languages, but what were they saying? The last part of verse 11 tells us.

We hear them telling in our own tongues what? The mighty works of God. They're speaking in the languages, the native languages of these people, so they can hear and understand what?

The mighty works of God. At the outset of our study of Acts, I set forth some goals for us, three goals. Do you recall goal three? Goal three was to pay careful attention to the means and the ways of the Holy Spirit for our study of Acts.

[ 22 : 51 ] Pay careful attention to the means and the ways of the Holy Spirit. I've said to you before, the primary role of the Spirit of God is the exaltation of Jesus Christ in the salvation and perfection of His church.

The exaltation of Jesus Christ in the salvation and protection of His church. This is His primary role. It's going to help us filter a lot of understanding about the Spirit of God.

The primary means is the Word of God spoken by the people of God. And here we see the first record of the ways that that happens.

Speaking the Word of God, speaking of the mighty works of God in the languages of the people. So He uses this as a method by which to tell people that speak other languages about the mighty works of God.

Now I want to draw your attention to the front of your bulletin. God finds very creative ways to humble me and to remind you of my great need of grace in the typo in the Charles Spurgeon quote.

[ 23 : 59 ] I can't, of course, misspell some insignificant word, but it has to be the third part of the Trinity that I call the Holy Spirit. So let me read it to you as it should.

He said, There will never be any mighty work come from us unless there is first a mighty work in us. No man truly labors for souls unless the Holy Spirit has first worked mightily in Him.

No amount of planning or preparation has any value whatsoever apart from the power of God at work in us and through us to accomplish His purposes.

Set that very clearly in your mind, beloved. That's axiomatic to understand what the Christian life should look like. And we are so quick and so ready to run off ahead apart from Him.

Stay and wait for the power of God that your ministry might be effective because apart from it it will not be. God is sovereign over redemptive history.

[ 25 : 14 ] He is calling together His church and we are merely instruments in His hand. Another way to see God's sovereign reign over redemptive history is to consider what has happened on this day, this day of Pentecost.

Right? So it's a day that God has set forth hundreds of years earlier, Leviticus chapter 23 and it's become this festival after the dispersion of Israel and the regathering of it and the dispersion of it and the regathering of it that there are Jewish people and there are converts to Judaism spread out all over the known world.

And Pentecost as one of these three major feasts would have brought together Jews from far and wide. It's a unique day that would have brought these people together.

The multitude was in Jerusalem for the worship of God. That's why they had gathered there. It was for the proper worship of God. It was the perfect moment in history to begin the church of Jesus Christ.

The beautiful opportunity for the apostles to begin to preach that all that you have practiced, all of the Judaism that you know was meant to point you to Jesus and He has come and He has died and He has been raised and He has ascended that we might believe in Him.

[ 26 : 39 ] This is crucial to the gathering of those people, the starting of the church and then later we'll see in the book of Acts there again they're scattering back out to take that good news of Christ to the world around them.

Verse 5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven, Parthians and Medes I'm not going to read all that again.

I worked so hard at pronouncing those right once. You've got the text before you, right? I'm going to read from you from MacArthur's commentary on this and actually I'm going to have to pronounce those again because he talks about them here.

But he just sums all this up and says this so well and I just want to give him the proper credit due him for this and give you some explanation of who all these people were. So there were Jews living

in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost, devout men from every nation under heaven. Those who went to the trouble to make the pilgrimage were obviously devout men. They traveled far distances to be there at this time. The phrase from every nation under heaven is an idiomatic expression meaning from many lands or from all of the nations where Jews had been dispersed. [ 27 : 53 ] It was a broad term. Parthians lived in what is modern Iran. They had never been conquered by the Romans and remained their bitter enemies. Medes partners in empire with the Persians in Daniel's time were now part of the Parthian empire.

Elamites lived in what is now southwestern Iran. They too were part of the Parthian empire. The residents of Mesopotamia lived between the two great rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates. Great numbers of Israelites had been deported to that region by the Assyrians and Babylonians.

Not all had returned to Palestine at the time of Cyrus' decree. Judea should probably be constructed in the broadest sense as all the region once controlled by David and Solomon.

That would explain the absence of Syria from the list. Cappadocia, Pontus in Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia were all regions in Asia Minor, modern day Turkey.

They had a large Jewish population as did Egypt, particularly in the city of Alexandria. It was in that city that the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, had been produced.

[ 29 : 01 ] The districts of Libya around Cyrene were west of Egypt on the African coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Josephus, a Jewish historian, mentions a Jewish population there.

That there were Jews in Rome as well as Gentile proselytites, so converts to Judaism, is obvious from the Emperor Claudius' expulsion of them some years later. That's recorded in Acts 18.2.

Cretans were from the island of Crete off the southern coast of Greece. Arabs were Jews living in the kingdom of the Nabataean Arabs located south of Damascus. And so they are people from far and wide, from all around what is mostly known of the world in that day.

Of course, there are people much further than that, but this is the perfect orchestration of events, right, brought together again by God's sovereign reign to jumpstart the rapid expansion of the church.

We find the church on three continents in one generation after this, right, watershed, amazing moment in redemptive history.

[ 30 : 06 ] And verse 12 says, And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, What does this mean? They're not wondering what the words, the mighty works of God, are, right, but they're speaking the mighty works of God, the Old Testament works of God up to this place.

Quite likely, some new information about the kingdom of God coming in Jesus Christ. I don't think verse 12 is meant to mean that they're scratching their heads and they need clarification, but they're saying, This is a major day.

What does this mean? Right? Here are these people, these Galileans, speaking in all of these various languages. What does it mean? And it marks this massive transition, a new economy of the Holy Spirit, the life of the church.

Further in chapter 2, Peter stands up amongst them and tells them what it means. It's the fulfillment of Joel chapter 2, which speaks of the outpouring of God's Spirit and the coming judgment of God.

And the end of that from Joel 2.32 in Acts 2.21, Peter says, And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

[ 31 : 32 ] And we see the conviction of the Spirit in the lives of the early church and this massive expansion of that number of disciples, that about 120 that we see in chapter 1 gets blown up to thousands upon thousands in just a matter of days.

What an amazing event for us to observe together. And beloved, this is our history. It's part of our story.

It has implications for today. And I hope you've seen God's sovereign reign over that story. We are part of God's redemptive purposes.

You, if you've placed your faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, have a place in this story and it is a glorious one.

Let's pray together.