

Why We Need To Read The Scriptures

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 0 0] you that we're talking about acts chapter 2 and verses 1 to 41 i expect to spend 45 seconds on each of 42 verses so that we will be out of here by no i it's not possible is it to do that however i uh it's a long passage to be talking about and so i uh but we're going to move very quickly did you ever try talking on an elevator you know when it's full of people and you want to be jolly and tell people what a nice day it is and how much you're enjoying riding with them and how utterly dependable you find the manufacturers of modern elevators so that they can do all the wonderful things and it's a terrible task isn't it everybody's there eyeball to eyeball and nobody is allowed to say anything to anybody i don't know i feel just a terrible sense of constraint quite idiotic when i try and open my mouth and say something and they look at you and then it's about the same thing when you get on a bus or a sky train it's hopeless i mean you you practically have to take a knife to cut through the non-communication that is there by fiat of that group they impose it on you and you know that you have to behave in a certain way and you can't talk or anything like that well today we're talking about pentecost and pentecost has a quite different view of how people should relate and i want to share with you the that way of relating i i got up at eight o'clock this morning in the communion service i would say it's just me me me and i want more and more and more for me me me it's all mine mine mine into them all the time and we don't dare break out of them we know what is expected in the situation and we readily conform to that pattern of behavior you know who you can talk to and who you can't and that's the way it goes well i just want to give you that as a little background to the second chapter of the acts of the apostles and then i want to uh i want to look at it in broad sort of broad sweeping statements that i hope will challenge you deeply to study the scriptures um so let's just bow our heads in prayer father people have been reading this passage over and over and over again they have been searching in it and turning over every stone in it and examining every blade of grass that grows in it and putting it under microscopes and trying to compare it with history and to do all sorts of wonderful things with it as scholars bend their minds to it and try and crack all it's laid down for us in this passage so it seems a bit hopeful for us to think that in the few minutes that we have to turn our minds to these verses tonight that you could speak to us in a new way that would change our lives and yet we know that is your purpose to change our lives our lives we uh our lives need to be changed and uh we know that it is your purpose to change them and it is the instrument of that change that you confront us with your word so that our eyes may be open to see our ears to hear our hearts to obey and that we receive into this body of death that resurrected life of jesus christ and we receive indwelling presence of christ in the person of your holy spirit to guide and direct us and to make us into new creatures

that we might be conformed to the image of your son jesus christ so lord you've got a lot of work to do and it's pretty hard dry clay that you're starting to work with in us so help us to respond to your word as we think about it and pray about it and seek to understand it in our minds so that our minds may be informed and to receive it in our hearts so that our hearts may be inflamed we ask this in the name of our of your son jesus christ amen so there it is first paragraph i'm going by paragraphs tonight that it's wind and fire that's uh terrible to see wind and fire i don't know if you've ever seen a forest fire sweep before the wind as it goes through the trees terrible terrible picture and so uh the coming of pentecost is first given to us is this very dramatic picture of the dry stubble before the wind and the fire coming and sweeping it and burning it all up and that's uh one picture of the holy spirit as it appeared to the disciples on the first pentecost that they would be consumed with that fire there's a little thing about this which i feel as an anglican i must tell you about you know the funny hats that bishops wear have you ever seen them like this do you know what they are they are the fire little flames of fire that they carry around on their heads to show that they're apostles uh the intention is good whether the results are always that good i'm not sure but uh certainly it's a lovely idea so there's wind and fire that sweeps uh sweeps through among the disciples resting on each one of them and filled with the holy spirit they began to speak in other tongues as the spirit gave them utterance they began to communicate that's why i told you about the elevator in the bus because we really have difficulty communicating and we don't even you know even though we all speak english we speak from different hearts and different points of view and different backgrounds and different educational systems and different senses of logic and different use of words so that we can barely make each other understand each other when we talk to each other communication is an extremely difficult thing and the first thing the work of the holy spirit on the first pentecost was to make it possible for people to understand each other and that's uh that's one of the things we need to look for as a work of the holy spirit that we somehow can begin to communicate in much greater depth with one another than we do at the moment communication a wonderful miracle of communication here as was read for us and that lovely list of parthians and medes and elamites and cappadocians and people from pontus and phrygia and pamphylia and people from rome and jews and proselytes and cretans and arabs they all heard in their own language the wonderful works of god and so i think that one of the signs of the working of the holy spirit is suddenly we hear we hear in a language that we understand it suddenly communicates to us and we begin to hear well that's the first business of communication there's one sort of aspect of that communication which i'd like to tell you about and that is that the people who heard it uh decided to mock and when they decided to mock they said they're filled with new wine they are drunk we had a wonderful testimony here last sunday night

to a man who preached his first sermon and it was very effective and he said it was because he was drunk uh shocked as i was i've lived with that thought all week and that begin to like it better as the week goes by uh simply because sometimes drunks can say the things drunks don't have any trouble with elevators drunks don't have any trouble with buses drunks don't have any trouble going up to you on the street and asking you very personal questions they have a wonderful freedom in talking and in communicating and uh my friend of mine was on a subway in toronto recently when one of them was there and he says my name is herb and i'm from alberta and i have a horse and i don't know how you people live in this city and he went on and abused them for several blocks in a way which was very incisive and which left everybody else just unable to speak because how could they answer this man and uh and i you know i know the tragic consequences of alcohol and one of the most tragic consequences of it is simply that that people who under the influence of alcohol are really quite nice people uh in their cold sober moments they are pretty unhappy people so it's uh it's a it's a it's an elusive kind of thing that drink does for you but it does sort of open possibilities and i love the fact that that they were criticized here for being drunk and uh because they had that kind of freedom to begin to talk about things that meant a lot to them and uh that's one of the things the holy spirit does to make it possible for us to communicate we've got an enormous amount of really good stuff to say to one another if only we could find the the the context and the and the possibility of saying it but but it's it's hard hard work to do it and uh and and to do it in a sense to do it cold sober is very hard indeed i mean cold sober in terms of the holy spirit uh not uh you know not uh trying to do it in our in our own sort of meticulous and logical and grammatical way that we try and explain the deep things that concern us and it just comes out like sawdust awful stuff and uh it doesn't communicate and uh you wonder if uh how god the holy spirit gives the gift of communication so people can speak next big section is the wonderful passage that paul peter preaches on from the book of joel he goes back into the old testament now if the first thing was uh was uh communication this is confirmation that what god had said in the old testament would in fact come to pass and in order to explain the present you go back to um what was said in the first place very important point let me tell you very important god doesn't do things and then explain them he explains things and then does them that's why it's very important for you to read the bible if you're looking for god to do something and then to explain it to you you're going to waste most of your life before you catch on that it doesn't work that way what you do is you find out god's explanation of things in his word and then you begin to see those things happen you can identify them when they happen and so this is a wonderful example of how when they had this pentecost experience they understood this experience they didn't just say wow you know and use all sorts of exclamatory terms

to say my this is tremendous they said this is that which god said would happen they knew about the experience long before they had it and one of the great tests of your experiences is is that the scriptures will interpret it to you that's why you need to come to the word of god before you come to the experience because the experience might be wasted on you if you didn't know what it was about that's what happened you see on the road to emmaus when jesus was walking along with the two disciples and he walked for a couple of hours with them at least and explained things to them and after he explained things to them then they experienced who he was and uh coming to christ i think happens that way that's why we spend so much time preaching at you in order that having some understanding of how god works you will then see it happen in your own life so that's uh how that's the second section is this confirmation of uh what god does what god has said in the experience of the disciples at the first pentecost it's a confirmation he communicates and he confirms and uh you you can i mean it's a wonderful passage that you could spend a lot of time on but i will pour out my spirit comes in it twice and he says that wonderful things will happen your sons and your daughters shall prophesy they have something to say for a change your young men shall see visions and people without vision perish and that's true you've got to have something which is infinitely more than what you've ever experienced you've got to live with a vision and if you've got no vision you're dead you know if you've got no vision about god's purpose in your life if you've got no vision about god bringing history to some kind of conclusion if you have no awareness of the ultimate reality of things and been given by god a vision of those things we're in real trouble in fact that's what secular man does is in a sense he wipes out the vision and then he finds life is a bit disillusioning so he blows his brains out and that's because of the lack of vision and he says here that young men shall see visions and old men shall go on dreaming dreams you know you dream a dream of of a society in which the idea of abortion would be absolutely unthinkable there's nothing wrong with dreaming that dream even though it's far from the reality of our daily experience that's the kind of vision that we need you need a vision of a world in which families are united and fathers are turning to their children and children to their fathers you need a dream of the reality of the kingdom coming and the circumstances of our world the world when people come to get married they're dreaming dreams and seeing visions and they need to because marriage signifies a lot more than most people ever experience within it and it must do it's meant to do that and we mustn't lose that kind of vision that young men see visions and old men dream dreams and men servants and maid servants in that day because of the pouring out of the spirit of god they shall prophesy and what prophesying is you see what the province does in the uh in the city of vancouver i like taking a crack at the province every so often because i i i find it appalling absolutely appalling but does it ever sell and so i'm humbled by the fact that

in our free enterprise world it's a success and i'm broke and uh what do you do but you can at least get your own at it once in a while but all it tells you is things and things and things and events and events but what will happen is that uh people will prophesy in other words they will understand what is happening they will be able to interpret what is happening they will be able to see the consequences of what is happening they won't just be endlessly compiling meaningless statistics they will begin to put life together and give it some some intent and some meaning and some purpose within the terms of the vision they have seen the dreams they have dreamed and the word of god as it is revealed to them the kingdom of god they will prophesy and then a lovely thing happens in verse 19 and following i will show you wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth beneath you know you probably haven't seen the sky for a few months but it's up there and uh once you do see it and you see the sort of sweep of the clouds and the mountains and the stars and and the planets and and the various broken down old what you call them i can never get past calling them sputniks but there's something else now that uh that the wonders in the sky will be in a sense a great theater in which you see nature in accordance with the purpose of god we're nature revealing something of the glory of god nature revealing something of the meaning of our lives the whole of the sky will be speaking to us and uh we will understand it you know uh you know i mean astrology is a is a kind of sick attempt to work on that problem i don't think they get very far uh you can check with flanders and swan they have it pretty well tied down if you've ever heard their song on the subject but uh what what it says here is that uh there will be wonders in the heavens above there will be signs on the earth beneath there will be blood and fire and vapor and smoke and the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the day of the lord comes the great and manifest day in other words the whole of nature will combine to speak to people it will not be a kind of mute objective process that just goes on and on and never says anything suddenly the whole of nature will break wide open and we will suddenly hear what it's saying with signs and wonders in the sky and blood and fire and vapor and smoke we try and do it lots in the movies to get them i mean they they use that kind of effect to create scenes all the time but this is going to be on a cosmic real life scale it's not going to be on the big screen with the newest kind of photography it's going to be something we see and the whole of nature is going to combine in an anthem to the praise and glory of god which we may not be glad to hear but it will be unmistakable what it's doing doing because in that day and under the influence of that message whoever calls on the name of the lord shall be saved in other words men's hearts will fail them in fear at this thing this message and they will get over their pride and their arrogance and their terrible self-sufficiency and they will call on the name of the lord and the lord will hear them and he will save them so that's the picture

[20 : 14] communication will take place all that god has said and promised will be will come to pass the old testament will be confirmed scripture will be confirmed and at the heart of the whole thing will be the person of jesus christ verse 22 men of israel hear these words jesus of nazareth the man attested to you by god verse 23 this jesus verse 32 this jesus verse 36 this jesus over and over again the focus is finally drawn and and and and right at the center of all that is happening and right at the center of the the testimony of the holy spirit to the hearts of men in communicating and confirming the fulfillment of scripture will be this jesus the one from whom we can't escape the one whom whom we must ultimately confront and who ultimately confronts us and you notice the kind of majesty with which with which he is spoken of in these passages a man attested to you by god with mighty works and wonders and signs which 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 you see that's how the word of god and the event are needed to interpret each other they witnessed lawless men crucifying and killing him but it's peter who comes along in this sermon and says what you saw as the crucifixion was in fact something which happened according to the definite plan the purpose of god and foreknowledge of god it was not outside the purpose of god and that's why we so much need to read the scriptures because the whole of our life and the whole of our experience is something we have to understand if you take it by yourself in the raw you can't handle it but if you allow it to be defined and shaped and given meaning by the scriptures then you find that even this catastrophic event of the crucifixion and killing of jesus christ suddenly turns out to be according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of god amazing statement isn't it having killed him god raised him up having loosed the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it and you see once you understand who jesus is then you understand that statement it just wasn't possible we are trained to think that everything ultimately must submit to death that death is the ultimate victor when scripture says death is just the last enemy to be destroyed that's all he's not the ultimate victor and it's impossible that we should be subject to death it's impossible that that death could hold on to jesus he was loosed from the pangs of death because it just wasn't possible being who he was it wasn't possible that death could hold on to him and so we've we've got the communication happens the confirmation of the scriptures the centrality of christ and i guess i'll call this fourth one the conviction of history because then peter goes into history when he goes into history he picks david when he picks david he quotes david in

psalm 16 as we read tonight and psalm 110 as we didn't read tonight and he says david understood this history bears witness to this fact history bears witness in the person of david and david had said a long time ago and peter understood this you see and this is how the holy spirit takes history and interprets it you ask a historian what history means and you won't get away for a week because it's hard to to give meaning to history it's very very difficult to take facts of history and interpret them in any logical sensible reasonable way but what happens here is that god the holy spirit takes history in terms of what king david said and and uh quotes it back to us verse 25 look i saw the lord always before me he is at my right hand that i may not be shaken there's a chorus about that isn't there al we shall not be moved i don't want you to sing it right now but you know sometime we could sing that he is at my right hand and i may not be shaken my heart was glad my tongue rejoiced hearts and tongues connected there that's important part of worship i might say my flesh will dwell in hope not in despair because you will not abandon my soul to the pit did you notice that when we read the psalm tonight you will not abandon my soul to hades nor let the holy one seek let thy holy one see corruption thou has made known to me the way of life thou wilt make me full of gladness with thy presence god had promised david long centuries before that the holy one of god would not see corruption and the wonderful thing is that having said that the holy one of god will not see corruption peter goes on to point that david did see corruption personally i say to you confidently of the patriarch david that he both died and was buried and his tomb is here to this day his body is in the tomb but the holy one of god was not to see corruption and therefore it talks about david as a prophet being there for a prophet and knowing that god had sworn an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of christ see we don't understand the resurrection apart from the perspective of the old testament that's why you can't separate the two they got to go together he foresaw david foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the christ peter says that with great confidence about that passage which we read as our psalm tonight that he would not abandon to hades nor did his flesh see corruption back to verse 32 this jesus god raised up and we are 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 remember pouring out the spirit from joel he has poured out this which you see and hear and then he goes on to quote david from psalm 110 david did not ascend in the heavens but himself says the lord said to my lord sit at my right hand that's a question with which jesus confounded the pharisees when he asked how come david said that um and he got them all mad at him they say by asking them that question the lord said to my lord sit at my right hand till i make thy enemies a stool for thy feet

that all israel peter says know assuredly that god has made him both lord and christ this
jesus whom you crucified wonderful wonderful wonderful work of the holy spirit is to take
this jesus and point people to him and said this is the one there's no way around this jesus
he may offend your sensibilities he may confound your philosophies he may betray your
sense of the whole and totalit wholeness and totality of things but i don't like to tell you that
even because i don't think unless by the holy spirit you're shown what it means i just don't
think it's acceptable to people but this jesus is the one whom is at the heart of the witness
of the holy spirit the centrality of the person of christ communication confirmation of the
scriptures the centrality of christ and conviction when they heard this they were cut to the
heart and said to peter and to the rest of the apostles brethren what shall we do and peter
wasn't at a loss for an answer repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of
jesus christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you you shall receive the gift of the holy
spirit you in fact will receive the gift of the holy spirit in repenting and being baptized that
work that gracious work of the holy spirit in your heart to allow you to receive baptism and
to allow you to come to a place of deep and personal repentance and the place that
repentance brings you to is where there is finally someone that you can be totally honest
with and that's god you don't have to deceive or to fool or to mess around any longer you
can be honest by turning to him that's what that's what that's what the what the holy spirit
did to those who heard this sermon of peter on the day of pentecost he brought them to a
place of conviction and three thousand were baptized in that day and all i can say about
that is that there seems to have been very inadequate baptismal preparation very risky
business baptizing people on such short notice and not really seeing whether they had
come through to faith or not and i suppose the rest of the new testament is the story of all
the mistakes that resulted from this uh too hasty baptism but uh i think in terms of our life
we can uh we can uh recognize the wonder of god's grace in meeting us with the all the
the promises of of of uh of the new covenant confirmed in us by the holy spirit the lovely
line which comes from the from the uh baptism service these things which god has
promised he will most surely perform and that's why they went ahead and baptized three
thousand of them on that day and so that brought conviction and conviction led to
repentance and baptism and that was the work of the holy spirit and that and that lent that
that led finally to the the last c communication confirmation of the scriptures centering on
christ conviction

and finally have you guessed it community those who received his word were baptized they were added that day three thousand souls and they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers and that's what created the community that these people were were banding were banded together by that work of the holy spirit in their devotion to the teaching to the koinonia or fellowship of the holy spirit the apostles teaching communicated by the holy spirit the fellowship created by the holy spirit the breaking of bread in obedience to the command of christ and the prayers which were a response to the holy spirit and that's what made up the community and that made up the agenda for the community that they ought to meet together on those terms well that's verses 1 to 42 of acts chapter 2 and it does all those things in a wonderful way to show you how god the holy spirit worked then and how indeed we believe he works now in our hearts and in our lives and in our circumstances to confirm the word of god to communicate with one another in a in a miraculous way so that we understand each other for a change the centrality of the person of christ this jesus the conviction that it brings and the content on the community that it builds let's pray our god speak to us through one another that we may deeply understand each other because of the ministry of your holy spirit that we might deeply understand you give us such a hungering and thirsting for your word that by your word we will understand the circumstances of our lives and be enabled to speak intelligently about them in words of prophecy to one another we may be without embarrassment able to share dreams and visions and to see in the whole the whole ordering of nature the testimony to your eternal and dreadful purposes your word being convert confirm that history bring being can being convinced of of your purpose in history being convicted by the power of your spirit concerning our neglect of and our unwillingness to find ourselves accountable to jesus christ the one whom we have killed and whom you have raised because it was not possible that death should hold him and the community into which you invite us by your holy spirit that community of people whose concern is fellowship one with another the foundation of apostolic teaching the breaking of bread and obedience to our lord

and the continuing offering of prayer prayer in communion and fellowship with one another and with your holy spirit god grant us this we ask in jesus name amen it is our intercession time now so we'll continue in prayer prayer we pray tonight to almighty god unto whom all of our hearts are open to the god who knows all of our desires and to the god from whom we can hide nothing as harry said to the god with whom we can be totally honest and as we come to god in prayer we ask him to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of the holy spirit that we may come to love god perfectly and that we may come to worthily magnify his holy name and we offer up these prayers through christ our lord lord in your mercy we heard this morning from a godly bishop and as we've read about tonight in the holy scriptures god making the church a missionary church let's pray tonight that god will send workers into his harvest fields blessed savior you looked with compassion on the multitudes we would ask tonight that you would raise up faithful men and women to seek and to find your dispersed your lost sheep that they may be saved forever lord in your mercy that church which was born at pentecost so so needs prayer always so tonight as we always do and in the church we'll pray for the the church throughout the world perhaps you're from another another denomination tonight think of your home church as we pray for the catholic church church everywhere most gracious god we humbly beseech thee for thy holy catholic church we ask you tonight to fill it with all truth that truth which the holy spirit brings to our hearts and our minds and in coming to truth bring us to the place of peace where the church is corrupt our father purify it

[40 : 37] where it is in air where it is fallen away from truth direct it again where anything is amiss where anything is amiss reform it where it is right strengthen and confirm it where it is in want furnish it where it is where it is desperately poor again we ask our father where the church is in want furnish it and in so many places the church is divided and so we ask our god to make it whole again that its witness may be whole for the church tonight our father we pray lord in your mercy we all know some in our lives who are suffering tonight we want to pray as we always do for those who are suffering perhaps you know someone who is lonely someone who is unloved someone who is confused about their future someone who lacks that wonderful vision that the holy spirit wants to give us all we want to remember those who are unemployed for those who are in hospital tonight for those who are bereaved for those who are discouraged just in a moment of silence bring before the lord in the quietness of your own heart those you know who are suffering tonight we want to be a part of our hearts almighty god you have told us that you are afflicted in the afflictions of your people regard with thy tender compassion those in anxiety and distress we ask you to bear their sorrows and their cares and to supply all their manifold needs and help both them and us always to put our whole trust and confidence in you lord in your mercy could you take your service sheet and turn to the back page oh god the source of all good desires all right judgments and all just works give to your servants that peace which the world cannot give that our hearts may be set to obey your commandments and that freed from fear of our enemies we may pass our time in rest and quietness through jesus christ our lord amen and the second call it together lighten our darkness lord we pray and in your mercy defend us from all perils dangers of this night for the love of your only son

our savior jesus christ amen and to and to bring together all of our intercessions tonight we say the general thanksgiving almighty god father of all mercies we are unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness loving kindness to us and all whom you have made we bless you for our creation preservation and all the blessings of this life but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our lord jesus christ for the means of grace and for the hope of glory and we pray give us such an awareness of your mercies blessings that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise not only with our lips but in our lives by giving up ourselves to your service and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days through jesus christ our lord to whom with you and the holy spirit the honor and glory throughout all ages amen