

Acts 2:1-12

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 May 2016

Preacher: Mike Moore

[0 : 00] Thank you. Thank you, David. It's a joy to be with you again, and that's a fantastic hymn, isn't it? I don't know about you, but I identify with that progress of understanding that goes through us before we come to the Lord Jesus. We're familiar with the story, and then suddenly everything becomes light as day to day for us, and we understand that.

What I want to do this evening, as you probably guessed, is look at Acts chapter 2, and it's a passage that we're very familiar with. And, you know, so much has been preached on this psalm, on the second chapter of the book of Acts, that you might think, well, what more can be said about it?

But there's something about the Scripture, and particularly these well-known passages of Scripture, that the reason that they're well-known is because they yield so much fresh truth to us, or at least the truth itself isn't fresh, but it becomes fresh to us as we consider it, as we read it, as we study it. You won't remember everything I say tonight, so there are some notes there for you to take away. I hope you've all got one. If you haven't, I think there's some out the front. So take those with you. They'll help you to remember, hopefully, what we've looked at tonight. But this is a really important passage of Scripture, not just for Jewish mission, but for world mission. But I want to look tonight at how it relates to Jewish mission. I'm not going to give any illustrations from the work that CWI is doing. We'll do that in the after-church service. I really hope that you're able to stay, because I've got some exciting things to share with you. After I'd served with CWI for 30 years, I sat down and did a bit of thinking about how things have changed in that 30 years. And I was astonished, you know, just as I thought of how things are happening today that were just not happening 30 years ago.

[2 : 21] And I could have come and preached on Acts chapter 2 those years ago. I could have spoken on the principles of evangelizing the Jewish people, but I could not have told stories of Jewish people coming to faith in Jesus. It's no exaggeration if I said to you that I could keep you here till midnight easily and beyond telling you stories of Jewish people who've come to Jesus in the last few years. I'll be telling you just a few of them in the service afterwards.

But let's look at Acts chapter 2 and the festival of Shavuot, the festival of Pentecost. The Jewish people refer to it as iman matan toratenu, the season of the giving of our law. Because the Jewish people believe that the law was given at Mount Sinai, the Torah was given at Mount Sinai. At the time of the festival of Pentecost. And so to them it's become this celebration over the years, this rejoicing that God gave to them his law as a gracious gift. It was a gracious gift. But sadly, so many Jewish people don't understand what the purpose of the gift was. The purpose of the gift was not to make Israel feel that they were righteous. That's why later on in the book of Jeremiah, God says that he will be to the Jewish people Yahweh Sidkenu, the Lord our righteousness. And of course we read in the New Testament that, you know, we have no righteousness of our own. The only righteousness you and I can claim to have is that righteousness of Christ, of Messiah that is imputed to us and is put to our account.

But it's quite interesting to look at the second chapter of Acts because what we see here is a kind of repetition of the experience that Israel had at Mount Sinai. And there are certain similarities, but there are certain differences, all of which are significant. So in Exodus chapter 19 verses 18 to 20, we're told that God descended on Mount Sinai in fire. And there was a sound of a trumpet and the mountain shook. What we have in Acts chapter 2 is God the Holy Spirit descending, coming upon God's people, coming upon that 120 people on another mountain, on the temple mountain in Jerusalem. It's very common to hear Christians say that the disciples were in the upper room when the Spirit came. They weren't. There's only one place where religious Jews would have been on the day of Pentecost and that would have been in the temple. And if they'd been in some upper room

somewhere in the streets of Jerusalem in the temple, nobody would have heard what was going on. And there certainly wouldn't have been Jewish people out in the streets because they would have all been in the temple because that's where they were supposed to be on that one day festival known as Shavuot, Pentecost. And it would have been impossible for Peter to preach to thousands upon thousands upon thousands of Jewish people in the narrow streets of Jerusalem. And then for there to be 3,000 who came forward and said, what must we do? And then were baptized in the name of Jesus.

[6 : 05] And there is, on that temple mount, there's fire, tongues of fire that come on the disciples. There's the sound of a rushing mighty wind, where there'd been the sound of a trumpet, on the day of Pentecost, on the first Pentecost at Mount Sinai. And there had been the giving of the law.

And here on the temple mounts is the preaching of the gospel. And the gospel is, even though the law was something that was a gracious gift from God, even though it came with glory, there is something that is even greater than God's Torah, something greater even than the law of God, and that is the gospel. And Paul spends an entire chapter, 2 Corinthians chapter 3, explaining how the gospel is more glorious than the law. He says, Moses came down from Mount Sinai with his face literally shining, but it was a passing glory. There came a time in his life when he no longer had to wear a veil because the Israelites were absolutely terrified because of Moses appearing with this shining face. And so they ask him to wear a veil when he speaks to them. He goes to speak to God in the tabernacle, he takes the veil off, and then when he comes out to the people, he puts that veil on.

And Paul says there's a lesson to learn from that. That glory of the Torah, of the law, was a passing glory. It was a fading glory. They said the glory of the Torah is that it kills us because we read it, and if we read it properly, like we were just singing in the hymn, we think, I'm undone. I'm a sinner. How am I going to, how can I be accounted right with God when I've not kept this law? But the spirit gives life. The spirit gives life, he says. The spirit gives light because it's when we read the scriptures, having come to Jesus because he's the key to the scriptures, we understand it. The gospel liberates whom the spirit, when the spirit comes in, he sets us free from sin, and it brings the likeness of Messiah in us. So what we find also is the cloven tongues that come upon the apostles. There's fire there. And here's a very interesting thing. In the Jewish Talmud, this vast compendium of teachings, of discussions between the rabbis and so on, this statement is made. Every single word that went forth from the omnipotent, every single word that went forth from God, was split into 70 languages for the nations of the world. If you read Genesis chapter 10, it lists 70 nations there. And so the rabbi said there are 70 nations in the world, and that the law that came to Israel at Mount Sinai didn't just come to Israel, but each word was split into 70 tongues, and it went out into all the world. And what have we got in Acts chapter 2? We've got people from all nations, every nation under heaven, the 70 nations that have come to Jerusalem that have come to Jerusalem, and the word of God goes to them.

[9 : 36] And there's a contrast there as well, because you remember what happened when Moses came down from the mountain with the tablets of law? The people were committing spiritual adultery with the golden calf. And 3,000 people died. 3,000 people were put to death. And what we find in Acts chapter 2, is those who believed the gospel and passed from death to life, number 3,000. 3,000 died, 3,000 lived.

So you see what is happening here? You know, it had become a tradition of the Jewish people to believe that the law was given at the first Pentecost at Mount Sinai. And God recreates, as it were, on another mountain, the Temple Mountain, Mount Zion. He reproduces what happened, but it's a more glorious reproduction of what happened than the events at Sinai itself. So I want to point out six things tonight.

As we look at the festival of Pentecost and try to understand it, I want us to notice six things, six fulfillments. First of all, the day of Pentecost, the events of the day of the Pentecost, were a fulfillment of at least two prophecies. The first one, of course, is in here, the prophecy of Joel. It shall come to pass. In the last days, God says that I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your young men shall see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirits in those days, and they will prophesy. So here we see, as Peter explains, is a fulfillment of that prophecy. And Joel lived just about slap bang in the middle of Sinai and the events that happened on the day of Pentecost.

And he's looking back, he's looking forward. Secondly, it's also a fulfillment, or at least a partial fulfillment, of Ezekiel chapter 37. You remember how the prophet in Ezekiel chapter 37 has a vision. God takes him in a vision to a dry valley, and the valley is full of dry bones. And God says to him, this is the whole house of Israel. Can these dry bones live? And he responds very wisely, Lord, you know the answer to that. And so God says to him, speak, speak to the dry bones. Say to them, oh dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. This is what I'm going to do for you. And as he speaks to them, something happens, the bones begin to rattle, the bones come together. The sinew and flesh comes upon them, but there is no life in them. And then God says to him, prophesy to the spirits, and say, come from the four winds, oh breath, breathe upon these slain that they might live. [12:46] And as he does that, as he calls upon the Spirit of God to come and breathe upon these dead bodies, no longer dry bones, no longer dry bones, but they're still dead bodies. And they come to life and stand up an exceedingly great army. Pentecost is at least a part fulfillment of that. These people who were spiritually dead suddenly become alive. And a work begins that is going to have repercussions and is going to still be working today. Secondly, first of all, fulfillment of prophecy. Secondly, there's fulfillment of a prayer. In Numbers chapter 11, the Spirit of God comes upon 70 of the elders of Israel, and there are two men in the camp, Eldad and Midad. And the Spirit of God comes upon them, and they prophesy as well. And some of the people say to Moses, stop these men prophesying. They're not office bearers, you know. They're not on the leadership team. Stop them prophesying. And Moses says, I wish that all God's people prophesied. I wish that all God's people would prophesy. Because that's what Joel says is going to happen in the last days. God's people are going to prophesy, and that's what happens at Pentecost.

Moses has longed for that. Moses has prayed for that, and so his prayer is being answered. So the events that happened 2,000 years ago on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, a fulfillment of prophecy and a fulfillment of a prayer. But it's also the fulfillment of a psalm.

One thing that people puzzle over and disagree over, what Christians and biblical scholars discuss is what's the significance of the tongues of fire and of the sound of a wind? Well, I think, first of all, it reminds us of the events of Sinai. I think it would have certainly reminded the people on the Temple Mount 2,000 years ago of Sinai. But in Psalm 104, God says he makes his messengers winds and his ministers a flaming fire. And here is God setting apart his ministers, setting apart his messengers. And he's using wind and fire to do it. It's very significant that he's doing that. So I think that what we see in Acts chapter 2 is a fulfillment of Psalm 104, seeing it in its fullest sense.

But it's also not only the fulfillment of a prophecy, it's not only the fulfillment of a prayer, it's not only the fulfillment of a psalm, but it's a fulfillment of a pattern. Something is happening that is part of a developing pattern that we see right throughout the Bible from Genesis, right through to Revelation. Remember how Adam and Eve met with God. He came to meet with them in the Garden of Eden. But after mankind fell, after Adam and Eve sinned against God, what we find in Acts chapter 4 is the first recorded act of religious worship in the history of the world. And it's two brothers. And Cain is coming to his altar, and Abel has got his altar. Individual altars. Worship is individual at that particular point. And of course, these two men are bringing each different offerings.

Cain is bringing from the fruit of the ground. And in the previous chapter, God said he'd curse the ground because of Adam's sin. So he's bringing his offering from a cursed source. But Abel brings a lamb of the flock. A lamb is a divine prerequisite to approach God. And Abel's offering is accepted. Cain's offering.

[17:04] He's rejected. And then when we come to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we find with the patriarchs, it's not individual altars anymore. The mark of the patriarchs, the mark of Abraham's faith, the mark of Isaac's faith, the mark of Jacob's faith is this. They pitch their tent, they build their altar, and they call on the name of the Lord. They're recognizing themselves to be strangers in this world, so they're not building their houses.

They're pitching their tents, but they're building their altars. And there's a lesson for you and me. What are the priorities in life? Very often we're concerned to build our house, but we need to have that kind of attitude that, you know, we live in this world as people who are not going to be around forever. We pitch our tents, we build our altar, and we call on the name of the Lord.

Those are the, that's the mark of the faith of the patriarchs. A family altar now. But when the people of Israel are brought out of Egypt by God, he redeems them. There is another development, and this time there's no longer individual altars, it's not so much a family altar, it's now, and there's now one place where you meet with God. It's right in the center of the people. It's the, the altar of God

that's right there in the center of the camp, and the people come and they meet God there. Their intents, God dwells in a tent with them and moves around with them. But when they become settled in the land, Solomon builds a temple. The people are living in, in houses of stone. God now lives in a house of stone, and the people approach him. And what's very interesting is that when the, when the tabernacle is established, and when it's dedicated to God, fire from heaven comes down and eats up the sacrifices that the people have offered to him. God is putting his seal of approval on that holy place. And the same when, when Solomon builds the temple, fire comes down, consumes the altar. Glory, the glory of God fills the temple, so much so that the priests are not able to, to serve. So you see what's happening, there is this, this, this development. But what happens, what happened in, when the Babylonians came along and destroyed Jerusalem in, in AD, in 486 BC? There's no temple anymore. So when the people come back from exile, the first thing that they do is they establish the sacrifices again, and then they build the temple. But the thing is the old men who saw Solomon's temple, when they see this new temple that's been built after they've come back from exile, they say, well, they cry, they weep, because it's just a, you know, it's totally inferior to Solomon's temple. And yet the prophet Haggai says, this, the glory of this temple will actually be greater than the glory of Solomon's temple. And Ezekiel, who, when he was in exile, the end of his book, the last 10 chapters of his book are devoted to a vision of a new temple, an even more glorious temple than Solomon's temple had been. In fact, it's much larger. It doesn't fit on the temple mount. It's so big that it would stretch over to the Mount of Olives. It is going to be gigantic. And it's going to be a place where God will be worshipped with pure worship. That temple has never been built.

What happened when Herod became king of Judea was that he took that temple that had been built after the return from exile, and he made it more and more ornate, he built around it, and he made it into one of the seven wonders of the world.

[21 : 30] But there is no account given to us, either in the Old Testament scriptures or the New Testament scriptures, in which the glory of God returns to that temple. God had gone into exile with his people. That's why Ezekiel sees him when he's in exile in the first chapter of his prophecy. But there's no account of God returning to his temple.

So when did the glory of God return to the temple? Well, in AD 33, at Passover, the Lord Jesus Christ came to Jerusalem, riding on a donkey, as the Davidic king, the true Davidic king of Israel. He was, and he went to the temple, he threw out the money changers and said, this house, my house shall be called a house of prayer.

The glory of God had returned. The glory of God had returned in the person of their God, the Lord Jesus. But not only that, but the glory of God is coming down here in Acts chapter 2.

The Spirit of God has come down. And he's bringing, not the glory of the law, which condemns us, but the glory of the gospel, which gives life.

He's coming with that glory of the law, that not only, that opens our eyes, and enables us to see Jehovah Sidkenu, our need of him.

[23 : 06] That's glory of God that brings liberty, that sets us free from sin, that glory of God that transforms his believers into the image of God.

Haggai's prophecy came true. But there's, so we've seen that the events of the day of Pentecost as recorded for us in Acts chapter 2.

They're a fulfillment of prophecy, a fulfillment of a prayer, the fulfillment of a psalm, the fulfillment of a pattern, but they're the fulfillment of a plan. God has had a plan since the beginning of the world, since man's sin.

God has had a plan to bring the nations, to bring the world back to himself. And he announces in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15 that he will undo the work that the serpent did, the work that Satan did in the Garden of Eden in turning God's creation against their creator.

What we find when we come to Genesis chapter 12 is God calls Abraham. And he says to Abraham, I will bless you and you will be a blessing.

[24 : 18] I will bless you and in you all the nations of the earth will be blessed. God is at work and he's called this man, probably an idolater before he was called, but he's bringing this man to be the means of bringing the nations back to himself.

And in Jeremiah chapter 2 verse 3, we read that Israel is the first fruits of God's harvest, the first fruits of God's increase. Now if you have first fruits, I don't know whether any of you farmers, all I do in terms of growing stuff is cut the grass and pull up the weeds and that's it.

But I do know this, that when a farmer sees the first fruits of his crop, that's the guarantee that a crop is coming. Israel is the first fruits, but there is going to be an even greater harvest from the nations.

Psalms 67, a Jewish psalmist says, may God be merciful to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us that your way may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.

God blesses Israel, that results in the salvation of the nations. And then at the end of that, as the psalmist says, let the peoples praise you, oh God, let all the peoples praise you, oh let the peoples rejoice.

[25 : 41] It then comes to the end of the psalm and says, then God, our God, will bless us and all the ends of the earth shall fear him. And that's the same structure that we find when we turn to Romans chapter 11, where God blesses the Jewish people.

They reject it, that wasn't expected. God blesses the Jewish people by sending the Messiah. But God then begins to call the Gentiles in order to cause Israel to become jealous, in order to cause the Jewish people to say, these Gentiles are enjoying the blessings that were promised to us. We want those blessings. And it's astonishing the number of Jewish people who have come to Jesus because they've seen Gentiles. And seeing Gentiles know God's salvation and saying, I want what they have.

And what those Gentiles have is what God promised to Israel. Many years ago, I was talking to an Orthodox Jewish man and he said to me, why are you telling me about Jesus?

He said, we Jewish people have got a religion that's far older than yours. We Jewish people have a very beautiful religion and there's things about Judaism that are very beautiful.

[27 : 02] You know, the traditions and ceremonies and so on. Why are you telling me about Jesus? And I said to him, Eliyahu, last Sunday at our church, we came to what we call the Lord's table.

And our minister took bread and he took wine and he took the cup of wine and he said, he announced that this was the cup of the new covenant in the blood of Messiah.

God promised to you, said in Jeremiah chapter 31, behold the days come when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, with the house of Judah.

Not like the covenant I made with them when I brought them out of the house of Egypt. Which covenant they broke, although I was a husband to them, says the Lord, but this is the covenant I will make with them in those days.

I will put my Torah in their minds. I'll write it in their hearts. It won't be on tablets of stone anymore. They will no longer say, every man to his brother, know the Lord, because they'll all know me from the least to the greatest.

[28 : 09] Because their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more. The reason I'm telling you this, Eliyahu, is because the blessings of having God's law written in my mind and in my heart were promised to you.

I know the Lord, even though I might be the least of all the Christians in the world. I still know God because he's forgiven my sins.

He's pardoned my iniquities. And if I found your wallet in the street and it had your name in it and it was full of money and I didn't try to return it to you, I'd be a criminal.

If I am enjoying your blessings and don't try to share them with you, I'm a criminal. I'm a thief. I've got to share those with you. He went very quiet at that.

So there's a plan that God is working at. So he calls Abraham in order the nations of the world might be blessed.

[29 : 14] And what is happening now as the Gentiles have been blessed with God's salvation? What is beginning to happen is the Jewish people, especially Jewish people in Israel, are beginning to turn back to their God.

The events on the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts chapter 2, they're the fulfillment of a prophecy. They're the fulfillment of a prayer. They're the fulfillment of a psalm. They're the fulfillment of a pattern. They're the fulfillment of a plan. But Pentecost is also, number six, the fulfillment of Pentecost.

What do I mean by that? Sounds like double talk, doesn't it? But what was the Feast of Pentecost all about? It was a harvest festival. All the three pilgrim feasts, Passover, Pentecost, and

Tabernacles, are all harvest festivals.

But they all have a significance that looks beyond themselves to the future. And Paul takes up the events that happened at Passover when he says in 1 Corinthians that Christ is the first fruits from the dead.

[30 : 37] At Passover, we read in Leviticus chapter 23, what happened at Passover? On the Sabbath, the day after the Sabbath of Passover, and on the Sunday, the priest was to take the first sheaf of the barley harvest.

Barley was regarded as a poor man's food. And he was to wave that before God. Go into the temple and wave it before God in thanksgiving to God. And he was, that's how they raised it up and down.

Raised it before God. And Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 that that happened on the day when Christ rose from the dead. And the reason Christ rose from the dead on the very day that the first fruits of the barley harvest were being presented to God was because Jesus, the Messiah, was the first fruits of those who rise from the dead.

and just as a farmer knows that when he takes the first fruits that the rest of the crop is going to come. Paul says, because he lives, we shall live also.

Because Jesus lives, because Jesus is risen from the dead, we shall rise from the dead also. We're not destined to spend our lives, our eternity in a disembodied state singing psalms or hymns and spiritual songs sitting on clouds.

[32 : 13] We are destined for resurrection the same as Jesus was destined for resurrection. That's the hope of every believer in Jesus. And because he's risen, it's absolutely certain that we will rise also.

So when it comes to Pentecost, what happened on the day of Pentecost, and this would have been happening while the, when the spirit came, two, the priest would have had two, two loaves made of wheat.

This was the wheat harvest. And wheat was regarded as the rich man's food. God feeds his people on the finest of the wheat, not the finest of the barley. And so in that, in that temple, he has two loaves of wheat bread and unlike the Passover bread, the Passover bread which represented Jesus had no leaven in it.

There was no symbol of sin in it. But these have leaven in them. These two loaves have leaven. They're risen. And so here's something imperfect. And there, that day, in the temple, AD 33, there are Jews and there are Gentiles who have converted to Judaism coming to faith in the Messiah. 3,000 of them being baptized on that day. And that's why James, when he writes to the 12 tribes that are scattered abroad, writing to Jewish believers in Jesus, in James chapter 1 verse 8, says that God has called us to be kind of first fruits of his creatures.

[33 : 54] The apostles knew that because of what happened on the day of Pentecost, God's harvest from the nations was absolutely certain. And this should encourage you and me, as you seek to share the gospel with your friends, you seek to share the gospel with school friends, workmates, neighbours, as you seek through the more formal ways of evangelism from the church and so on through Sunday school, whatever way you do evangelism.

Paul says at the end of 1 Corinthians chapter 15, we can be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord in as much as we know that our work is not in vain in the Lord. We're seeing we're in dark days. There are many Christians who feel that we're, you know, we're doomed to be, you know, taken over by Islam, radical Islam and so on.

Whatever happens, God's purposes must come to pass because of what happened at Pentecost because here are the first fruits. If there are the first fruits, there must be the harvest. And it seems throughout history since we've had this kind of cycle.

Israel is blessed, the Gentiles are blessed, results in blessing for Israel. But there's going to come a final point in which according to Paul in Romans chapter 8, there will be the fullness of the Gentiles and there will be the whole of Israel.

[35 : 29] Back then it was a remnant, first fruits. There will be the full harvest. There will be all Israel, no longer a remnant. And back in the 19th century, the Church of Scotland and the Free Church according to the Directory of Public Worship used to pray for the fullness of the Gentiles to come in and for all Israel to be saved.

And that was how CWI began because of that. And Jewish people were being saved in vast numbers in the last half of the 19th century.

something like a quarter of a million Jewish people in Eastern Europe came to know Jesus as their saviour. And it can happen again. And what I would just like to leave you with at this particular point is just whether you can stay with us for the after church in the future.

Do pray for us. Do pray for us. Because we are proclaiming the word of the Lord to the dry bones of the house of Israel.

But it takes more than that. We need the spirits to breathe upon those who hear the word and to believe. And as you pray, the work that you do in your prayers is just as important as the words we speak to the Jewish people.

[36 : 56] As you pray for us, remember the valley of dry bones, the coming of the spirit was just as important as the word that was preached. On the day of Pentecost, there is the spirit comes and there is the word that comes as well.

And it's through the word and the spirit together that people come to faith in Jesus. God, history is not going to go out with a whimper.

Remember Isaiah chapter 53 verse 6, he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians, he must reign, he must reign until all his enemies have become a footstool for his feet. History is not going to end with a whimper, friends.

history is going to end with every knee bowing, every tongue confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. History is going to end with a triumphant cry.

[38 : 03] And you and I, God calls us to be involved in the process of bringing, taking people like you and me, ordinary people like you and me and making us instruments in his hands.

How glorious, how wonderful is that? And that's been his plan all along and God's plans never fail.

The future is bright. The future is as bright as the promises of God. And take comfort tonight, take hope, rest assured that you can be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord because your work is not in vain in the Lord.

It never can be. Well, let's sing together, shall we? We're going to coordinates for the Great Math.

Thank you. Thank you.