

Acts 2:1-41 (PM)

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- [0 : 0 0] Folks, just think for a moment, what do you reckon, what do you reckon are some of the biggest events in world history? What would be the biggest events in world history?
- Probably the fall of Rome would be one, right? That's a big deal. The invention of paper, it happened in China around 100 AD, that's a big deal.
- Gutenberg Press, very important. I was born in 1969 and even... Well, that's not the joke. That's not even the joke.
- I thought that was not a big deal. No, no, that wasn't a big deal. Oh no, here's another redhead. Fantastic. That's what we need. Thanks, bro.
- Thanks, bro. You'd be amazed at how little I hear that, actually. So, born in 1969. Even in my lifespan, I have seen some pretty big changes in the world, like huge, huge changes in the world.
- [1 : 0 5] For example, I was a tween when the first personal computers became popular. So, this is computers that you would buy and take home. The first computer we had that my brother and I learned to code on was called a Sinclair ZX81.
- Has anyone ever heard of this computer? No. No. It was world changing. And then we got a VIC-20 and then a Commodore 64. Is this starting to ring bells?
- Amstrad and Atari? Great. Okay. So, first personal computers. I lived through that lifetime, before and after. I remember the Berlin Wall coming down. I started working in the 90s when the internet became a thing.
- Huge. 2023. We're all alive now. This will probably, we'll probably look back at this period of time and go, the rise of AI. You know, these are all huge things.
- Our passage in Acts 2 describes something astonishing, like a world changing event that's more profound than anything I've just mentioned there.
- [2 : 0 8] And it was world changing because it marked a new era, a new way in which God related to us. So, we're looking at Acts 2, 1 to 41, and the structure is pretty simple.
- 1 to 13. Crazy stuff happens. Wind, fire, speaking other languages. That's 1 to 13. And then 14 to 41, Peter preaches a sermon explaining it.
- So, we have these miracles, this phenomena. And then in verse 12, in the phenomena part of the passage, we have somebody says, what does this all mean?
- And then Peter takes that question quite seriously and preaches this cracker of a sermon. And it's just a sample of it, but it's a great sermon. So, that's the structure. That's how we're going to look at it. Let's start with the stuff.
- At the beginning, these very unusual events in 1 to 13. So, this was the day of Pentecost. So, that's a Jewish festival. And it remembered a couple of really important things.
- [3 : 0 6] It was the beginning of the harvest. So, you know, crops would grow and the first fruits or whatever were being produced. And people would go, this is fantastic. Let's all gather and thank God for these crops.

It also was a time of remembering God giving the Ten Commandments. Now, on this day, this day of this festival, there's 120 disciples of Jesus. They're all hanging out together.

And they're all hanging out together because Jesus said, I'm going to send you the Holy Spirit. So, go somewhere and hang out together and just wait for that to happen.

And they didn't know what to expect. But suddenly, three things happened. They heard something. They saw something. And they said something. They heard something.

They saw something. They said something. What did they hear? It's described as a sound like a rushing wind. I don't know.

[4 : 05] Like, you know, like a rushing wind. It sounded exactly like that. So, a sound like a rushing wind. And I want to point out something that you sort of can go over pretty quickly in the passage and ignore.

But verse 2 is quite important. It says, suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a rushing wind. And this is important. So, Luke, who wrote this story, he wants us to know that God's power is coming from outside the room into that room.

So, it's not just outside the room. It's actually outside the world. Something is coming from outside the world, from heaven, into that room. And that's important because we don't want to make the mistake of thinking these guys were just having some weird, freaky, kind of psychotic, ecstatic, psychological group experience.

No, something was happening to them. God was doing something amazing to them. And it sounded like a mighty wind. And it has that description of a wind.

Because when we think wind and we think the Bible and we're thinking wind, a whole lot of stuff comes to mind. In the old languages that this was written in, wind and spirit and breath were all kind of like the same word.

[5 : 22] So, when it says wind, we think a whole lot of things. Genesis 2 might be something that comes to mind. Let me remind you of what that says. Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

And the man became a living creature. So, again, that breath word, that's the wind word. God breathed life. Another really famous story, Ezekiel 37.

You may remember this one. Let me read a few verses from it. It's this guy, Ezekiel, is having this vision. God gives him this vision. The spirit of the Lord set me down in the middle of a valley.

It was full of bones. And he said to me, Son of man, can these bones live? Thus says the Lord God to these bones. Behold, I will cause breath to enter you and you will live.

Breath, spirit, wind. Okay. And I will lay sinews upon you and will cause flesh to come upon you. I will cover you with skin and put breath in you. And you will live and you will know that I am the Lord.

[6 : 27] So, you've got this valley of dry bones, this picture of destruction. It's a picture of a place where just selfishness reigns and it just leads to death and nothingness.

And God says, I'm going to come into that place and I'm just going to breathe life where there is death. Breathe. Wind. So, in the Bible, remember, wind means breath.

It means life. So, coming back to our story in Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, which sounds like wind, is telling us that God is going to breathe life into His people. He's going to recreate them.

Which is what happens when you become a Christian. The Holy Spirit enters you and begins to recreate you in His image. And you start to become the person that God meant you to be.

Which is awesome. Because the world beats you up. Sin beats you up. It clouds your identity. It deforms your aspirations. And on Pentecost, a whole new era begins.

[7 : 32] God sends His Holy Spirit into our disordered hearts to change us. To make us new. To make us more like Him. Okay.

So, that's what they heard. The sound of a mighty wind. They heard something. And then they saw something. They saw something. Verse 3. And divided tongues of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.

So, what's the deal with describing it like fire? It's kind of like the wind thing. It's supposed to bring things to mind. Well, like the wind thing, it points to something bigger. In the Old Testament, fire represents the presence of God.

And there's lots of stories about this. Moses in the burning bush. And the pillar of fire in the desert. When the Israelites were escaping Egypt. And in that same story, when God is giving His law to Moses in Exodus 19, it says, Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire.

It doesn't just represent His presence. It represents His holy presence. A presence that exposes and reveals and purifies. Like in the olden days when they would burn gold and silver and it would bring out all the impurities.

[8 : 41] So, the life-giving power of God comes into the hearts of these Christians of Pentecost. It looks like fire. Because it's supposed to be telling us that where these sin, it's going to expose it.

And where these compromise, it's going to reveal it. So, the Holy Spirit is coming not just to give people warm, fuzzy feelings. It's coming to change you and make you holy. And folks, if you feel, as a Christian now, if you feel spiritual heat in an area of your life, that could be the Holy Spirit.

That could be the Holy Spirit speaking to you. Pay attention to that. Pray into that. Okay, moving on. They heard something. Wind.

They saw something. Looked like fire. And then we have speaking in tongues. This third phenomena. Let me remind you the passages here. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Now they're dwelling in Jerusalem. Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at the sound, the multitude came together. And they were bewildered because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.

[9 : 57] So, the Spirit fell and the followers of Jesus started walking around telling people about God and Jesus and all the good news of Jesus. So, they'd walk up to an Egyptian and they'd start speaking Egyptian.

And that was shocking to them because in verse 7 it says, Are not all of them who are speaking Galileans? It would be weird for a Galilean to know all these different languages.

Because the Galileans had this harsh, distinct accent. They were regarded as uncouth, uncultured, unsophisticated people.

They're sort of like the ancient equivalent of the modern day Australian accent, I think. Just as... If that's helpful to know. I say that from the position of a scholar.

It's not insulting Australians. It's just... I just think that's helpful to you. So, we have these uncouth, unsophisticated Galileans walking around knowing all these different languages.

[11 : 01] So, the question is, why did the pouring out of the Holy Spirit onto these Christians present itself in this way? Because that's quite odd. It's weird, isn't it? And I'm sure you know it's more than a party trick.

This incredible manifestation, it does two things. It points back to a curse in the Old Testament. And it points forward to the purposes of God. What God intends to do in the world.

So, first, the curse. I hope this is interesting, too. I find this really interesting. Do you remember the story of Babel in the Bible? Humanity was consumed by pride. This is way, way, way back in history.

And it's a story in Genesis. Humanity was consumed by pride. And they try and build this tower all the way up to God. And God stopped them. And how did He do it? He didn't sort of knock the tower down.

He just confused their languages. So, when they talked, they couldn't understand each other. And that caused a scattering. And God's not about scattering, is He?

[11 : 58] He doesn't want to do that. This is a new era. So, think about Pentecost. What's happening here? God is reversing that curse. Because, miraculously, now, people who didn't understand each other can understand each other.

So, instead of scattering, there's a gathering from people from all over the world. So, at Pentecost, God is practically and symbolically reversing the curse. Because this is what God is about.

It's just beautiful, isn't it? Look, whatever you think about what was happening that day on Pentecost. And whatever you think about speaking in tongues and its use today. On that day, all those people present, representing the known world at the time, heard the gospel.

And God was deliberately and miraculously making sure that no culture was given precedence over any other culture. God was reversing the curse of Babel.

And God was telling His people, I'm going to make a family. An international, worldwide family of Christians. But that's not all.

[12 : 59] As I said, the speaking in other languages points back to a curse. It points forward to God's purposes in the Word. Look at verse 11 there. Both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians were all hearing them tell in our own language, in our own tongues, the mighty works of God.

So what was it that the Galileans were saying? They're talking about the mighty works of God. So you remember in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was still around, but it would just come down on just a few prophets every now and then to speak words of God.

But now the Holy Spirit falls on everybody. So that we can all prophetically speak about God. We've got this ordination coming up in a couple of weeks.

But we're all, we're all meant to be ministers. We're all ministers. We all have the Holy Spirit. We're all empowered to speak about the mighty works of God.

As a young Christian, I had this idea that the Holy Spirit was this, like this power, like a wizard, like you were like a wizard, and you could do supernatural things, freaky things.

[14 : 08] But that's, that's wrong-headed, isn't it? The Holy Spirit is not there to empower me to do my will so I can get my way in life. As well as changing our hearts, the Holy Spirit is there to empower us as a church to be engaged in the mission of God, which is to let everybody know that God is real and that He loves us and He forgives us and He wants us, He wants to turn our lives around.

That's the big outward ministry of the Spirit. So, Dr. Packer, he sort of helpfully describes this ministry as a floodlight ministry.

He says, the work of the Holy Spirit is a floodlight ministry. So, a floodlight shines a big light on what it's directed at. So, you don't think about the floodlight, you look at what the floodlight's directed at.

Now, quoting Packer now, he said, the Spirit's message is never look at me, but always look at Him. That's Jesus. See His glory. Listen to Him. Hear His word. Go to Him and have life.

Get to know Him. And taste His gift of joy and peace. Let me do a bit of a summary here. So, back to the question somebody asked in verse 12.

[15 : 26] What does this all mean? What? This madness, what is going on here? It means God's desire is for a united worldwide family who are people becoming more like Christ and wanting to share Christ with the world.

That's what the Holy Spirit is about. Okay. So, the people on Pentecost, 120 of them. They hear something. They see something. They say something. And then Peter preaches a sermon and he's trying to unpack what has just happened.

So, let's look at that quickly. The sermon Peter preaches. There's just a sample of it here. It says right at the end. He said a whole lot more things, but we've just got this little sample here.

He begins by saying, look, I know it's crazy, but these folks aren't drunk. And then he quotes the prophet Joel. So, now we're looking at the second sort of two-thirds of our passage.

He quotes Joel, this Old Testament prophet. Verse 17. And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. Your sons and daughters will prophesy and your young men shall see visions, etc.

[16 : 37] So, Peter's saying, first, his first point was, I know it looks crazy, they're not drunk. Second point, this is something that God had planned from a long time ago.

This is a good thing. And then Peter gets laser focused on Jesus. And he spends a lot of time, he talks about Jesus' incarnation. He talks about Christ's crucifixion, his resurrection, his ascension.

And we don't have time to get into all the details there. But you know, there is a bit of a rhythm in this sermon. Peter says, you did this to Christ.

But God did this. You did this to Christ. But God did this. In verse 23. This Jesus you crucified. Verse 24. God raised them up.

Verse 36. God made him both Christ, Lord and Christ. This Jesus who you crucified. You did this to Christ. But God did this. And it's not a blame game.

[17 : 33] Remember, Peter at this point is not speaking to the 120. He's speaking to this huge crowd. And it's not a blame game. He's just telling them the truth about themselves. Which is a kind thing to do.

It's a good thing to do. He's saying, God sent his son and you refuse to believe that. And that's the big problem with the world, folks.

He says to them. The big problem with the world is a refusal to recognize Christ as the Lord. So Peter's just naming the issue. It's the resurrection of God. And at the same time, he's saying, but let me tell you about all the amazing things that God has done.

Verse 33. This ties it into the Pentecost event. What's the first thing that Jesus does after being exalted at the right hand of God? You know, Jesus is killed by the people he's trying to save.

And the first thing Jesus does is, verse 33, being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit. He has poured it out, this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

[18 : 39] So that's the big explanation there, the big reveal. Because you killed me. You killed me. I came to you. You killed me. But I've got a plan. I'm going to put my life into you to change you, to heal your heart.

This is the God that you killed. This is what I'm going to do for you. It's wonderful, isn't it? God has given you himself. He's given you himself in the Holy Spirit.

And this means we can be in the world in a different way. I went to a soccer game this morning.

And one of my kids was playing soccer. The team was not a local team. The parents on the other team, it was in the fading seconds of the game, a draw.

And the parents of the other team were abusing the ref, telling him he's garbage. And he's a terrible person for letting this goal go through. And I went over and talked to these parents.

[19 : 55] And to defend the ref. Astonishingly, they did not repent. But it just made me think about how Christians, how we be in the world, you know.

The Holy Spirit empowers us to live differently. To be people of grace and peace and kindness. And not people of pettiness and anger.

You know, Galatians 5 talks about this in a wonderful way. So just before we end, let me just read a few verses from Galatians. Galatians 5. Galatians 5, 16 to 25.

Walk by the Spirit. And you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit. The desires of the Spirit are against the flesh.

But these are opposed to each other. To keeping you from doing the things you want to do. But if you're led by the Spirit, you're not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident.

[21 : 05] Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control.

Against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

Folks, let's keep in step with the Spirit. We don't get transformed by just sort of going, I'm going to try really hard to be transformed.

It's getting in step with the Spirit. It's listening to the Spirit. When you feel that heat, that spiritual heat in your life, it's paying attention to that. It's submitting to the Holy Spirit. It's becoming familiar with the teachings of Christ.

[22 : 14] It's accepting people speaking to you about what's going on in your life. Now as I finish here, look at how our passage ends and we'll finish with this. Now when they heard this, this is Peter's sermon, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?

Which is a great question. And I hope that's the question you ask yourselves at the end of these teachings. And Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It kind of confirms two big things I think we already know. We have these two great needs in our life, don't we? We need to be forgiven. We also need God Himself, the life of God in the Holy Spirit, to invade the places in our heart where selfishness reigns, where self-centeredness reigns.

We need His power to invade those places so we can live out and present to the world the fruits of the Spirit.

And so our ambition in life is to share the good news of God with the world. Folks, we need the Holy Spirit, don't we?

[23 : 37] Amen. Amen.