

KINGDOM COME

ACTS 2



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A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Kingdom Come: Acts 2

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Introduction to Acts 2

Acts 2 brings us into the new era of human history, the era in which we live, the era of the Kingdom of God.

The coming of the Holy Spirit – the promise of the Father – establishes a beachhead of grace and truth in the world. The apostles and others, gathered in that upper room, served to *sign* the Kingdom's coming and became, as a community of believers, an *outpost* of its ongoing advance.

Now the proclamation of Christ as Lord and Savior, and the coming of His Kingdom, must go forth in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the world. The first believers wasted no time getting about the business of the Kingdom, beginning in their own lives, and in their life together as the Church.

In Acts 2 a template begins to emerge by which we may study the progress of the Kingdom throughout all ages, and evaluate the work of our forebears in Christ, as well as our own lives and callings in Christ.

We're happy to offer a series of brief videos to introduce each portion of this study. You can view each one *by [clicking here](#)*.

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We hope you find this study of Acts instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Circumcised in Their Hearts

Be sure to view the video introducing our study of Acts 2 (Lesson 2) by [clicking here](#).

Read and meditate on Acts 2.1-4

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon and into the assembled believers carries several layers of significance with it, the most important of which Peter will explain in just a bit. This is the promised “circumcision of the heart” foretold in Deuteronomy 30.1-10 and Ezekiel 36.26, 27. The coming of the Spirit upon and within the believers marks the beginning of the ongoing work of Jesus, Who is transforming His followers into His own image (2 Cor. 3:12-18) and, through them, building His Church, advancing His Kingdom, and restoring the world to its pristine state before the Lord (2 Cor. 5.17-21; Rev. 21.5).

For reflection

1. We notice that the “fire” of the Spirit divided itself, yet remained the same “fire.” Each believer receives the same Spirit of God with the same fullness, albeit with different expressions of that fullness, depending on our station and calling in life (1 Cor. 12.7-11). In the Old Testament, how did God use fire to signal His presence with His people? What should this fire of the Spirit symbolize for us?
2. The speaking with other tongues has both a practical and symbolic significance. Practically, this spiritual gift would have facilitated the effort that was about to ensue among the many visitors in Jerusalem. What does the giving of this particular gift, here at the beginning of the Church, suggest about the work of evangelism for local churches?
3. Symbolically, here we see God “reversing” the judgment at the tower of Babel, where He created many languages to separate the nations. With the outpouring of the Spirit He is creating one “spiritual language” – life in the Spirit and Kingdom of God – to unite people of many languages in the Tower which is our Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. Meditate on Psalm 48. How can you see this idea suggested in this psalm?
4. This passage also recalls the event in Joshua 5 where the new generation about to inherit the land of promise was circumcised first, so that they would be a people fit to receive the covenant blessings of God. Here the “new generation” of the new people of God is circumcised in their hearts before they undertake the “conquest” of the earth (Acts 1.8). Meditate on Deuteronomy 30.1-10 and Ezekiel 36.26, 27. What does this circumcising of the heart entail, with respect to the Spirit of God?
5. How do you experience this “circumcision of the heart” in your relationship with the Lord? How does this affect your work of bearing witness for Jesus Christ?

Summary

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father, marks the beginning of an entirely new phase of human history. A new Kingdom has come, with a new power to advance it, and a new people through whom to come on earth as it is in heaven. If you are a part of this new Kingdom,

how should this affect the way you live each day?

Closing Prayer

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners shall be converted to You.

Psalm 51.10-13

2 What Does This Mean?

Be sure to view the video introducing our study of Acts 2 (Lesson 2) by [clicking here](#).

Read and meditate on Acts 2:5-13

All these diverse people were Jews or proselytes (Gentile converts to Judaism, v. 11) who had assembled in Jerusalem for the feast of the first fruits. They were described as “devout men” because they kept the ancient feast of the Jews.

For reflection

1. Yet another meaning of the giving of the Spirit during the time of this particular feast is that His coming fulfills the promise inherent in the feast of first fruits. For now, the first fruits of the ongoing work of Christ were about to be gathered to Him. How can you see that God was preparing these people for what they were about to hear? Do you think God is preparing people in your life to hear His Good News? Explain.
2. This is not a miracle of “hearing”, as some have supposed; we’ve already seen that the disciples were speaking in tongues as the Spirit enabled them. It must have taken a bit of time for people to find their way to someone speaking “the mighty works of God” (v. 11) in their own language, and this would only have multiplied the excitement and the wonder. The believers were proclaiming their hope in a miraculous manner. What would the proclamation of hope look like if you were to share it with someone today?
3. Naturally, people wanted an explanation: “What does this mean?” It’s human nature to seek an explanation of things we can’t readily grasp, even if that explanation is a dismissive one (v. 13). God uses people’s natural curiosity to open hearts and minds to spiritual truths, but for that curiosity to be piqued, some remarkable evidence of spiritual life is required. But what kind of evidence?
4. A miracle of divine grace and power “parts the waters” into the hearts of thousands as the Spirit enables people to hear and believe the Good News in their own languages. The miracle of the gift of tongues here recalls the miracle of the drying up of the Jordan in Joshua 3, which gave Israel access to the “heart” of the land of promise. Both were miracles, but of a different kind. Do you expect God to work miracles in the lives of people today, miracles of “parting the waters?” Explain.
5. These first believers were proclaiming something they experienced personally and profoundly. Can we expect to be effective witnesses for Christ if we do not have a personal and profound relationship with Him? What’s involved in such a relationship?

Summary

The ongoing work of Christ shifts to the Spirit filling the Church, and the Church going to the world. One aspect of the discipline of historical theology involves studying the patterns and processes by which the Kingdom expands in and through the Church, throughout the course of history. What patterns can you discern here? To what extent are these working in your life? In your church?

Closing Prayer

As we have heard,
So we have seen
In the city of the LORD of hosts,
In the city of our God:

God will establish it forever. *Selah*
We have thought, O God, on Your lovingkindness,
In the midst of Your temple.
According to Your name, O God,
So *is* Your praise to the ends of the earth;
Your right hand is full of righteousness.
Let Mount Zion rejoice,
Let the daughters of Judah be glad,
Because of Your judgments.

Psalm 48.8-11

3 The Last Days

Be sure to view the video introducing our study of Acts 2 (Lesson 2) by [clicking here](#).

Read and meditate on Acts 2.14-21.

We note how easily Peter dismissed the one explanation proffered for the events of this Pentecost morning. It was so stupid and nonsensical that all he had to do was point out a basic incongruence in the explanation: Nobody is drunk this early in the morning.

1. OK, that dumb idea dispensed with, on to the real explanation. Or, rather, on to the Word of God. Peter immediately turned to the Scriptures, not to some eloquent explanation of their *experience* – “And you can have it, too!” He wanted these people to know that what they were seeing exactly corresponded to what God Himself had revealed centuries before. God’s *Word* is sure, not Peter’s *experience* (cf. 2 Pet. 1.19-21). What does this suggest about how we should present the Good News to others?

2. We note also that Peter announces the beginning of the “last days”, the days in which the ongoing work of Christ has been proceeding for nearly 2,000 years now. The “last days” are not, as some suppose, a brief period at the end of time just before Jesus returns. They are now, and have been since the Spirit first fell, and whatever the Scriptures of God *say* about those last days refers to the ongoing work of Christ, the work of Restoration, and the work we as Christ’s followers should be pursuing in *our* day. Meditate on Micah 4.1-8. How did Micah envision the last days? What should we learn from him about what to expect during this time of the ongoing work of Christ?

3. That work is a work of *proclamation* first of all (vv. 17, 18). Whatever “wonders” may accompany that preaching (vv. 19, 20) will be, like Pentecost itself, the Lord’s doing. Our duty is to proclaim, and the duty of those who hear is to “call upon the name of the Lord” and be saved (v. 21). And what we are to proclaim is the rule of King Jesus. How would you explain the Kingdom of God? How did Jesus come to be its King?

4. Peter establishes an important principle concerning the ongoing work of Christ, which is the work of Restoration: We do not leave the Old Testament behind! The Kingdom of God comes as promised in the Old Testament. The Old Testament informs our thinking about the Kingdom and the Restoration we seek in Jesus Christ. If we fail to base the ongoing work of Christ in the Old Testament, we ignore the example of the Apostles, and of the Lord Himself. What do we learn from Genesis 49.8-11, Daniel 2.44, 45, Daniel 7.18-27, and Isaiah 9.6, 7 about the Kingdom of God?

5. Does the Old Testament play as large a role as it should in the life of your church? In your own discipleship? In pursuing the ongoing work of Christ, what do we learn from Peter about the importance of the Old Testament for life in the Kingdom of God?

Summary

Peter’s announcement of the Good News hangs on three pegs: the teaching of the Old Testament, the life and work of our Lord Jesus, and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The objective of his preaching was to call men to submit to and obey Jesus as Christ and King. Here is a template or

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pattern for all believers and their churches in all times. How well does your church adhere to this template?

Closing Prayer

The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty;
The LORD is clothed,
He has girded Himself with strength.
Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved.
Your throne *is* established from of old;
You *are* from everlasting.
The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
The floods have lifted up their voice;
The floods lift up their waves.
The LORD on high *is* mightier
Than the noise of many waters,
Than the mighty waves of the sea.
Your testimonies are very sure;
Holiness adorns Your house,
O LORD, forever.

Psalm 93

4 The Sovereignty of God in the Gospel

Be sure to view the video introducing our study of Acts 2 (Lesson 2) by [clicking here](#).

Read and meditate on Acts 2.22-28.

Peter continues his explanation of the events of that first Pentecost morning. It is as the Old Testament says: These are the last days, the Spirit is upon us, and we His servants and witnesses proclaim the Kingdom, because God has raised His Holy One from the dead, as David prophesied.

For reflection

1. We note Peter's emphasis on the historicity of the events of the Gospel – Jesus' works and wonders, His passion, and His resurrection. This account is neither myth nor delusion: All this was attested to those present. They knew it was true. Jesus is alive! How do you experience the reality of Jesus, risen from the dead and reigning at the Father's right hand?

2. God is sovereign in all aspects of the work of the Gospel, sending and empowering Jesus ("Holy One" v. 27), ordering the events of wicked men according to His Word, raising His Messiah from the dead, overcoming the pangs of death, and now sending His Kingdom to the world. In that Kingdom, He has commissioned His Spirit-filled servants to proclaim the Good News. Does God continue to work like this in human history? Can you give some examples? How does one position himself in that flow of divine sovereignty?

3. The Gospel is the quintessential fusion of things spiritual and temporal, heavenly and earthly, Creator and creature. Now the offer of life and forgiveness is extended through the preaching of Christ's witnesses. The ongoing work of Christ is underway with a vengeance. In what sense can we say that the *then and there* of God's promises have broken into our *here and now* in the Gospel?

4. The walls of Jericho fell with a mighty shout. The walls of men's hearts are about to fall under the simple proclamation of an undeniable truth: Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, and He is Lord! Who are the people in your life who need to hear this Good News? Are you prepared to tell it to them?

5. If someone were to ask you to explain the Gospel, what would you say? See what you can do, using only Peter's preaching, to make an outline of the Gospel such as you might share with a friend.

Summary

The Gospel is the Good News that God's promises of old are now coming to fruition because of Jesus. Men may deny or oppose the Lord, but they cannot prevent the Gospel from doing His sovereign pleasure. We are privileged to be entrusted with this mighty Word, like the apostles and first believers. What is your approach to making this Good News known to others?

Closing Prayer

The LORD said to my Lord,
"Sit at My right hand,

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Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”
The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion.
Rule in the midst of Your enemies!
Your people *shall be* volunteers
In the day of Your power;
In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,
You have the dew of Your youth.

Psalm 110.1-3

5 Lord and Christ

Be sure to view the video introducing our study of Acts 2 (Lesson 2) by [clicking here](#).

Read and meditate on Acts 2.29-36

See how carefully Peter lays out *all* the Good News. It is rooted in promises made to David (cf. 2 Sam. 7) and throughout the Old Testament. It inheres in Jesus, Whom God raised up and exalted to the highest heaven. It is realized through the Spirit, Who accompanies the proclamation of the Word. It demands to be understood, heard, and obeyed.

For reflection

1. Jesus is not simply Savior (Christ); He is Lord. We may not receive Him in any other way than as Savior from our sins *and* Lord of our lives and of all things. What are the implications for you of the fact that Jesus is Savior? That He is Lord?
2. If we think to receive Him merely as Savior, and perhaps later as Lord, then we do not receive Him at all. And note that not-so-subtle word of warning from Psalm 110: “Your enemies Your footstool.” There are consequences for resisting God and rejecting the Good News, and they are not pleasant. What are those consequences? Is this part of the Good News? Explain.
3. The Good News is only *good* against the backdrop of the *bad* news: God holds all men accountable for the death of His Son. Either we accept that death and its benefits, or we reject it and find ourselves trampled underfoot. Meditate on Romans 1.18-32. Is what we see here part of the consequences for rejecting the Good News? Explain.
4. Peter’s sermon, while incited by events, was based on Scripture: Joel, Micah, the Psalms, and a reference to 2 Samuel. Scripture has explosive power to convey the Good News, but only when we make proper use of it. The enemies of God at Jericho fell by a word – the shout of God’s people; and now many of the enemies of God are about to become His friends, by a Word – our proclamation of the Good News. Looking at the events of Acts 2, how should you pray daily for the lost of this world?
5. Is the Gospel you share with friends as full and complete as the Gospel Peter shared on that first Pentecost? Begin praying the Good News back to the Lord at some point each day. How could this help you in being ready to explain the Good News to anyone who may ask a reason for your hope (1 Pet. 3.15)?

Summary

The Gospel is the Good News about Jesus and His Kingdom. It has its roots in the Old Testament, was fulfilled in Jesus’ life, words, and work, and now is being proclaimed for the world. How can you help your church to become more consistent in proclaiming the Good News to your community?

Closing Prayer

I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel;

My heart also instructs me in the night seasons.
I have set the LORD always before me;
Because *He is* at my right hand I shall not be moved.
Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will rest in hope.
For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence *is* fullness of joy;
At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 16.7-11

6 “What Shall We Do?”

Be sure to view the video introducing our study of Acts 2 (Lesson 2) by [clicking here](#).

Read and meditate on Acts 2.37-41.

This is a true Pentecost, indeed, as the first fruits are gathered to the Lord, right on schedule. Peter’s preaching of the Word of God has powerful effects. The walls of blindness and unbelief come tumbling down in the hearts of thousands as they hear the glorious Word of the Gospel.

For reflection

1. Those hearers were “cut to the heart,” showing the power of God’s Word to burst through reasons, fears, doubts, priorities, predispositions, and every other defense of the soul, to begin the ongoing work of Christ in the lives of even the hardest of men. Meditate on Hebrews 4.12. What happens when the Word “cuts to the heart” of someone?
2. Peter was clear that men must repent and publicly identify with Jesus as proof of the Spirit’s work in their lives. What is repentance? How does the call to repentance fit into our proclamation of the Good News?
3. Peter also foreshadowed the further reach of the Gospel to the Gentiles, echoing Acts 1.8, by his mention of “all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (drawn from Joel 2.32). Perhaps while some of his hearers dithered, Peter continued to exhort them to be saved. Are you as urgent as Peter about encouraging others to believe?
4. Ultimately, some three thousand souls declared their submission to Jesus. A glorious first harvest, indeed! What does this suggest about the kind of expectations we should entertain for our own proclamation of the Good News?
5. It’s not hard to see why, in just a bit (Acts 4), the religious leaders of Jerusalem will marvel at Peter and John as “unlearned” men. Peter seems to know his Bible pretty well. For an unschooled fisherman to be so capable of ranging throughout the Scriptures requires three things: study, time with Jesus, and trust in the Spirit. These are all available to us as well. Is your time in the Word equipping you to be a witness for the Lord (Acts 1.8)? Do you think you could share the Gospel using only the Old Testament? Try it with a friend.

Summary

When we proclaim the Gospel in its fullness, using the Word of God with dexterity, God can use it to break down walls of defense and open hearts to His saving love. What can you do to become more effective and consistent at sharing the Good News with lost people? What can keep you from this?

Closing Prayer

Blessed *be* the LORD my Rock,
Who trains my hands for war,
And my fingers for battle—

My lovingkindness and my fortress,
My high tower and my deliverer,
My shield and *the One* in whom I take refuge,
Who subdues my people under me.
LORD, what *is* man, that You take knowledge of him?
Or the son of man, that You are mindful of him?
Man is like a breath;
His days *are* like a passing shadow.
Bow down Your heavens, O LORD, and come down;
Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.

Psalm 144.1-5

7 Evidence of Faith

Be sure to view the video introducing our study of Acts 2 (Lesson 2) by [clicking here](#).

Read and meditate on Acts 2.42-47.

A new era, a new Spirit, and a new life demand a new community to sustain and advance them. The writer of Hebrews tells us that faith involves “evidence” of the unseen things we have come to believe and in which we hope (11.1). Here is the evidence of the ongoing work of Christ: People joining together in fellowship, sharing their goods with one another as each has need, learning and praying together, rejoicing in the Lord, and having favor with all their neighbors. This was real. This was new. This was *proof*.

For reflection

1. No wonder many more were being added daily as they saw what the Spirit was doing in the lives of their neighbors and friends. What do the people of your community see, in your church, that might attract them to the Lord?
2. Let’s not misunderstand the sense of verse 45: The sense of the Greek here is that the people *would sell their possessions and distribute the proceeds* when a need became known. They did not do this all at once and give everything to the Apostles. People who were being restored to the Lord were also being restored to one another. A new community of Restoration was fulfilling the promise of Micah 4.1-8, and the evidence of the reality of Jesus Christ being risen from the dead was increasing on every hand. Do the churches in your community demonstrate the kind of oneness that Jesus said would convince the world He had truly come in the flesh (Jn. 17.21)? Explain.
3. Just as Joshua and the army of Israel “spoiled” the city of Jericho, so that God’s purpose abounded with good things, so here the people of God “spoil” the devil of his former holdings – themselves and all their possessions (cf. Matt.12.22-29) – and share freely with one another in the joy of the Lord’s victory. What should we expect this to look like in churches today?
4. The Gospel’s conquest of the world is a communal effort, and it brings the community of Restoration to ever-increasing fullness as the Kingdom expands. And all this is happening from the inside-out, because of what we read in verses 42 and 43. Would you describe your experience of Jesus as “inside-out”? Explain.
5. In what ways does your own church resemble this new community in early Jerusalem? In what ways does it not?

Summary

The Church is a *sign* that the Kingdom has arrived. It is also an *outpost* from which the Kingdom advances in the world. How can you see these first Christians serving both as a sign and outpost of the Kingdom? How should their example inform our own vision and practice as churches today?

Closing Prayer

Happy *is he* who *has* the God of Jacob for his help,

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Whose hope *is* in the LORD his God,
Who made heaven and earth,
The sea, and all that *is* in them;
Who keeps truth forever,
Who executes justice for the oppressed,
Who gives food to the hungry.
The LORD gives freedom to the prisoners.
The LORD opens *the eyes of* the blind;
The LORD raises those who are bowed down;
The LORD loves the righteous.
The LORD watches over the strangers;
He relieves the fatherless and widow;
But the way of the wicked He turns upside down.
The LORD shall reign forever—
Your God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 146.5-10

For reflection or discussion

1. What is the Gospel? What Scriptures would you include in your presentation of the Good News? How would you make sure to include a call for repentance?
2. These days it is unusual to see preachers, believers, or churches boldly proclaiming the Gospel out in public. Why do you suppose this is so? Is this public reticence concerning the Good News what we ought to expect? Explain.
3. Do we really believe people will repent and believe the Gospel? Explain.
4. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is the best rating you could give, to what extent does your church resemble what we see in Acts 2.42-47? Why did you choose that number?
5. What's the most important insight or lesson you've learned from Acts 2?

We are transformed into the image of Jesus Christ *from* the glory we encounter in God's Word to the ways we *live for His glory* in the world (2 Cor. 3.12-18; 1 Cor. 10.31). What have you encountered of God's glory in our reading and meditations in Acts 2? How has He shown Himself to you more clearly? How can this help you to live more consistently for His glory in the daily details of your life? What have you learned about yourself from Acts 2 to help you in being a witness for the Lord?

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.