

Baptised in the Name of Jesus

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[0 : 00] This is the AM service on the 18th of May 1997. The sermon is taken from Acts chapter 2 verses 1 to 42.

It is entitled Baptised in the Name of Jesus and the preacher is Hilary Roth. Luke first wrote his gospel and then he wrote a sequel and that is the Acts of the Apostles. Luke's gospel ends with the disciples waiting for power and direction. We read in Luke 24 verse 49. And see, I am sending upon you what my father promised. So stay here in the city until you have been closed with power from on high.

But what came in Acts 2 was a total surprise to everyone.

[1 : 21] Luke tries to describe what happens as best he can. And he doesn't do too bad a job of it, considering the incredible events that he was witnessing.

Suddenly, Luke says, the great event took place. The Spirit of God came upon them. It was accompanied by three supernatural signs. A sound, a sight and strange speech. First, there came from heaven.

First, there came from heaven a sound like the rush of violent wind. And it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Secondly, there appeared to them visibly what seemed to be like tongues of fire, which separated and came to rest on each one of them.

Thirdly, all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages. Thirdly, all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages.

[2 : 54] And I really would have loved to have been there. But this was an act of God which changed the world forever. Because it was the Feast of Pentecost, thousands of Jews were in Jerusalem.

Pentecost was one of three festivals which the law required the attendance of Jews at the temple. So Jerusalem was jammed packed.

200,000 Jews could crowd together into the temple. So there were Jews from Babylonia, from Syria, from Egypt, from Rome, from Crete and Arabia.

So many of them were obviously outside in the street when they heard this commotion among the disciples. Perhaps the noise followed by the disciples burst out of the upper room and developed into a meeting in the street, which then went on to a huge gathering in the temple area.

We can't be sure about all these details, but we can be certain about the impact on the hearers. They'd come from all over the known world, and yet they heard the disciples praising God in their own language.

[4 : 24] This was a special act of God that marked the beginning of breaking down barriers.

And this is a theme that drives the book of Acts. The next thing that happened was that the onlookers accused the disciples of being drunk.

And Peter took advantage of the situation by telling them all about Jesus of Nazareth. And so they did, three thousand of them on that day.

Just as the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus when John baptized him, so that he entered his public ministry, full of the Holy Spirit, Luke tells us, led by the Spirit, in the power of the Spirit, anointed by the Spirit, to equip them for their mission in the world.

The coming of the Holy Spirit in such a dramatic way certainly got people's attention. And so Peter, not slow to take that opportunity to speak to the crowd, he was there telling them what all about Jesus of Nazareth.

[6 : 14] And it's interesting, I think, to see the remarkable change in Peter. Not so many days before, he had been the one who denied Jesus after he got arrested.

But now he was forgiven and restored by Jesus. And now he was a transformed man.

And I think we too can thank God that he doesn't wash his hands of us when we fail. There was a large crowd, such a large crowd there, that Peter had to shout to be heard.

They didn't have a PA system in those days. And Peter's message began with the explanation of what had happened.

It could not be drunkenness, he said, since it was only nine o'clock in the morning. And the Jews on a feast day abstained from eating and drinking until 10am or even noon.

[7 : 28] It was not intoxication, says Peter. It was the ministry of the Spirit that had caused this.

It was the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And to prove that the Spirit could produce these sorts of things, Peter quoted from Joel 2, verses 28-32.

And he told them that Jesus was none other than the Messiah. The Messiah that they had been looking for.

The Christ. Christ is the Greek word for Messiah. The Anointed One, the Messiah, was Jesus.

And they need look for him no longer. To most of us, it means little to say that Jesus is Messiah or Christ.

[8 : 31] To many of us, it is his first and last name. But to the Jews, Christ or Messiah was a clear teaching from the Old Testament Scriptures.

That God, God's Anointed One, would come and set the world right. This was clear teaching from the Old Testament.

And Jesus of Nazareth was to many just another upstart human religious teacher. And to say that Jesus was the Christ was blasphemy.

That Jesus, for Peter, goes on to prove to his audience that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they knew well, was the Messiah.

Whom they also knew well. From the Old Testament prophecies, Peter reminded them of the picture of the Messiah. From the facts they already knew, he also painted a picture of Jesus.

[9 : 46] Jesus had come from a town many of them knew, north of Jerusalem. Many of the crowds already knew that he was not an ordinary man.

Because some of them would have eaten with the 5,000. Some of them would have seen him heal the sick. Some of them would have heard the amazing reports of the raising of Lazarus.

But despite all this, the crowd were guilty of pounding this extraordinary man to his death.

A brutal death by Roman execution. By crucifixion. God's hand was in all this to work out his purposes.

But that did not excuse their awful behavior. They had killed God's messenger. They had killed God's anointed one.

[10 : 50] The Messiah. Peter points out to them from the Old Testament. That references about Jesus are there, pointing to God.

Jesus puts Jesus on the same level as God. And this revelation would have been staggering to that Jewish crowd.

Because all the honor and the adoration and the worship that they had reserved for God alone was also due to a poor carpenter from Nazareth.

They were not trifling with a Galilean carpenter, but God, says one commentator.

Human beings may have killed Jesus. But God brought him back to life.

[11 : 58] This was not a resuscitation, but an eternal resurrection. And the resurrection of Jesus was the central fact of Peter's sermon.

Everything hell hangs on this truth. And Peter then is at pains to point out that he is not guessing about this resurrection.

He is not guessing about it, or it was a rumor, or he had it from second-hand reports. He had seen Jesus alive.

He was alive from the dead. He'd seen him with his own eyes. And so had the other disciples who were standing alongside him. There was no doubt about it.

Peter tells them that this fact is beyond dispute. They, like us, could debate it. They could procrastinate it.

[13 : 04] They could deny it. But nothing would change the truth. Many in the crowd that day were convicted by the thought that they had contributed to the death of God's Messiah.

We are told that the crowd feels the sharp pain of guilt. Literally, they were cut to the heart.

Realizing that they had killed the Messiah, their only hope of salvation, they desperately wanted to know, What shall we do?

What shall we do? And Peter's answer was, Repent and be baptized. This called for a two-fold change.

The first was a change of mind. The second was a change of association. Change of mind is the meaning of the word repent.

[14 : 21] It's not just sorrow for sin, though this is involved, nor is it just a mental agreement to certain facts.

It is the kind of basic change of mind which will bring about a change of life. A change of mind which will bring about a change of life.

And perhaps this is best explained when we express to each other that we've had a change of heart.

So for these people, repentance meant wholehearted change of mind about Jesus of Nazareth. Thinking of him no longer as a carpenter's son, a religious, perhaps imposter, but now to believe in him as the Lord and Messiah.

[15 : 19] The second part of the change concerned baptism. Baptism. This was visible proof of their repentance.

It was not just any sort of baptism. The baptism was well known to those people because of the ministry of John the Baptist and because it was one of the acts that a convert to the Jewish faith had to undergo.

But it was baptism into the name of Jesus Christ. Baptism signifies an association with the message, with the teaching, or group, or a person involved in authorizing it.

Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ meant that these people severed their ties with Judaism and had an association with the teaching of Jesus and his people.

Repent and be baptized, says Peter. And when you do this, all will be forgiven and they too will receive the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

[16 : 37] And the offer is not restricted to them, but is available to family and friends miles from Jerusalem.

And Peter here reaches out across time, across space, across generations and cultures. And we read in Acts 39, For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.

And today, two thousand years later, Chris and Nicole, Stephen and Georgina, bring Stacey and Aaron to be baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and to be received into the church of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit continues the work of Christ here on earth through his people. And three thousand people met the conditions that day and were baptized.

And we too must keep on asking, together with those who heard Peter's Pentecost sermon, What shall we do?

[18 : 07] What shall we do so that the Holy Spirit will be in our lives? What shall we do so that the Holy Spirit will remain with us always?

And Peter gave the answer to that question at Pentecost. And his answer is still valid for us today. 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.

The gift of the Spirit is the Spirit himself. The Spirit regenerates us, indwells us, unites us, transforms us.

All the fruits and the gifts of the Spirit flow from this one great gift. God has given us himself, and his name is the Holy Spirit.

He is in the Spirit. He is in the Spirit. He is in each heart that calls to him in faith. I would like to tell you a little story, sort of an observation rather than a story.

[19 : 27] An observation of some time in Wales. And I remember when it was winter, in the valleys of Wales, you can see rows and rows of cottages, as you all have seen pictures of, if you haven't been there yourself.

But in the winter, those rows and rows of cottages have a deep cavern of snow on their roofs. But as the day wears on, large sort of fragments begin to tumble off the roof.

They come tumbling over one another until perhaps you might see a whole avalanche of it come sliding over the edge of the roof and get dumped onto the pavement.

And then before the sun goes down, you can see each roof clear and dry, as if it were a summer's eve. But here and there you'd see one or two roofs that still had a snow mantle over them that was unbroken.

And there would still be stiff icicles all around the edge. So what made the difference in those houses?

[20 : 50] The difference was found within. Some of those cottages were empty. Some of the cottages had perhaps very lonely, poor inhabitants.

Perhaps they couldn't afford to buy the fuel that was necessary. And so they huddled over small, perhaps scanty fires.

while the other houses perhaps had high blazing fires creating a real inward warmth. And it was that inward warmth that melts the snow, melts the covering of snow over the roofs.

would be possible to actually get up on the roof and clear it away. Pull off the icicles.

the snow but the snow and the icicles would return. It actually needs an inward heat to create that total thaw on the roof.

[22 : 04] the holy spirit is our fire within. God is our fire within.

God is ours. He has not given us just a gift. He has given us his whole being without reservation. And that is the good news of Pentecost.

This glorious message is the message that God loves us and he has blessed us with himself. That is the message of Pentecost.

But do we hear this message? Do we grasp it with faith? I am not asking whether we actually grasp it intellectually but I am asking as it penetrated our hearts.

Is it really there in our bloodstream? When the Holy Spirit came to live in the believers at Pentecost 2,000 years ago, he chose the church as the place for his special presence.

[23 : 25] He has since then enabled the church to accomplish Christ's work. He has guided the church to understand the scriptures and he continues to do this in the church today.

And one story that I did read was about Wales again and it's a story about a famous preacher called Dr.

Newman Hall. And Dr. Newman Hall stood early one morning on the summit of Snowdon in Wales. He stood there with 120 others who had come to see what promised to be a really beautiful sunrise. and they were not disappointed that day. They stood watching the sun tinge the mountain tops and it sparkled on the lakes.

And then Dr. Hall was invited to preach. that he was overpowered with emotion and he could not preach. But he felt that he could pour out his heart in prayer which he did.

[24 : 42] And as he prayed tears rolled down the faces of people and a superhuman stillness came over them. And quietly with a solemn awe they descended the mountain and scattered.

afterwards when visiting there again the doctor was told that 40 people were converted that morning and had joined the church in the neighbourhood.

But he said I never said a word to them I only prayed. Yes and still more wonderful he was told they did not understand a word you said.

for none of them could speak English only Welsh. It is an absolute miracle that a faith that was born in a little sliver of Middle Eastern country 2,000 years ago is now all around the world and that mighty acts of God are praised today in Swahili in Maori in Vietnamese in English in many many other languages.

languages. All of us are curling our tongues around different words but those words translate into the same reality.

[26 : 24] One Lord one faith one baptism one God and Father of all. Amen.