

The first gospel sermon

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- [0 : 00] Turn to our studies in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, and reading again at verse 14. The Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, at verse 14.
- But Peter, standing up with eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, let this be known unto you, and hearken to my words.
- For these are not drunken as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day, but this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.
- Now, as we come to look at this part of the Acts of the Apostles, it is necessary for us to go back and recall something of what we have seen up to this point.
- We have seen that this book was written by Luke, who wrote the Gospel, the Gospel according to Luke, and he is also writing these Acts of the Apostles.
- [1 : 10] But they are not so much the Acts of the Apostles as the Acts and words of the Lord Jesus. The Gospel, according to Luke, gives us the Acts and words of the incarnate Jesus when he was here upon earth.
- The Acts of the Apostles gives us the words and acts of Jesus when he was risen and exalted to the right hand of the Father. It is a continuation of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- And that work is going to be done through the Apostles, through the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ and their successors. And they are to be witnesses to the Lord Jesus Christ in ever-widening circles.
- They are to begin witnessing at Jerusalem, but then their witness is going to spread out in ever-increasing, widening circles until it reaches Rome.
- And the Acts of the Apostles record that increasing witness, that ever-widening witness, as it goes from the center of Judaism to the center of paganism.
- [2 : 29] As it goes from Jerusalem to Rome. That's what we have in the Acts of the Apostles. But the Apostles, the disciples, cannot do this in their own strength.
- They cannot possibly undertake this in their own strength. And just as the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus at his baptism for his public ministry, so now the Holy Spirit has to come on his people to equip them for the ministry that they are to undertake.
- They too have to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Just as Jesus was for his work, so his people have likewise to be baptized with the Holy Spirit.
- And therefore, he tells them, he exhorts them, to wait for the coming of that Spirit. But in the meantime, something has to happen before the Spirit can be poured out.
- And what has to happen is this, that Jesus has to be exalted to the right hand of the Father. He has to be exalted.
- [3 : 45] He has to be enthroned upon his mediatorial throne, at the right hand of the Father. And from there, he is going to send the promised Holy Spirit.

The Spirit, we read in John, was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified. It had to wait for the glorification of Jesus before the Spirit could come upon the disciples.

And so the disciples, 120 of them, are waiting there in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father. They all continued with one accord in prayer and in supplication.

And 10 days later, it all happens. It's all fulfilled. Now, when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled, a particular day, Pentecost means 50th, 50 days after the Passover, when Jesus was crucified, the day of Pentecost came, was fulfilled, that day that God had ordained for this to happen.

And at Passover, at the Passover, there was the first fruits of the harvest. And at Pentecost, there was the completion of the grain harvest.

[5 : 12] And there was these seven weeks, 50 days in between. And you see, there's a spiritual application there. At the Passover, when Christ was crucified, there was the first fruits.

He was the first fruits. And then there's the 50 days and Pentecost, and there's the great harvest. There's a completion, you might say, of the harvest.

In one sense, it's only the beginning. And yet, it's a completion of what Christ did. 3,000 souls brought into the church in a moment.

The harvest is coming. This is what God has said would happen when the Spirit would be poured out from on high. And the Spirit is poured out.

It's poured out as a gift from heaven. It comes down. The Holy Spirit comes down. Everything is pointing to the supernatural here, to the coming down from above.

[6 : 15] And it's accompanied by phenomenon. And we saw some of that phenomenon. We saw there was a sound, a violent wind being borne along.

The noise was not wind, but sounded like it. And that noise, we are told, filled the house where the disciples were gathered. there was a sound, but there was also a sight, what appeared to be tongues of fire, a flame, and then there was tongues, and they separated and they rested on each person in the room, becoming for each person an individual possession.

an indication that that Holy Spirit who was coming upon them came upon each one individually. And not only a sound and a sight, but also a strange speech.

They began to speak in other tongues. They began to speak in other tongues. And the phenomenon seemed like natural things, yet they were supernatural in our origin and in our character.

And these three signs, these three phenomena, represented the new era of the Spirit. Because they're all indicating to us that it's the Holy Spirit of God who is at work.

[7 : 48] It's the Holy Spirit of God who is coming down. He is compared in other parts of Scripture to wind. The wind bloweth where it listeth. the mystery of the work of the Spirit.

He's also compared to fire. He shall baptize you with fire. The fire of purification, the fire of cleansing, the fire of refining, the work of the Holy Spirit and of power.

Jesus said you shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon you. And all these things are pointing to the gift of the Spirit. They're accompanying the gift of the Spirit.

They're indicating to us that this is the Spirit coming in power. And the speech in other languages is speaking to us of the universality of the new dispensation.

It's symbolizing to us a new unity in the Spirit. This work is transcending racial, national and linguistic barriers.

[8 : 55] You see, all these things are being done away with in the age of the Spirit. And as we saw last week, Babel, it is reversal of Babel.

It is reversal of what happened at the Tower of Babel. What happened there? Well, there was the confusion of languages.

There was the dispersion. Everything that sin had caused. There's all that sadness connected with Babel. But now, God is reversing that.

Instead of the scattering, there's the gathering together. Men were scattered by sin and by pride and by rebellion. God is gathering them together again and giving them a unity in the Spirit that transcends racial and nationalistic barriers.

And you see, there's a bewilderment. There was a bewilderment at Babel that they could not understand one another and they were bewildered.

[10 : 08] Here at Pentecost, they're beginning to understand one another. even those who speak different languages. They're beginning to understand one another and they're bewildered at that, at the wonderful works of God.

God is reversing what happened at Babel. And you see, at Babel, man was determined to make a name for himself. He wanted to keep his name as it were alive in the earth.

He wanted to make a reputation for himself and therefore he wanted to build this tower. What happens at Pentecost? Men are determined to exalt the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what the Spirit does for them. The Spirit so works in them that they are determined to exalt the name of Jesus. And it's his works they proclaim and his wonders.

And again we can think of it in this way. At Babel, earth proudly tried to ascend to heaven. Man tried to reach heaven.

[11 : 18] He wanted to reach up to heaven. What happens at Pentecost? Heaven humbly comes down to earth. Heaven humbly descends to earth.

The Spirit of God comes to dwell in human beings. The Spirit of God comes to dwell in the church. That's the wonderful thing that is happening here.

And Luke makes this emphasis on the international nature of the crowd. He tells us that God-fearing Jews from all the countries round about are staying at Jerusalem.

They are Jews of the dispersion. Jerusalem. They weren't born in Jerusalem. They were part of the dispersion and are coming back to Jerusalem for the festival.

They are there in Jerusalem for the feast from every nation under heaven. Now he doesn't mean of course that literally. He means every nation of the known world as it were.

[12 : 22] Every nation round the Mediterranean basin. They have come from all these nations and he speaks about them moving from east to west. Five groups can be distinguished here in this list.

This international group, this multilingual crowd gathered round and he puts great emphasis upon this and they listen to what these believers, these disciples are saying.

we hear them declaring the wonderful works of God in our own tongues. You see it's the spirit that made them do that.

When men and women are filled with the spirit they declare they have to declare the wonderful works of God. But you see everyone is declaring it in our own tongues each in his own native language.

And you see these speakers these believers, these disciples were known to be Galileans. And these Galileans had a reputation for being the uncultured people.

[13 : 34] They were looked down upon by the people in Jerusalem. They were the people from the provinces. They were the country bumpkins who came to town and therefore they were uncultured.

And that's the amazing thing that these uncultured people who weren't used to using other languages. Here are they doing this thing and the people are amazed.

They're bewildered, they're perplexed, they can't understand it. This is an amazing thing, these country bumpkins speaking in this way in other languages about the wonderful works of God.

What does it mean? That's what they say, what does this mean? They want to know what is behind all this. And there's another group, a minority, no doubt, who for some reason perhaps didn't understand these languages and they ridiculed, they mocked, they said, they've had too much wine.

That's the explanation, they're drunk. These people are drunk. There's the mockers and the scoffers and they say that about these believers.

[14 : 52] And that, of course, prompts Peter to deliver the first sermon of the Christian era, the first sermon of the age of the spirit, the first Christian sermon that we have recorded in the word of God.

And it's amazing to think this, we do not think of the acts of the apostles as containing much a doctrine as it were. But it's good for us to be reminded that there are 19 speeches in the acts of the apostles, 19 speeches or sermons in the acts of the apostles, and eight of them are delivered by Peter and nine of them by Paul.

He beat Peter by one, and one by Stephen and one by James. Now we cannot for a moment think that these speeches are verbatim what these men said.

And of course the sceptics will argue and say, well, how did Luke know what Peter said on the day of Pentecost? How did he know? And how did they know these other speeches?

How did they know the contents of them? Well, they're not verbatim. They're summaries, they're digested, digested, of what was said. And there were witnesses to these speeches.

[16 : 18] And Luke is a very careful historian. And Luke found out what was said on the day of Pentecost. And of course, above all, we must remember he was inspired by the Holy Spirit of God.

But what we have here in this sermon is only a digest of what was actually said. You can speak this sermon in a few minutes. Peter probably preached for an hour or so.

With many other words did he testify and exhort them, saying, we've only got a small part of what Peter actually said on that day.

But here we have then the first sermon. And Peter stands up and preaches in Aramaic. He stands and speaks to the people. And he says, these are not drunk as he supposed.

It's only nine o'clock in the morning. Even drunkards haven't begun to imbibe at that time in the morning. And besides that, these are good Jews and Jews normally fasted during festival time, during the feasts.

[17 : 26] And therefore, they cannot be drunk. This is not the explanation. And so what Peter does is give the explanation what is the real explanation of this?

The extraordinary phenomenon of spirit-filled believers declaring God's wonders in foreign languages. What's the explanation of it?

Well, Peter says it's the fulfillment of Joel's prediction that God would pour out his spirit upon all flesh.

an interpretation of an Old Testament passage in the light of its fulfillment. Now, that Old Testament passage seems to be referring, as we read it, to a plague of locusts that was threatened upon the people of Israel as a judgment.

And God said to them, if you repent, the judgment will be stayed. And it's that context that the passage in Joel comes to them. And then at the end of that passage, at the end of that chapter, afterwards, I will pour my spirit upon all flesh.

[18 : 44] At a later date, he says, in the history of the children of Israel, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. Now, Peter takes up that, and he says, as is often said in the New Testament, this is that.

This is that. What you're seeing now is what was prophesied under the Old Testament by the prophet Joel. This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.

And it shall come to pass, and he begins to quote from the prophecy of Joel, but you will note that he changes a few words. It shall come to pass afterward, saith God.

in the Old Testament. And Peter changes it to, and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God. Because he knows that we are in the last days.

And this is what is happening in the last days. And it's a unanimous conviction of the New Testament authors that Jesus inaugurated the last days.

[19 : 53] he inaugurated the messianic age. And that's the last days. And the final proof that this was so was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

That was the promise of promises in the Old Testament. That God would pour out his spirit. That God would give this spirit.

and that has been fulfilled and therefore the last days has come. And the whole messianic age stretches between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ.

That's the last days. That's the messianic age. That's the age of the spirit. And the whole period between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ are the end times.

And we're living in the last days. There's going to be no climactic historical event between us and the second coming of Christ.

[21 : 02] That's the next great event that we are looking forward to. That's the next great event that the church is looking forward to. There's going to be nothing between this and that.

And so we're living in the last days. And often you hear people saying you know I think the last days are coming upon us. See what's happening in the world. The earthquakes and so on and all the turmoil that's going on.

We must be living in the last days. Well it's true but not in the sense that they're thinking. We have been living in the last days since the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world.

These are the last days. the days from his first coming to his second coming. The days from Pentecost to the present time.

And you see he has come and he has come again. The day of the Lord. It's difficult very often in the Old Testament to know what is meant by the day of the Lord.

[22 : 04] Whether it's the first coming or the second coming. And it's often been said that the Old Testament perspective is that you're looking at a range of mountains and you can't see the distance between the mountains when you're looking at a range at some distance.

And you see there's these peaks and there's the first coming and then behind it there's the second coming. And when the prophets are speaking about the day of the Lord you're not sure at times whether it's the day of Christ's first coming or the day of his second coming.

Because you see it's the day of the Lord. Both of them. And in between the first coming and the second coming are the last days. And we're living in the last days.

The thing that we're looking forward to now is the second coming. The blessed hope. As Calvin made his motto, Lord how long? How long till you come again?

This is what the church is waiting for. As A.J. Gordon put it, for yet a little while. How little? How little? He that cometh shall come and shall not tarry.

[23 : 13] The church is waiting for that coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And he says, it shall come to pass in the last days. I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.

And your sons and your daughters shall prophecy and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams. and you see here the significant thing is this, that God is pouring out his spirit upon all flesh.

You see, first of all in that figure we have here the generosity of it. It's like a heavy tropical storm. It's not a drizzle, it's not a shower, it's a rain storm.

God is pouring out with generosity, with grandeur. He's pouring out his spirit upon all flesh.

The generosity of God in the dispensation of the spirit, but also the finality of it. You don't gather up a rain storm, you don't gather up the rain, it's there finally, it's the final outpouring of the spirit for the last days, the finality of it, but also the universality of it.

[24 : 37] It's for all flesh, it's for all flesh the spirit is poured out. Everyone, irrespective of outward status, it has no distinction of sex, it's on your sons and daughters, it's got no distinction of age, it's upon young men and old men, it's got no distinction of rank, it's upon men servants and maid servants and masters and so on.

You see, it's upon all flesh. In the Old Testament, the spirit came as anointing upon kings and upon priests and upon prophets, upon men who were commissioned by God to do a special work.

But can you find anyone in the Old Testament an ordinary person who was the anointing of the Holy Spirit in this way? It was restricted, but you see, now it's universal.

It's upon all flesh. Without distinction, God is pouring out his Holy Spirit, he's baptizing people with his Spirit, and that's the way they are brought into his church and made partakers of the blessing.

and you see, not only that, but there's a universal prophetic ministry as a result of that. On my servants and on my handmaids, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophecy.

[26 : 10] Now this is not some charismatic gift that some people have. It's a very popular view today that there are certain people who are prophets, and there are people who can prophecy in that sense.

But that's not the sense that is meant here. This is something that will be true of all God's people who have the baptism of the Spirit, who have the outpoured Spirit.

You see, God spoke in the Old Testament through prophets. They were foretelling, and they were foretelling. But the main emphasis is their foretelling.

In the prophets, God is speaking. God is making himself known by his word. And the Old Testament expectation is that in the New Covenant days, the knowledge of God will be universal.

They shall all know me from the least and to the greatest. That's the promise of the New Covenant. All shall know me from the least to the greatest. All the people shall be taught of the Lord.

[27 : 15] That's the promise of the New Covenant. And the New Testament writers take up that. Paul in writing to the Thessalonians, you yourselves, he says, have been taught of God.

They've been instructed by God. They know. And John writing his epistle says, his anointing teaches you all things. And you see, the wonderful thing is this.

We say that God's people, all of God's people are priests. We don't need priests because we ourselves are priests. All God's people under the New Covenant are priests.

You're priests to God. You're offering up a sacrifice to God. And you're also kings. You're reigning with Christ. You're kings. But also, you're prophets.

All God's people are prophets. They've been anointed to be prophets. The Lord Jesus Christ was the prophet that God raised up, and he was anointed to be a prophet.

[28 : 16] But he is anointing his people to be prophets. And that Holy Spirit is making them prophets. As Luther says, the knowledge of God through Christ which the Holy Spirit kindles and makes us to burn through the word of the gospel.

You see, the Spirit has given us the word and we must make the word known. The universal knowledge that we have as the people of God is the foundation for the universal communion.

We want to communicate the universal communication of the gospel. We want to witness. We want to make known that word. We want to witness to Christ and we are therefore prophets in that sense.

Because we know him, we want to make him known, that's what is meant here. Nothing more than that, but something like that which is great, that every one of those who are baptized by the Spirit are those who are speaking the word of God.

Those that were scattered abroad went everywhere gossiping the gospel. Every individual believer who is brought into the church, who is baptized in the Spirit, has got this desire within him to witness to Christ and to make the gospel known.

[29 : 45] That is the effect of the baptism of the Spirit. And then briefly, something more. And I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath, blood and fire and vapor of smoke.

The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before that great and notable day of the Lord come. You see, we're living in the last days. And in those last days, there's upheavals of nature.

Now, if you take it literally, these upheavals of nature began at the crucifixion. On the first Good Friday, there was darkness at noonday.

The earth trembled, the rocks rent, the graves opened, and so on. And there were these upheavals in nature connected with the last days.

But perhaps we should take it metaphorically. And these things that are spoken of here are convulsions of history. They are apocalyptic images for the social and political revolutions that will take place in the last days.

[30 : 55] These disturbances that are spoken of are pointing to all the upheavals that are going to take place in the world before the last days.

And what upheavals we are seeing in the world in these days. God is working. God is doing these things. And these are surely indications to us that there are these, that the last days, that we are in the last days, and that that great day of the Lord is coming.

That great day of the Lord. Everything is working up to that. There's a vivid picture of that in Revelation chapter 6 at verse 12. You will see there the sixth seal that is opened, and the great disturbances that there are in the earth.

And then there's that terrible picture of those who are hiding themselves in the rocks to hide themselves from the face of the Lamb.

To hide themselves from the wrath of the Lamb. You see that's what's going to happen in the last days. These tremendous upheavals in the world, an indication that we're living in the last days.

[32 : 07] And you see, that's what should spur us on. Because the last days are the days of opportunity. The last days are the days of opportunity.

And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. This is the day to call on the name of the Lord.

the day of grace. This is the day of mercy. This is the day of the free offer of the gospel. This is the day of the spirit. And this is the time in which we have for being saved.

Before that great and notable day of the Lord come. Because that's what we're hastening on to, every one of us. Whether it comes to us at death or at the second coming of Christ.

That's what we're all speeding on to. And that day will come. There's no doubt about it. It will come for every one of us. That terrible day of judgment.

[33 : 07] That terrible day of the second coming of Christ. Well, what are we to do? Well, says Peter from Joel, we have a wonderful opportunity.

It's a day of grace. whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. That's all you've got to do. Because you see, he's on the throne of grace.

He's the Savior offered in this day of mercy. And all you've got to do in the light of what is coming to you, in the light of that threatened day, in the light of that day of judgment, says Peter and says Joel, call on the name of the Lord.

Call for mercy in a day of mercy. Call for grace in a day of grace. And whoever does it, because it's a universal offer, in the age of the universal spirit, whoever does it will be saved.

That's the hope, that's the glory of this dispensation. We're living in a day of grace. We don't know how long it will last. We don't know how long it will last for us individually.

[34 : 21] We may be cut off in a moment. We may be cut off suddenly. But you see, now, even tonight, in this building, it's a day of grace, a day of mercy.

The day of the spirit, the age of the spirit, and the age of the gospel, and you can't afford to put it off. You've got to now make peace with your maker and receive that Christ that is so freely offered in the gospel before that dreadful day come.

Call tonight on the name of the Lord. May he bless our meditation. Let us pray. O gracious God, we thank thee for the coming down of thy spirit.

We thank thee for his work in the world. We thank thee that he is the one who is exalting Jesus. We pray that we might exalt him too, that we might have that decide in our hearts to be his witnesses, to extol his name, to extol his merits, to extol his saving power to those around us.

And grant that those, O God, who are around us, who are lost, might be plucked as brands from the burning before that terrible day come. O grant, we pray thee tonight, if there are any here who are concerned about these things, that they may indeed be enabled by thy grace to call on the name of the Lord.

[35 : 43] Hear us, we pray thee, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.