

Men's Group 24th September 2013

Week 2

Welcome to chapter 2. This is quite a complicated chapter and I think we will likely have to slow down and spend the whole evening on it.

It has two main parts to it. The first is the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the second is Peter's speech in the temple precinct. The speech itself falls into two subsections, the first being the 'Day of the Lord' section which we need to look at historically, the second being the main body of the speech, which is of key importance for the question, *Just what was the gospel message being preached by the early church right at the beginning?*

The Coming of the Holy Spirit – Acts 2.1 to 2.13

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues^(a) as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,^(b) ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹²Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

¹³Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

Question 1

The tongues of fire etc. may be the most dramatic element, but not necessarily the most important. What really matters here?

The Holy Spirit will recur many times during Acts, and we will learn more as we go along. At this stage we need to consider particularly—as Luke does—how the Holy Spirit fits into the overall Old Testament–New Testament continuum (sometimes referred to as 'Salvation history').

We need to consider Joel and other Old Testament references to the Day of the Lord. Perhaps the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31.31 – 34) is relevant here also.

AS we continue to look at the Holy Spirit there will always be two separate but interrelated questions to answer:

- What was the role of the Spirit in the early Church between AD 30 and AD 62, the period covered by this book? And secondly,
- How does this relate to today?. This is a controversial subject of course. But we do well to make a distinction between the two in our discussion.

The Holy Spirit in Old Testament Context – Acts 2.14 – 21

Use of Lord and LORD (and other translational issues)

It has become traditional among translators of the Old Testament to translate 'Yahweh', the common name for God, as the LORD, in small capitals. As opposed to Lord in lower case which just means Lord. This tradition follows from the ancient Jewish practice of regarding the name of God as too holy to be used.

The key ancient translation of the Old Testament into Greek, known as the Septuagint, follows a similar practice, though without the capital letters.

This is important, since the New Testament writers, almost without exception, when they use or quote the Old Testament use the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew text.

So for example Psalm 110 which we will discuss tonight, in the Hebrew Old Testament says "Yahweh says to my Lord" which is fairly clear; By the time it gets to Acts chapter 2, via the Septuagint, it becomes "The Lord says to my Lord" which is far less self-explanatory.

¹⁴Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷"In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.

¹⁹I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.

²⁰The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

²¹And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.'^{le}

Question 2

As a straight evangelistic presentation of the gospel, there was no real need for Luke to put this section in. But he has put it in. Why?

It seems that the gift of Holy Spirit is not just about power, inner transformation etc.; but also it is conveying a wider message about where we are in the grand scheme of God's overall plan for the human race. What is this?

*I've attached a short and simple Wikipedia article on **The Day of the Lord** which I found quite useful. No doubt there are many longer and more complex accounts on the Internet for those who are interested. Relevant passages are Amos 4.18 – 20, Joel 2. 28 – 32. Also many others such as Zephaniah 1. 1-18.*

The other reason for bringing Joel in, I suppose, is Joel 2 which give about as succinct a presentation of the gospel message as one could imagine.

What Must We Do to Be Saved? - Acts 2.22 onwards

²²"Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men,^[a] put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. ²⁵David said about him:

"I saw the Lord always before me.

Understanding the two Psalm quotes:

Psalm 16 in the Old Testament says, "The **LORD** (i.e. Yahweh) said to my Lord . . ."

Psalm 110 says "The **LORD** (i.e. Yahweh) says to my Lord . . ."

This passage from Psalm 110 also comes up from the mouth of Jesus in Matthew 22.42 – 45,

Because he is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.

²⁶Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest in hope,

²⁷because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
you will not let your holy one see decay.

²⁸You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.^[a]

²⁹"Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³²God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³³Exalted to

the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

“The Lord said to my Lord:
“Sit at my right hand
³⁵until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.””³⁶

³⁶“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

³⁷When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

³⁸Peter replied, “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. ³⁹The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

⁴⁰With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

The Fellowship of the Believers

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Question 3

Most of us have a tendency to read the New Testament through the prism of later concepts of exactly who and what Jesus was, as enunciated by such as the Council of Nicaea, Chalcedon, the writings of Augustine on the Trinity, and so on. If we lay all that aside, and focus just on the text in front of us, without preconceptions, how are Jesus, and God, actually portrayed here?

For this we need not only 2.22 – 24, but also the two psalm quotations that follow it (Psalm 16.8 – 11 and Psalm 110.1).

Question 4

As we continue future weeks we will be looking at the role of the Holy Spirit in the church and the believers in the period AD 30 – 62 (As well as in the present day). Now we consider the keynote verse of this sermon, which is verse 38. This is the real message of the sermon. So,

What is the relationship here between REPENTANCE, BAPTISM, FORGIVENESS, and the HOLY SPIRIT?
What was the role of BAPTISM in the early church. What did it mean for them? (verse 38)

Repentance of what? What about Hebrews 6.1?

Finally a short historical narrative on the domestic arrangements.

We need to understand at this point, very important, that at this stage Peter is talking about something done **by the Jewish God, through the Jewish Jesus, for the benefit of the Jewish people.**

The idea that any of this has anything to do with non-Jews is still off in the future.