

AM Acts 2:1-21

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[0 : 00] And it's on page 1096 of the Church Bible. So Acts chapter 2.

And just to introduce the reading. So the book of Acts is the second part of a two-volume series written by Luke. And the first is the book called Luke in the New Testament.

And at the beginning of Acts, in verses 1 and 2, Luke, the writer, describes the first book. He says, in the first book, O Theophilus, that's who it's addressed to. In the first book, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day when he was taken up into heaven, that is.

And that implies that this book, the second book, Acts, is about all that Jesus continued to do and to teach after he was taken up into heaven.

And it begins with Jesus appearing to his disciples after he rose from the dead.

[1 : 17] And that took place over a period of 40 days. And then after that period, Jesus, having appeared to his disciples on a number of occasions, he was taken up into heaven.

And then we read of 10 days, when we come to chapter 2, it's 10 days after that. So 50 days after Jesus rose from the dead, 10 days after he was taken up into heaven.

And it's the Jewish feast of Pentecost. That was one of the Jewish festivals, one of the three big festivals of the Jews in the year.

And it was kind of like a harvest festival. It was at the completion of the barley harvest and the first fruits of the wheat harvest. And also, at some stage, maybe at this stage, many Jews also sort of used it as an anniversary for the giving of the law at the time of Moses on Mount Sinai.

So anyway, we're going to read from chapter 2, verse 1 to verse 21. 1. 2. 3. 4.

[2 : 30] 5. 5. 6. 6. 6. 7.

7. 7. 7. 8.

8. 8. 9. 9. 9. 9. 9. 10.

10. 10. 10. 10. 10. Are not we to a speaking Galileans?

And how is it that we hear each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians.

[3 : 48] 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.

In those days I will pour out my Spirit, And they shall prophesy, And I will show wonders in the heavens 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. May God bless to us that reading from the word.

[5 : 20] Let's, I'd like us this morning to turn back to the passage that we read, To Acts chapter 2, On page 1096, And we're really focusing on just on the beginning of that chapter, Verses 1 to 13.

So in, In or around May of the year AD 30, The disciples of Jesus numbered around 120 in Jerusalem, With perhaps just a few hundred more in Judea, Samaria and Galilee.

Today, there are a countless number of disciples, Of Jesus Christ, All across our globe. And that number is growing. And today, They're meeting to worship in a huge number of languages, In more languages, Than we would be able to count.

How did that happen? How did we get from that situation in May 30 AD, To the situation that we have in the world today? Well, the answer has a lot to do with what happened on the day of Pentecost, Which we read about in Acts chapter 2.

Now, this event is a unique event, In world history, Just as Jesus' death, And resurrection, And ascension, Are unique events, In God's plan for history, And for salvation.

[7 : 05] So this event of Pentecost, Is a unique event. And it's closely bound together, With Jesus' ascension into heaven. In John chapter 16, Verse 7, Jesus tells his disciples, He says, Unless I go away, The comforter, Or counselor, That's the Holy Spirit, Will not come to you.

But if I go, I will send him to you. So, Jesus Christ ascends, Into heaven, And from there, The Holy Spirit descends, To his people.

And that's what happens, On this day of Pentecost. Pentecost. So in verse 1, We read that when the day of Pentecost arrived, The disciples were all together, In one place.

And I think it seems likely, That the place was, The temple in Jerusalem. That would be the only place big enough, For all the people, That were there.

And four things happen. First there's wind, Second fire, Third the Spirit, And fourth, Languages. So first, The wind, In verse 2, We read that, And suddenly there came from heaven, A sound, Like a mighty rushing wind, And it filled the entire house, Where they were sitting.

[8 : 28] The words for, Spirit, In both Greek and Hebrew, The two biblical languages, Also mean, Can mean wind, Or breath.

And Jesus, In John chapter 3, Likened, The Holy Spirit, To the wind. You can't see the wind, But you know it by its effects. On the way here, I passed, Some huge windmills, And, The blades were turning, I couldn't see the wind, But I could see, What the wind was doing, In turning the blades. And of course, Much of our power, Our electricity, Our lights, And, Other, Electrical power, Comes from, From windmills.

So, Just like the wind, You can't see the Spirit, But you know it, You know the Spirit, By, His effects. And this sound of a wind, The wind, Symbolizes the coming, Of, The Holy Spirit.

And it's not the sound, Of a gentle breeze. It's the sound, Of a powerful, Mighty, Rushing, Wind. And the promise, Of the Holy Spirit, Was closely connected, With, Power.

[9 : 43] At the end of Luke's Gospel, 24, Verse 49, Jesus said to his disciples, I'm going to send you, What my Father, Has promised. But stay in the city, Until you have been clothed, With power, From on high.

And in Acts chapter 1, Again to his disciples, Jesus says, You will receive power, When the Holy Spirit, Comes upon you. Now, The Holy Spirit of God, Has always been active, In creation, Throughout the Old Testament, We read of the Spirit's, Work and activity, Even from the, The creation, Of the universe, And also through, The Old Testament, God's Spirit, Empowered, God's servants, And prophets, But now he comes with new, And unprecedented power, Not just on special people, Like prophets and leaders, But on all, God's people, This is the age, Of, The Holy Spirit, And then, The second, The second, Phenomenon is, Is fire, In verse 3, It will be that, Divided tongues, As of fire, Appeared to them, And rested, On each one of them, Now I mentioned, Briefly, Earlier that, For Jews, And, We're not quite sure, When this, Sort of, Custom came in, But may well have been, At this time also, That Jews, Commemorated at Pentecost, The giving of the law, The Torah, At Mount Sinai, At the time of Moses, And there are parallels here, With, That account, In Exodus chapter 19, Verse 18, We read that, Mount Sinai, Was covered with smoke, Because the Lord, Descended on it, In fire, And, Maybe this is kind of, Parallel with that, There, The Lord descended on the mountain, In fire, Here, The Holy Spirit, Who is the Lord, Who is, Yahweh, The God of Israel, He descends, On, Not on the mountain this time, But on, His people, On the disciples,

It's a, A theophany, Which means God appearing, At Sinai, God appeared in fire, On the mountain, Now God again, God, God's spirit is appearing, In the form of fire, Upon his people, And then, The third, Thing we read of is, In verse 4, That they were all, Filled, Filled, Filled, With the Holy Spirit, So the language here, Is of, Being filled, Or filled up, With the Holy Spirit, Now there's, Other terms

that's used, Which are, I think just the same meaning, In chapter 1, Verses 4 and 5, Jesus says, That in a few days time, You will be, Baptized, With, The Holy Spirit, Later in chapter 2, Verse 17 and 33, It speaks of God, Pouring out, His spirit, And, It's the same, The same meaning, The only difference, I think is that, Later on in Acts,

It speaks of, People being filled, With the spirit, For sort of, On subsequent occasions, When they, Maybe are called on, To speak, About Christ, And bear witness, About Christ, Whereas the language, Of baptism, With the spirit, Being baptized, With the spirit, Having the spirit, Poured out, Is only used, Of a one off, Unique experience, But we read here, That all, Were filled, With the spirit, It's not the case, That some were filled, And not others, All the disciples, Were filled, With the spirit, What about, How does that relate, To us today, Of course none of us, Were there, On the day of Pentecost, Well, Later on in verse 38, Chapter 2 verse 38, Peter says, To the crowd, Repent, And each one of you, Be baptized, In the name of Jesus, The Messiah, So that your sins, May be forgiven, And you will receive, The gift of the Holy Spirit, So when we, Repent,

[14:02] When we put our faith, In Christ, Then we receive, The Holy Spirit, Paul says that, In 1 Corinthians 12, Verse 13, He says that, He's writing to the whole, Church in Corinth, And he says, We were all baptized, With one spirit, So as to form, One body, Whether Jews, Or Gentiles, Slave or free, And we were all given, The one spirit to drink, So, There are some Christians, Who say that, Being filled, Or baptized, With the spirit, Is a kind of, Second experience, First of all, You come to faith, And then maybe, At some time later, You might be baptized, With the spirit, But here we see that, The Bible teaches, That all believers, Are baptized, With the spirit, All believers receive, The Holy Spirit, Abraham Kuyper, A Dutch theologian, Used the illustration of, And he was, Sort of around the turn,

Of the 20th century, So I guess it was very, Sort of opposite, For the time that he lived in, But he spoke of, Of a whole city, Being put on the electricity grid, And that's what happened at, Like what happened at Pentecost, But then, Sort of later on, Outlying villages, And individual houses, And farms, Would also be joined, To the grid, And that's what happens, When individuals, Come to put their faith, In Jesus Christ, But when we believe, We receive, The spirit, And then the fourth thing, Is languages, In verse four, We read that, They were all filled, With the Holy Spirit, And began to speak, In other tongues, Or languages, As the spirit, Gave them utterance, This is a miracle, Of, Speaking, Speaking, Not just of, Of hearing, That these disciples, Suddenly had, A miraculous ability, To speak languages, They had never previously, Learned,

And these are, These are human languages, I prefer the translation, Languages, Rather than tongues, And it's, As the spirit, Enables them, It's the Holy Spirit, Who gives them, This, Remarkable, Miraculous, Ability, And, And it corresponds, To the people, Who were there, In Jerusalem, For, The festival, The festival of Pentecost, So, In verse 5, It says that, Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem, Jews, Devout men from every nation, Under heaven, Heaven, They were there for the festivals, Now many people, Many Jews who, Lived in the diaspora, That's the sort of scattered communities of Jews, All around the, The kind of known world, Some would retire to Jerusalem, To live out the rest of their years there, Others would, Would visit on pilgrimage, And perhaps particularly at festival times, So there were all these people,

And, In verse 6 we read that, At this sound the multitude came together, And they were bewildered, Because each one was hearing them speak, In his own language, So, These Jews who had, For many generations, Lived in, Other parts of the world, Maybe wouldn't even speak, The language of Jerusalem, Which was Aramaic, They would speak the language, Of the place where they had grown up, And, There's a whole long list, Of languages that Luke, Luke gives, And in verse 7 we read that, They were amazed and astonished, Saying, Are not all those, These who are speaking, Galileans, And how is it, That we hear each of us, In his own native language, Now, Galilee was not known, As a centre of learning, It had a reputation, For being backward,

Out in the sticks, As we would say, There was no way, There was no way, That these Galileans, Of all people, Could know, All these different languages, Some of which came from, Very far away, And, Luke lists them, Pardians, Medes, Elamites, Residents of Mesopotamia, So that's sort of, To the east, Judea, Nearby, And Cappadocia, That's in Turkey, Pontius, And Asia, Also in modern day Turkey, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Also, Egypt, Which we know, Where that is, Libya in North Africa, Belonging to Cyrene, And, And Rome, And people from Crete, And Arabs too, So all these different peoples, From all, All around, With their own, Languages, And they're hearing, The disciples speak their own language, Now, I think it might be hard for us, I think most, Probably the majority of us

here, Our mother tongue is English, And it's just hard for us to imagine,
[19 : 12] How amazing this was, Because, Today, Everywhere in the world you go, You'll find somebody at least, Who can speak and understand English, But if you imagine, Say, A Gaelic speaker, Traveling to Pyongyang, And they're encountering, A rural North Korean peasant, Farmer, Get up in a public square, And address them in perfect Gaelic, And not only in that, But in lots of other, You know, Languages, And that brings us closer to the, Just the, How amazing, This was, What was happening here, So, Peter goes on to, In his explanation, He goes on to relate these events, To, To Joel's prophecy, And, God willing this evening, I want to look at, Peter's speech, Which, Is, In most of the rest of, Acts chapter 2, So, If you want to hear that, Come back this evening, But there's another, Old Testament passage, Which is in the background here,

It's not mentioned explicitly, But Luke, Hints at it, He gives a, A list of, In verses, From verse, 9, To 11, A list of different, Nations and tribes, And that's, Kind of, Maybe recalls, Genesis chapter 10, Where after the flood, Many different nations, Develop, Emerge, And spread, Around, Around, But also in chapter 11, We read of, The account of the tower of Babel, And the confusion of language, Let me just read it to you, From, Genesis 11, Verse 1, Now the whole earth, Had one language, And the same words, Or common speech, And as people migrated, From the east, They found, A plain, In the land of Shinar, And settled there, And they said to one another, Come, Let us make bricks, And burn them thoroughly, And they had brick for stone, And bitumen for mortar, And they said, Come, Let us build ourselves a city, And a tower, With its top in the heavens, And let us make a name for ourselves, Lest we be dispersed, Over the face, Of the whole earth, And the Lord came down, To see the city, And the tower, Which the children of man, Had built, And the Lord said, Behold, They are one people, And they have all one language, And this is only the beginning, Of what they will do, And nothing, That they propose to do, Will now be impossible for them, Come, Let us go down, And there confuse their language, So that they may not understand, One another's speech, So the Lord dispersed them from there, Over the face, Of all the earth, And they left off, Building the city, Therefore its name was called Babel, Because there the Lord, Confused the language, Of all the earth, And from there, The Lord dispersed them, Over the face, Of all the earth, Babel, Was, What happened there, Was a communication, Breakdown, In God's judgment, On the arrogant plans, Of that society, Pentecost, By contrast, Is a communication, Breakthrough, Immediately following, The account of Babel, In the following chapter, Genesis chapter 12, We have the account, Of God's call, Of Abraham, Or Abraham, As he was then, From all the different nations, Of the world, That had developed, Different languages as well, God chose, One man, This man Abraham, And promised, That through him, All the families, Of the earth, Would be, Blessed, That's in Genesis 12, Verse 3, And now God, Is fulfilling, That promise, Particularly through, The death, And resurrection, And ascension, Of Jesus Christ, Through which, Salvation for the whole world, Comes through those events, And now, With the sending of the Holy Spirit, To give power, For witness, About Jesus Christ, About the salvation, That he gives, To the ends, Of the earth, And the sign, That God gives, Along with the sending, Of the Holy Spirit, Is that now, God is breaking through, Those barriers, Set up at Babel, In judgment, On the godless pride, Of that society, Because God's word, God's message, The good news, Of Jesus Christ, Is not just for one people, One nation, One language, But for all, Now, On this occasion, All the people, There in Jerusalem, At Pentecost, Were Jews, Either by birth, Or by, Conversion to Judaism, The gospel, Impacting,

[24 : 15] Non-Jewish nations, Comes later on, In the book of Acts, But this event, Anticipates, And signposts, The good news, Of Jesus Christ, Going to every, Nation, And tribe, And especially, Every language, Because that good news, Is for, Everyone, Now, I myself, In the past, I've preached, On Pentecost, Being a reversal, Of Babel, But that is not quite, Right, If it were just a, A simple reversal, The apostles would have, Declared the praises of God, In one language, Maybe Aramaic, Their own language, And everyone would have, Miraculously understood them, But that's not what happens, At Pentecost, Instead, The spirit enabled, The disciples, To speak, In the, Numerous languages, That were understood, By the different groups, Of pilgrims, There in Jerusalem, There for the feast, God did not,

Abolish, The different languages, Rather God communicates, In all those languages, And that's, That's important for us today, Today, Many, Different religions, Claim a special language, For God, So my Muslim friends, Claim that, Really God's word, Is in Arabic, For many, Indian religions, They say it's, Sanskrit, Or Pali, Or Punjabi, Many Christians too, Have, Said that God's, Special language

is Latin, Or Syriac, Or even 17th century English, But what we learn here, Is that, God speaks in every, Language of the world, And let's just think about that, For a moment, Here we're meeting, This service is, In English, And for most of us, I know not all of us, But for most of us, That's our mother tongue, We hear the word of God,

Read and preached, In English, And we respond, In praise to God, And in prayer, Singing, Praying, In English, A language, That actually didn't exist, When Pentecost happened, And a language, Whose roots lie, In languages, Spoken at the far, Extremities of the world, From the perspective, Of Jerusalem, But the fact is, We don't, We don't even think about that, Most of the time, And that's significant, It's just so, So normal, So natural, For us, Because the gospel, Has made itself at home, In, In English, In the English language, And that's true for, Other languages here, As well, Gaelic, Farsi, Sarani, Portuguese, Etc, We just don't think about, We praise, We worship, We read God's word, In our own language, And it's just so normal, And natural to us, But it's the work, It's the result of the work, Of the Holy Spirit, The spirit of Christ,

The spirit of mission, Begun here, On the day, Of Pentecost, And we should give thanks, For that, It stresses the, The vital importance, Of the work, Of Bible translation, So that, And that's so in keeping, With the work, Of the Holy Spirit, The spirit of Pentecost, So that everyone may read, And hear, The word of God, In their own mother tongue, And hear the voice of God, In their own language, Just, Last week, I was in, In Pakistan, And, I was delighted to meet, A guy, From, Baltistan, Now, Baltistan is in the far north, Of Pakistan, It's probably the most, Famous thing about it, Is that it's where, K2, Is located, K2 is the second highest mountain, In the world, But, The people of Baltistan, Their language is, It's related to Tibetan, But the,

The majority, Of the Baltistan, There is Shia Muslim, And I met, He was a, A religious leader, Cleric, And, I was just talking to him about, About the Injil, Or the New Testament, And he said, Oh, We've just had that translated, Recently, Into my language, Into Balti, And I've got a friend, Who was involved in that, And he was just really positive, About that, So, That was just, That was just a great joy for me, To hear that, Of the, The New Testament, Being translated, Into that, Language of northern Pakistan, And being, Being well received there, I remember another story, This is from, I think it was Uzbekistan, Where, A few years ago, The Uzbek Bible, Was, Translated, And, And published, And, A religious leader, Got a hold of a copy, And he didn't like it, So, He would, Rip out, Read the page, Rip it out, And chuck it in the river, And, There was a,

[29 : 23] A woman, Who was, Downstream, Washing her clothes, And, She started picking out, All these pages, And she read it, And it just, She was just gripped, By this message, And, She took it home, And told her, Her friends, Her relatives, And shared it with them, And, A community of believers, In Christ, Emerged from, Reading the Bible, That had floated down, At the river in that way, From that new, Bible translation, So, God's word is going out, All across, The world, I've been privileged to, Take part in, In prayer meetings, With people from different, Languages, I remember, In our own home, We had a number of meetings, Where there were people from, Speaking Farsi, And Sarani, And also Dari, And we said, You know, Pray in your own language, And people did that, And that was, That was just great to do that, And of course, God hears, In every language, And,

One thing that we, Learn from this, Is that, The Christian mission, That is in step, With the Holy Spirit, Is not, Imperialistic, It doesn't, It doesn't, Try to impose, A language, And a culture, On, On its, Hearers, On listeners, In new places, But the gospel, Makes itself at home, In every, Language and culture, Where it goes, Sadly, The church, Has not always been in step, With the Holy Spirit, In this, But for us today, Here in, In Scotland, In Dumfries, In the southwest, Dumfries and Galloway, Do we make every effort, To communicate, In terms, In language, That the people around us, Can, Understand, To communicate, The good news, Of Christ, To the people that we, Come into contact with, Now this, This passage, Points to, What I call, A diversity principle, In the New Testament, Which exists, Alongside,

A unity principle, The unity principle, We read that in many places, But, We could sum it up, In the words of, Ephesians chapter 1, Verse 10, Where it speaks about, The ultimate goal of all things, Which is to bring unity, To all things, In heaven, And on earth, Under, Christ, That's the ultimate, Goal of history, But also, God, Is a God, Of, Of, Diversity, A God, Who creates diversity, We see that in creation, Every, Snowflake, Is unique, It's different, From every other snowflake, Every set of human, Fingerprints, Is unique, Because God is a God, Who, Who delights in, And creates, Diversity, And in the redeemed, Human race, We will see, Not the, Abolition, Of diverse cultures,

And languages, But their bringing together, And their renewal, And their redemption, In Jesus Christ, At the end of the Bible,
At the end of the New Testament, We have, A picture, A vision, Of, Of the goal of history, Where John writes in, Revelation chapter 7, Verse 9, And with this I close, He says, After this I looked, And there before me, Was a great multitude, That no one, From every nation, Tribe, People, And language, Standing, Before the throne, And before the Lamb, Who is Jesus Christ, Amen, May God bless, His word to us, Amen, Amen,