

PM Acts 2:1-41

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[0 : 0 0] And I want today to look at Peter's sermon, or message, on that occasion. But just to set the reminders of the context, we'll read from the beginning of the chapter to verse 41.

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, 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 how is it that we hear each of us in his own native language?

[1 : 0 9] Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and Proselytes, Cretans and Arabians.

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? But others mocking said, They are filled with new wine.

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, Let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.

For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel.

And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, even on my male servants and female servants.

[2 : 2 6] In those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heaven above, and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and vapour of smoke.

The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass, that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God, with mighty works and wonders and signs, that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know.

This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. You crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by death.

For David says concerning him, I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced.

[3 : 44] My flesh also will dwell in hope, for you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life.

You will make me full of gladness with your presence. Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.

This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.

[5 : 06] Let all the house of Israel, therefore know for certain, that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?

And Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

For the promise is for you, and for your children, and for all who are far off. Everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.

And with many other words, he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation. So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about 3,000 souls.

[6 : 12] May God bless to us that reading of his word. Let's turn back to the passage we read to Acts chapter 2. And we're looking really from verse 14 to verse 41.

As the title of the book of Acts suggests, it's a book full of action. There's lots of deeds, lots of doing in it. But there's also much teaching.

At the beginning, as we reminded ourselves this morning, Luke talks about his first book in Acts 1 verse 1. He says, In the first book, I dealt with all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day when he was taken up.

And that suggests that Acts is about what Jesus continued to do and to teach after the day when he was taken up to heaven. And Jesus continues to do and to teach by the Holy Spirit through the apostles and other disciples.

But the point we're making is it's not just about doing, it's also about teaching. And the book of Acts contains many speeches and sermons.

[7 : 28] In fact, about a third of the book is made up of speeches of one kind or another. And here in Acts 2, we have the first main speech to people who are as yet not believers.

And it's kind of an archetypal message that is presented to us here. So Acts is about the progress of the word.

And if you read the book, it's almost as if the word is a character of the book, a main character of the book. So it's about the word, about preaching, about evangelism, about telling the gospel.

And that is essential to the spread of this movement, those early followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes the message, sometimes it spreads through more than word, but never by less than word.

Now in all these speeches, Luke, who's the writer of Acts, he probably records a summary of the main points. So in verse 40 of chapter 2, it says that with many other words, Peter bore witness and continued to exalt them.

[8 : 42] So it seems that Peter said a lot more than is down here. So Luke is sort of summarizing the main points of Peter's speech. Now some of the features of Peter's message are unique for that situation.

Pentecost was a unique event and Peter is explaining that event. But there are other elements of his speech that are a pattern for all proclamation of the gospel and for us as God's people today.

We have the same message. It might be being applied in different situations to different people, but the essence is the same message. And so as we read this and other messages, other sermons, speeches and acts, we need to ask ourselves, is our message, what we believe, what we proclaim in line with what the early church, the early believers believed and proclaimed.

So what gives rise to this speech, this sermon of Peter's, is that he's explaining an event. And the event is the coming of the Holy Spirit and the phenomena that come with that that we looked at this morning.

And the crowd, they have seen, they have heard that the wind, the mighty Russian wind, the sound of the mighty Russian wind and these flames of fire are lighting on the disciples. And they have heard the disciples proclaiming the wonders of God in their own many different languages.

[10 : 16] And they're amazed and they're perplexed at this. And in verse 12, they ask, what does this mean? Now, this is a unique occasion and a unique opportunity for this message that Peter proclaims.

But for us today, we also should be on the lookout for other opportunities to proclaim, to tell, to share this message about the Lord Jesus Christ.

A great example is Christmas coming up and you've got the carol service here and that is an opportunity. People in our secular age still celebrate Christmas.

People will still turn up for a carol service and it's an opportunity to present the message of the gospel, the good news, to them. Easter is another.

And there are maybe other events. Or maybe it's just in conversation with individuals and there are maybe just situations that arise where there's an opportunity to share something of the good news of Christ.

[11 : 23] Well, Peter dismisses, Peter's responding to their question, what do these things mean? He dismisses the wrong explanation that they've had too much wine and with, I think, some humour.

He says, it's only nine o'clock in the morning. It's not that. I think that accusation of drunkenness was probably made by locals, local Jerusalemites who didn't understand the other languages.

So they just thought they were kind of babbling. They're the ones who are making this accusation. But Peter refutes that and he goes on to give the correct explanation of this amazing event of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

And we can divide Peter's message into three parts. First of all, there's prophecy. Second, there's fulfillment. And then third, a sort of a concluding declaration.

So first of all, prophecy. Peter says that this event fulfills the words of the prophet Joel of when God would pour out his spirit on all flesh.

[12 : 30] So Joel was an Old Testament prophet. There's a book called Joel in the Old Testament. We don't know actually exactly when he lived. There's not really much in the way of clues in the book of Joel to sort of place him in Israel's history.

But we know it was centuries before the birth of Christ. And Joel chapter 2 from verse 28 onwards has this prophecy about God pouring out his spirit on all flesh or on all people.

Peter sort of adapts it slightly. Joel says in Joel it says and afterwards God says I will pour out my spirit. Peter I suppose he's expounding it and applying it he says in the last days says God I will pour out my spirit.

And in the New Testament the last days begins with the coming of the Messiah Jesus. In fact it's the whole time between Jesus' first coming and his second coming which is still future.

So we today are living in the last days. And from Joel's perspective this was a prophecy about a future time when God would pour out his spirit on all flesh and all people.

[13 : 47] And that's mentioned twice in verse 17 and verse 18. In the Old Testament era God's spirit was poured out only on certain particular special people on prophets or on those who were leaders of the Israelites.

There's one place where this comes out really clearly in the book of Numbers chapter 11 when God appoints and gets Moses to appoint 70 elders to help him with the leadership of the Israelites.

And they're called to come to the tent of meeting and God pours out his spirit on them and they begin to prophesy. But two of that number for whatever reason we're not told why they don't come to the tent of meeting they're still in the camp somewhere.

But God's spirit comes on them and they start prophesying and Joshua Moses' assistant says to Moses Moses my lord stop them. And Moses replies he says to Joshua are you jealous for my sake I wish that all the lord's people were prophets and that the lord would put his spirit on them.

And so what Moses had merely wished for Joel was prophesying that that would become a reality that God would pour out his spirit not just on one or two but on all God's people.

[15 : 18] That is what Joel was prophesying and of course we'll come to that it's fulfilled at Pentecost. But Joel speaks of phenomena that sort of go along with this among humans that will be upon men and women upon young and old they will prophesy they will dream dreams and see visions so it's old young male female all God's people and also in nature there will be signs in the sky and on the earth it may be just that this is not to be taken literally it's just sort of talking about what we would you know we use the term earth shattering events and it could be just speaking in that way but it could on the other hand be referring to recent events we think of the crucifixion where there was darkness at noon and it may well be referring to some of those things that took place but in verse 20 we read that it's these things will happen before the day of the

Lord comes the great and magnificent day so that's speaking of something that many prophets spoke of about this of a coming future day of the Lord now it's different from the last days the last days are an era a whole period of many days but the day of the Lord is a day of judgment when God will put all wrong to right when God's reign God's kingdom will come in its fullness and completeness and before that day Joel says there is a universal offer of salvation all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved in other words all who pray to him asking him for help all who ask God to save them they will be saved and that again is something that is developed in Acts that this offer of salvation is to all to people from all nations and all tongues and languages and peoples that offer goes out so that's the first part of

Peter's message it's prophecy from Joel the second is fulfillment and Peter tells a narrative a story a true story to explain how they've got to the point where Joel's prophecy was fulfilled and the things that they have seen happening how they happened and this story it's all centered on Jesus of Nazareth and it's a narrative of five movements and I've got five words for them and they all end in shun so the first is attestation the second is crucifixion the third is resurrection the fourth is ascension and the fifth is effusion which is just a fancy word for saying pouring out so the first is attestation in verse 22 Peter says that

Jesus of Nazareth a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst as you yourselves know he begins with the humanity of Jesus he doesn't begin with Jesus as being a divine person as being a divine messiah that might be just sort of too much to take on board at the beginning so he begins with what they know Jesus as a man but as a man whom God did remarkable things through these mighty acts these wonders that caused wonder and signs that pointed to Jesus himself and that this was a new age that had dawned the age of God's kingdom coming of course there's more to say about Jesus but you've got to begin somewhere and he says this all happened here in your midst as you yourselves know Jesus was well known as a miracle worker as a healer and it's the kind of things that

Luke has already described in his gospel many accounts there of Jesus healing people and doing great signs and wonders and miracles so there's attestation God attesting to Jesus a man attested to you by God the second movement is in the drama is crucifixion Peter in verse 23 says this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men or that could be just men who don't have the law in other words people who don't have the Torah who in other words the Romans who were the ones who actually crucified Jesus but Peter speaks of a double reason for Christ's suffering and death here on the one hand it's according to God's plan and purpose and foreknowledge

[20 : 36] God is in control here God is working out his purposes even through horrific evil and wickedness it's not the case that events had spiraled out of God's control or that the forces of evil had somehow got the better of God no God is in control everything's going according to God's plan and God's purpose but the second thing and this might seem almost sort of contrary to the first is that people are responsible Peter Peter Peter says you killed him they were not robots they had real choice in what they did and they are responsible for that choice the Westminster confession in chapter 3 point one says this it tries to bring these two things together it says that God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his will freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass yet so as thereby neither is

God the author of sin nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures so that's just trying to bring together these two things that Peter says here that God is in control it's all going according to God's plan and purpose from the beginning and yet people act freely they have real choices and they are responsible for those choices that they make now beyond that Peter doesn't really give a reason for the death of Christ and it's similar with other speeches and acts in other parts of the New Testament we have a theology of atonement of a theology of the cross of what Christ accomplished in his suffering and death on the cross of him accomplishing redemption for his people and reconciling us to God and removing our sins from us of how he died for our sins in our place particularly in places like Romans and Hebrews and to me it's just very interesting that in our tradition very often we think of an evangelistic message as explaining what

Christ achieved on the cross and yet in the New Testament that's really what's in teaching for believers and it doesn't really feature strongly in preaching to those who are not yet believers I'll leave you to chew over that and we move on to the third movement which is resurrection in verse 24 that God raised him up God raised him from the dead and there's a contrast here with you killed him but God raised him the human verdict on Jesus was that he was worthy of death it was a death sentence which they carried out but God turned that verdict on its head by raising him from the dead to life God vindicated Jesus now we know of cases of vindication we think of the recent post office scandal how many postmasters were wrongly convicted of financial misconduct and some of them were sent to jail for that and then those sentences were overturned and they were declared to be innocent of wrongdoing they were vindicated and that is what happened to

Jesus only infinitely more so I mean the sentence carried out in Jesus was the worst possible crucifixion was the most brutal and degrading and shameful death sentence conceived by humanity and that was what was meted out to Jesus but God completely turned that on its head God vindicated him by raising him from the dead as it says in Philippians 2 that God hyper exalted him God God just absolutely turned that verdict on its head and vindicated totally vindicated Jesus by raising him from the dead and Peter says that he loosened the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by death to be held captive by death so death is that can be translated agonies death is a curse it's the ultimate humiliation and I think there's a picture of a kind of a contact test here a struggle with death we sometimes speak of you know someone who's ill fighting for their lives for their life and someone might of course in the short term win that fight you know they might recover but in the long term we all lose that fight we all lose the fight for our lives or

I can maybe fight the decaying process by eating all the right stuff and exercising and looking after myself and I might gain a few extra years of reasonably healthy lifestyle of healthy life but death will get me in the end death gets us all in the end in the end death wins and yet not for Jesus it was impossible for him to be held captive by death because he is the Lord of life he is the author of life he died for the sins of others and that penalty was absolutely and fully paid and so death no longer has any claim on Jesus it was impossible for him to be held by death and Peter's words also hint at the uniqueness of Jesus at resurrection you see there's a few people in the Bible who are raised from the dead we think of Lazarus or

[26 : 47] Jairus' daughter and there's one or two others but they would die again in due course they would again become captive to death and yet for Jesus it was impossible for him to be held by death Jesus rose to everlasting undying life he has absolutely and finally triumphed over death but then the question comes how can we be sure Jesus rose from the dead and maybe people there ask that question and Peter has two answers to that first he returns to the theme of fulfillment and he quotes a second Old Testament passage Psalm 16 which we sang and how David prophesied the resurrection of the Messiah in Psalm 16 and Peter says that this was obviously not fulfilled in David himself because David died and was buried and at that time people could still visit David's tomb in Jerusalem but in verse 30

Peter says that David was a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ the Messiah that he was not abandoned to Hades nor did his flesh see corruption and Peter's there referring to the second Psalm that we sang Psalm 132 verses 11 and 12 that David could see that his offspring the Messiah would come and that he would not be left to the realm of the dead to Hades and his body would not go through decay so according to Peter Psalm 16 is messianic it expresses the experience not of David himself but of the Messiah David's offspring it also emphasizes the physicalness of the resurrection this resurrection is not just souls living on but the resurrection of the body and it's fulfilled in

God raising Jesus from the dead verse 32 God has raised this Jesus from the dead and we are all witnesses of this fact and that's the second reason we can be sure that Jesus rose because it was witnessed eyewitnessed by Peter and the other disciples indeed by many other disciples they saw the empty tomb and Jesus appearing to them alive after his death by crucifixion and Peter speaks of the eyewitness testimony of many people and that is another reason how we can know that this happened so that's three movements in this story attestation crucifixion resurrection fourth ascension in verse 33 being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the father the promise of the promise of the Holy Spirit he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing and then

Peter quotes yet another Old Testament passage Psalm 110 in verse 34 he says David did not ascend into the heavens but he himself says the Lord said to my Lord sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool so again Peter makes clear this is not fulfilled in David David didn't ascend to the heavens but he's speaking about his own Lord David's Lord my Lord he says who was invited to sit at the right hand of the Lord of God and that is where Jesus is now and then we come to the fifth movement in the story which is effusion or pouring out in verse 33 that Jesus having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing so Peter brings the narrative full circle back to what they are seeing and hearing the wind the fire the miraculous gift of languages and their question what does this mean and the explanation of this is that

Jesus is exalted to the God's right hand and he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you are seeing and hearing so he brings it back to what they've seen and heard and to Joel's prophecy where God says I will pour out my spirit on all flesh on all humanity but notice there's a subtle shift in the fulfillment because Peter says that Jesus is the one who has now poured out what you are seeing and hearing what in Joel's prophecy is God's work God is the one who says I will pour out my spirit in the fulfillment it is Jesus pouring out the spirit so that that's the the narrative the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy and it's Peter concludes with a declaration in verse 36 let all the house of

[32 : 35] Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified again we see the gaping contrast between God's verdict on Jesus and the people's verdict on him Peter describes Jesus as the one whom you crucified the people of Jerusalem represented by their leaders the Sanhedrin who condemned Jesus but also the crowd and shouted crucify him and in later sermons Peter directs the same accusation in chapter 3 4 5 and 7 although later on in chapter 10 where it's more remote it's not you it's they crucified him they killed him and also in chapter 13 Paul speaking in Antioch it's the people of Jerusalem and their rulers they killed him and yet this rejection of Jesus expresses their rejection of God and his way and that is something that we are all we all do in one way or another because sin is universal how it manifests itself differs from person to person and society to society and yet sin is universal but Peter says that

God has made this Jesus both Lord and Christ or Messiah Lord relates to Psalm 110 where David says that the Lord said to my Lord so it's that my Lord David's Lord and Messiah relates to Psalm 132 where God had promised David with an oath that he would set one of his descendants on his throne that descendant is the Messiah Messiah now Jesus has already been proclaimed Lord and Messiah the angel who announced his birth to the shepherd said that today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you who is the Messiah the Lord but now through his resurrection and ascension and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit God has vindicated Jesus and demonstrated this exalted status and in

Jewish expectation indeed in the Old Testament in many passages that speak about the coming Messiah from the line of David the Messiah was not he would be the king of the Jews the king of the Israelites but more than that his reign would extend to the ends of the earth so Jesus being Lord and Messiah means that he is the true and the rightful king of everywhere of the entire world and so for those who are hearing they come to this realization and they're appalled at it that they found out that they have rejected and crucified the world's true king and so in verse 37 we read that when they heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles brothers what shall we do now none of us here this evening was alive when Jesus was crucified it happened many centuries before any of us were born but of course there are other ways of rejecting

Jesus Christ of refusing him or ignoring him or just keeping him out of your life keeping him at arm's length living to serve other masters other idols or gods and all of these are ways of rejecting the world's true and rightful king and the one who is rightfully king over your life and over my life and so listen to what Peter tells them and us in verse 38 Peter said to them repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so there was a call a command to repent that means to turn from sins and for them particularly the sin of killing Jesus but it's more generally from a call to turn from going our own way living life our own way to living God's way to following Jesus Christ and be baptized in the name of Jesus the Messiah water baptism is symbolic of baptism with the spirit of the pouring out of the spirit a sign of entrance into the community of God's people and in verse 40 he says save yourselves or I think it would be better translated actually be saved from this corrupt generation it relates back to

Joel's prophecy that all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved and so there is a response demanded from the message at first it's implicit in the main part of Peter's message but when people ask what should we do it becomes explicit there is a response demanded a response of repentance and of baptism of faith of looking to God calling on God for salvation calling on the name of the Lord to be saved but then just finally there's a promise a promise of forgiveness of sins be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and we see here just the amazing grace of God God is offering forgiveness forgiveness even for the sin of crucifying the one who is

[38 : 43] Lord and Messiah and you might expect they might have expected maybe they did expect God to just say well all that's left for you is just to depart and be damned forever but no there is forgiveness offered God offers and holds out forgiveness for all who will repent and that offer Peter says in verse 39 the promise is for you and your children even for all who are far off and I think we can think of that in terms of time and place we are far off in terms of place and time but the promise is for us that if we repent if we trust if we call in the name of the Lord to be saved then we will be forgiven we will receive the Holy Spirit may God bless his word to us