

# Acts 2

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] I want to turn you to the second chapter of Acts that we read just a few moments ago.

And what I would like to do is just to look at the significance of this chapter of Scripture. The actual festival of Shavuot, the Jewish festival of Shavuot that we call Pentecost, that the New Testament refers to as Pentecost, will begin on Tuesday night, this coming Tuesday night, and it will last a whole day until sunset on Wednesday nights. Now, the way that the day that Christians keep the festival or remember the events of Acts chapter 2 is probably more accurate than the Jewish calendar, because according to the book of Exodus and Leviticus, what the Jewish people were to do was from the Sabbath after Passover, they were to count 50 full days, and then the Feast of Shavuot, the Feast of Pentecost came. And so, when we keep it next week, when we remember it next week, that is probably the actual anniversary. It's most likely the anniversary on which the Spirit of God came, and a new era came about in the purposes of God.

The Jewish people refer to Shavuot, Pentecost, as Ziman Matan Toretenu, the season of the receiving of our law. They believe that the Jewish people arrived at Sinai at the festival of Pentecost, and that Moses went up the Mount of Sinai during that period of time, and then came back with the law of God. And it's very interesting to compare the events of Acts chapter 2 with the events of Exodus chapter 19, where God appears on the mountain, and God gives, according to the Jewish reckoning, His Torah, His commandments to the people of Israel on Mount Sinai. So, the book of Acts, Acts chapter 2, also take place on a mountain. At that time, it was Mount Zion in Jerusalem. It was on the Temple Mounts. Now, there are some people who think that the 120 disciples and the 12 apostles were meeting somewhere in the city in an upper room. That's highly unlikely, because we read that at the end of Luke's gospel, and at the beginning of the book of Acts, that the disciples were always in the temple praising God. So, it would be highly unlikely that on one of the great pilgrim festivals that they were in a house somewhere in Jerusalem on their own. And secondly, everybody else would have been in the temple on that day, so it would have been impossible for them to hear what was going on in some upper room in some part of the city. And also, they wouldn't have been able to come together because so many narrow alleyways, so many streets, you couldn't have got thousands of people gathering in the streets to hear a sermon from Peter. So, they were in the temple. The place where they were was the temple, and that's when the Spirit of God came. And what we find in the book of Exodus in chapter 19 is that when God comes down on the mountain, there is the sound of a trumpet, sound of somebody blowing a trumpet. And what we find in the book of Acts in chapter 2 is there is the sound of a rushing mighty wind. Now, in Hebrew and in Greek, we have a word that has three meanings.

In Hebrew, the word ruach means breath, it means spirit, it means wind. And they hear the sound of somebody blowing a trumpet on Mount Sinai. In Acts chapter 2, we have the sound of the pneuma, a rushing mighty breath, the sound of a rushing mighty wind, the sound of a rushing mighty spirit. And so, you've got this parallel event as well, the sound of a trumpet, the sound of a rushing mighty wind. And not only that, but you have on Sinai, God comes down and Sinai begins to smoke, like the smoke of a kiln, we're told. And what happens at Mount Zion, at the Temple Mount, when the Spirit of God comes, is that there is fire. And it's tongues of fire that sit upon each of the apostles, appear over above them. And it's very interesting, there's a Jewish comment evidence on the events that took place at Sinai. And you find it in the Jewish Talmud. And it's in the tractate Shalom. And it's in, if you get a copy of the Talmud, you'll find it in Shabbat 88b. And it says this, that when God's words came on Mount Sinai, all of those words divided into 70 tongues of fire for the 70 nations of the world. And here in Acts chapter 2, we have people from every nation under heaven, Jews and Gentile proselytes to Judaism. And not only that, when Moses came down from Mount

[ 6 : 03 ] Sinai, you remember that the people had broken the first of the commandments, they were worshipping a golden idol. Moses says that everybody who is to worship, who has worshiped that idol is to be put to death. And 3,000 of them die that day. On Mount Sinai, 1,400 years later, sorry, on Mount Zion, 4,000 years later, sorry, 1,400 years later, sorry, 3,000 people come to life because the Spirit moves as Peter preaches, and they say, what must we do? Peter tells them what they must do, and 3,000 of them are made alive. So, you see the similarities and the contrasts that are taking place there. Now, of course, some of those things with regard to the tongues of fire and so on are part of Jewish tradition, Jewish legend. It's not in the Scriptures at all. But those views were held at the time that the apostles were receiving the Spirit. And so, God takes some of these traditions, He takes some of these legends that they had, and that they were familiar with, so that every Jewish person who was there on the Temple Mount would have been aware of those kind of things. They knew what happened at

Sinai 1,400 years before. They knew the tradition that those words that God gave came as 70 flames for the nations of the world. So, having said that, how do we understand the events of Acts chapter 2?

Well, I want to suggest to you this evening that what we have here is the fulfillment of five things, that what we see in Acts chapter 2 is the fulfillment of five things related to Pentecost.

The first, of course, is it's the fulfillment of a promise, because in the prophecy of Joel, God has said the day would come when He would pour out His Spirit, not just on prophets, not just on men that He had chosen for special tasks, not just on kings, not just on great warriors, but He would pour out His Spirit on ordinary men and women. And here we have 120 ordinary men and women, even the apostles. Some of them are fishermen, one of them is a tax collector, you know, they're from all kinds of walks of life, and the Spirit of God comes upon them, and endues them with power so that they might be His messengers, so that they might be His mouthpieces.

So, it's the fulfillment of a promise. The second thing is, it's the fulfillment of a psalm. It seems to me, we were singing Psalm 104, and in the fourth verse, it says that God makes His messengers winds, His ministers flames of fire. And here are God's messengers, here are God's ministers, and what better way to set them apart as His messengers and as His ministers than signifying signifying that with flames of fire and with wind. So, fulfillment of a promise, fulfillment of a psalm.

[ 9 : 29 ] But I want to suggest to you as well that what we see here is the fulfillment of a pattern. Now, it's very common to imagine that what happened on the day of Pentecost was that the church was born, and many people will refer to Pentecost as the birthday of the church. I don't think that's a right way of looking at the day of Pentecost, for the simple reason that the church did not come into being on the day of Pentecost. Israel in the Old Testament, in the Hebrew Scriptures, is called God's Kahal, Assembly, Congregation. 300 years before Jesus was born, the Jewish people translated the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, because the Jewish people had been scattered around the world, and the lingua franca, the common language around the world, was Greek, and so they translated it into Greek.

And everywhere, they came across that word kahal, they translated it as ecclesia, the word that is translated in the New Testament as church. And in fact, when Philip is giving his defense before the Sanhedrin in Acts chapter 7, he talks about the church in the wilderness. He wasn't talking about the tabernacle, he was talking about God's people, God's congregation, God's assembly in the wilderness.

So, if it wasn't the birth of the church, what was it? Well, it's interesting to look at the history of worship in the Bible. You start in chapter 4 of the book of Genesis, and in chapter 4 of Genesis, you have two brothers, Cain and Abel. They come to worship God, and each one has his own individual separate altar. Abel has an altar on which he offers a lamb. Cain has an altar on which he offers the fruit of the ground which has been cursed. So, he brings his offering to God from a cursed source, and God doesn't accept it. Abel, on the other hand, brings a lamb. And we're told in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 4, that that lamb was accepted by God. First mention of a lamb in Scripture, the first worship in Scripture, it's two young men, and they are coming to their own separate altars.

What happens is when we come to the accounts of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, things change in terms of worship. We have a family altar, so that Abraham, wherever he goes, he pitches his tent, he builds his altar, he calls on the name of the

Lord. And that's a good principle for our own lives, isn't it? Pitching our tent, the tent was temporary. He pitched it, he took it up again, but the altar was permanent. And in our lives, the principle should

still be that we live as though we're strangers, we're moving on, we could move on any time from this life, but the important thing, the rock-solid thing about our lives should be the altar, the worship, the service of God in our lives, not just on Sunday coming to church, but every day of our lives. And we find the same thing happens with Isaac. We find that Isaac pitches his tent, builds his altar, calls on the name of the Lord, and Jacob, even though it takes him longer to come to that position where he has the Lord as his God, there comes the point when he builds an altar and he calls it El Elohi, Israel, God the God of Israel. God has become his God. That's the mark of the patriarch's faith. When we come to the book of Exodus, when we read the account of God redeeming his people from Egypt, when they come out of Egypt, God, as the people are living in tents, God says that he will live in a tent right in the heart of the people. He will pitch his tent right in the middle. And so, the tabernacle is built. And so, there is one altar. As the people approach God, they all come to the same altar. They all offer the same sacrifices. They all offer the same worship.

[13:36] So, you see how things are changing. And then, when the people come into the land, David decides that he's going to build God a temple. The tabernacle is going to...the worship is going to change again. And when Solomon builds his altar, when Solomon builds the temple, the Spirit of God comes down, or the glory of God comes down at that temple. Fire eats up, falls from heaven, and eats up the sacrifice that had laid there. God is approving that temple. He's laying his seal to it. And what we find in the book of Ezekiel in chapter 46 is that Ezekiel has a vision of a new temple. Throughout his book, God has been taking him back to the temple in Jerusalem.

And each time he's taken in spirit back to the temple in Jerusalem from Babylon, what he sees is abominations in the temple. What he sees is people worshiping idols in the temple. What he sees is people committing terrible acts of betrayal of their God in the temple. It's become a corrupt house, and God says it's going to be destroyed. It's going to be removed. And so it is. The Babylonians in 587 destroy the temple in Jerusalem. Now, Ezekiel's a priest, and he's bitterly laments the destruction of the temple. But he has a vision of a future temple, and this future temple is completely different to the temple that he's been taken back to in spirit. This is a pure temple. It is so big, in fact, as he sees it, that it occupies not only the temple mount, but it goes right across the Kidron Valley. It fills the Mount of Olives as well. It is so big. Now, how are we to understand that temple? Is it just a much bigger temple? Well, if it was, there wouldn't really be a progress, would there? It just means there's a bigger temple. It's like Solomon's, only it's a lot bigger, hugely bigger. But Jesus makes us, when we come to the Gospel of John, we are told in chapter 1, verse 14, that Jesus, who has been identified as the Word of God, who was with God in the beginning and was God, comes and dwells among human beings. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. It's an interesting word. That word dwelt is an interesting word because it means literally He tabernacled among us. He came and lived, as it were, in a tent among us. And John says, we saw His glory. And we haven't got time to do it tonight, but we could, if we had an hour, we could look at John's Gospel and see how He reveals Jesus as the true tabernacle, as opposed to the old one that had gone long ago. But in chapter 2, Jesus goes into the temple, He casts out the money changers, and He says, you have made my house into a house of prayer. And they say, you've made my house into a den of thieves. It should be a house of prayer. You've made it a den of thieves. And they say to Him, give us a sign. Give us some kind of sign that you have the authority to come in here and to take over the temple and to throw out the money changers. And Jesus responds, I'll give you a sign. Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again. And they say to Him, are you crazy? For 40 years we've been building this temple, and you are going to build it in three days? How are you going to do that? And John adds this explanatory note. He says, they didn't know that He was referring to the temple of His body.

[17:38] And there's an interesting passage in John chapter 7. Jesus is in Jerusalem for the last of the great three pilgrim feasts, the Feast of Tabernacles. Interesting. The true tabernacle is at the Feast of Tabernacles. And at the last great, at the final day, the great day of the feast, on that great day of the feast, the priests would send men down to the Pool of Siloam. It had been a long, hot summer.

There would be very little water left in the cisterns. But in faith, the people would take that water, they would bring it to the altar of sacrifice, and they would pour it out. That water would then trickle towards the gate of the temple. It would go down out of the temple into the Kidron Brook, and that would...the Kidron Brook flowed right down through the Judean wilderness into the Dead Sea.

Now, that was a great act of faith on their part, but they were trusting God to send more rain. They were trusting Him to send the late rains. And Jesus, on that day, as they're pouring out that water, stands up and says, whoever is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. For as the Scripture says, he who believes in Me, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.

Now, for those of you that know your Bible really well, where does it say in the Old Testament that those who believe in the Messiah will have rivers of living water flowing out of their innermost being?

Well, if you've got your concordance in the back of your Bible and you're looking through it right now, don't bother, because there is no verse in the whole of the Old Testament that says that whoever believes on the Messiah will have living water flowing out of his innermost being. So, what do we make of that?

[ 19 : 38 ] Where did Jesus get that idea from? I think that He's thinking of that temple in the book of Ezekiel. Notice, what happens in that temple in Ezekiel is that he sees that great glorious future temple, is water is flowing out of it. And that water, as it flows out, doesn't remain a trickle. You go on half a mile, and it's up to your knees. Go on another half mile, it's up to your waist. Go on another half mile, you can swim in it. And this water goes from the temple right down through the Judean desert. It reaches the Dead Sea, and the Dead Sea becomes fresh, and fish live in it.

Nothing except microbes live in the Dead Sea now, but Ezekiel is saying there'll be fish there. Now, I don't think that Ezekiel is saying simply that there'll be a future when those of you who are keen anglers will be able to catch a plane, go to Israel, and go down to the Dead Sea and catch fish, instead of floating around in the water reading your newspaper and your novels or whatever you do. I don't think that's what it's all about. Jesus is saying that temple in Jerusalem is that temple that is going to be raised from the dead, that He said about in John chapter 2, destroy this body, destroy this temple, in three days I will raise it again. But only, it's not just that Jesus is the temple, but His people become living stones in that temple. In Ephesians chapter 2, we're told that Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus are being built together into a living temple. Peter talks about living stones in that great spiritual temple. So, what we see in Ezekiel chapter 37 is in vision form, in symbolic form, a picture of the people of God transformed. So, we've moved from individual altars to family altar to national altar to tabernacle to temple made of stone to temples made of people, living people. And what happened on the day of Pentecost? It wasn't the birth of the church. What happened on the day of Pentecost was that a new temple came into being, and that living water began to flow out, first of all to Jerusalem, then to Judea, Samaria, and it's continued to flow out to the uttermost parts of the world, bringing life, spiritual life, wherever it goes. And that spiritual life begins right there in the temple courtyard, in the old temple courtyard, where 3,000 people are made alive. A little while later, it's 2,000, that's in Jerusalem outside of the temple, and it just goes on and on. It's gone on and on, for 2,000 years. So, what we're seeing in Acts chapter 2 is, first of all, fulfillment of a promise, the fulfillment of a psalm, the fulfillment of a pattern. Let me just add the fulfillment also of a plan. Ever since man sinned in the Garden of Eden, God had a plan to redeem the world to Himself. God had a plan to bring the whole world, not just human beings, but the whole creation that has been corrupted back to Himself, and He announces how He's going to do it. He says to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, you will bruise His heel. And the process begins at that moment. The process to bring about the crushing of the serpent's head so that creation can be put back on kilter again. And you find that that promise is kept alive in the Old Testament Scriptures in remarkable ways. The next time you get that promise repeated is in Numbers chapter 24, when Balak, the king of the Moabites, calls Balaam, a famous prophet, a famous soothsayer, a wizard, an occultist that we know about from archaeological discoveries. He was really well known in the ancient world, and King Balak calls him to curse the Jewish people. And in one of his final visions, Balaam says, I see him, but not now. I see him, but not near. A scepter will rise. A king will rise out of Judah. A ruler will rise out of Israel, and he will crush the heads of all the noisy boasters. When we go to the book of Judges, this is a period of national apostasy. When the people of Israel have rejected their God, they've gone after other gods, and they sin, and God sends God...they suffer because of it. They make supplication to God, and He saves them. And He does it by some very flawed characters indeed. And in chapter 3 of the book of Judges, we find that there is Balak...there is Barak, and he says to Deborah, who is the judge of Israel at that time, she says to him, go and fight the Lord's battles.

He says, I'll go if you go with me. She says to him, I'll go with you, but because you're the seed of the woman, you should crush the head of the seed of the serpent. But because you won't do that, the glory will go to a woman. And what happens is there is...the Israelites are winning the battle, and Sisera, the captain of the enemies of Israel, runs, and he comes to the tent of Heba the Kenite, and his wife Yael is there, and he says, let me come and hide in your tent. Now, that was highly irregular because the kind of moral climate of the day did not allow a man to go into the tent of a woman. But he thinks if he goes in there, the Israelites who are following him will never suspect that he's in the tent of a woman. So, she says, yeah, sure, come on in. You know, lie down, take your rest. And he says, can you give me some water to drink? She says, oh, I'll do better than that. I'll give you some milk. So, she said, just take it easy to sleep. I'll make sure that nobody disturbs you. And while he's sleeping, she takes a tent peg and she drives it through his temple and nails his head to the floor. Wow, what a woman. And the song that's sung is that she crushes his head. It should have been the seed of the woman, but because of the disobedience of the seed of the woman, it's a woman who crushes the head of the seed of the serpent. And we find Abimelech drives a group of people into a tower. They climb in the tower, he sets light to it, he burns them alive, and he tries it a second time in another city. But this time, a woman, for some reason, carries a millstone, and these things are not light. And she goes up into the tower and she leans out the window and with unerring accuracy, she drops the millstone and it hits Abimelech in the head. A woman crushes the head of the seed of the serpent. And then you have David and Goliath, and there's something of the serpent about Goliath because he's clothed in scale armor. And how does David kill him? He's a noisy boaster. Remember that promise of Balaam? He's a noisy boaster. Come to me and I'll scatter your bones.

[ 27 : 45 ] I'll feed you to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field. And how does David kill him? A stone in the head, and then cuts his head off. But you see, the thing about God was keeping the promise alive. He was keeping the plan on track, but all that was happening was the seed of the serpent was having his head crushed, not the serpent himself. And through the cross, the writer of the Hebrews says, God destroyed him that had the power of death. He destroyed him that had introduced death, which was Satan. And on the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ did battle with Satan, and he crushed his head. Of course, his heel, as it were, was injected with all the venom of the enemy, but Jesus destroyed him that had the power of death. Very, very quickly, last of all, it's not, the Pentecost is, the day of

Pentecost was not only the fulfillment of a promise, it was not only the fulfillment of a psalm, it was not only the fulfillment of a pattern, it was not only the fulfillment of a plan, but it was the fulfillment of Pentecost itself. At Passover, Jesus died, and Passover was the barley harvest. And when Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, He rose from the dead on the very day that the priest took the barley harvest, took the first fruits of the barley harvest, and held it up and presented it before God.

And Paul in Romans chapter 15 says that Jesus was the first fruits from the dead. And He rose on the second, on the very day that the first fruits of the barley harvest were presented to God, He rose as the first fruits from the dead, so that because Jesus lives, you and I can live also. Because Jesus lives, all those who believe in Him will live also. And here at Pentecost, it was the wheat harvest. The barley harvest, barley was regarded as a poor man's food, wheat was regarded as a rich man's food. And what happens on the day of Pentecost when Peter and the 120 are in the temple for the celebration of the Feast of Pentecost, the high priest would take two loaves made of wheat. Now, the Passover bread was unleavened.

Leavened is always a picture of sin in Scripture. But He came before God with leavened loaves at the time that 3,000 people were becoming the first fruits of Christ's work and resurrection.

You see what's happening here? There's so much coming together on the day of Pentecost, and that was just the beginning. And the harvest continues. And I wanted to share this with you tonight because we do live in dark days. We live in days when we're under attack. We live in days when we're under attack from atheists, from politicians, from sociologists, from all kinds of people, from people of other religions. You and I are under attack all the time. You're under attack at work.

[ 31 : 22 ] Some of you are under attack at school because you believe in the Lord Jesus. And you find it hard going. Sometimes you feel you don't want to go to work because there are going to be people who are mocking you, making fun of you because you're a Christian. And this passage says, this chapter says, hang on in there, because God has a plan, and that plan is coming to fulfillment,

and that plan will come to fulfillment. And so, Paul ends his 15th chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians by saying, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, inasmuch, because Christ is risen for the dead. And because he sent his Spirit, inasmuch as you know because of that, that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. You may find it very difficult standing up to be counted when people are making fun of you, but you have got the Holy Spirit on your side, because the Holy Spirit was sent at Pentecost to enable you to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ, and he has not withdrawn his Holy

Spirit. You might not feel that the Holy Spirit is with you, but he is because Jesus has sent him. And brothers and sisters, we are taking part in a battle. We may lose, well, we're taking part in a warfare. We may lose battles, and we will lose battles, but we will win the war, because the victory was gained 2,000 years ago on another mountain, on Mount Calvary. And therefore, God's promise, the psalm, the pattern, the plan, and Pentecost, and all that's associated with those things have come to pass. The Lord is with us. The Lord is with us indeed, and we will, in the end, be victorious because of God's great plan for the world, and we should rejoice in that. Let's just pray.

Our Father, we give you thanks for the promise of Pentecost. Thank you that you kept your promise. Thank you, Lord, that you turned your ministers into winds and your messengers into flames of fire on that day. May we continue to know that in our day. Thank you for the pattern that you established a new temple of which we are living stones in it. Your plan was proved to be on course, because the Spirit is given. The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our God and of His Messiah, and He shall reign forever. We thank you, Lord, that we have been presented to you as the firstfruits of the coming of the coming of the coming of your Spirit. Enable us, Lord, to stand firm.

Enable us to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, because we ask this for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing the last three verses of Psalm 72 in the Psalter.

Psalm 72 in the Psalter. His name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall. Men shall be blessed in Him, and blessed all nations shall Him call. Now blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel, for He alone doth wondrous works in glory, that excel and blessed be His glorious name to all eternity. The whole earth let His glory fill. Amen. So let it be. Verses 17, 18, and 19 of Psalm 72 in the Psalter on page 314.

[ 35 : 37 ] His name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall.

Christ shall be blessed in Him, and blessed, all nations shall be called. Now blessed be the Lord our God, the Lord of God, the Lord of God of God.

God of Israel. God of Israel. For He alone doth wondrous works in glory doth excel.

And blessed be His glory to all eternity. The whole earth let His glory fill a grace, the whole earth let His glory fill, His glorious name to all eternity.

The whole earth left His glory filled.

[ 37 : 25 ] Amen. So let it be. The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon you and give you peace through the Prince of Peace.

Amen.