

Acts 2:1-41 - Bair

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Preacher: Daniel Bair

[0:00] Well, I love to look at the night sky. Any other night sky watchers in here?

! Or actually, maybe what I really wonder is why Earth doesn't.

Wouldn't that be exciting? You look outside, you see this day and night rings around the planet.

Well, there's a law that governs celestial spheres and their proximity to each other called the Roche Limit.

You guys didn't know you were coming to an astrophysics lesson this morning, but the Roche Limit is this area where if a planet comes, or you have two bodies of significant mass, if they come in close proximity to each other, the body with the greater mass wins out in gravity, and the smaller one will shatter into pieces and create rings around the other planet.

And so if our moon came a little too close to Earth, we too could have rings. Hypothetically, anyway. I don't suggest we try it. But I do suggest, though, that the same rule that governs the celestial spheres in a similar way governs the spiritual world.

[1:34] For centuries, our world has desired to taste the spiritual, to reach up to the heavens, to pull the heavens down. We remember the plains of Shinar where the people of the Earth gathered together to build a tower, and, well, that didn't end so well.

The languages were confused and their lodgings were scattered. Because there's a problem when we come too close to the proximity of the spiritual, our weak gravity is not strong enough to hold together in the presence of this greater spiritual body.

And so we live in this world of desire to taste that, to see that, to experience that, yet we can't handle that. We can't reach it.

Yet Acts, the story of Acts, this triune story, is the story where God invades our sphere, where the celestial, heavenly world comes in close proximity to Earth, and the Roche limit of our world is breached.

And so it's been 50 days since a borrowed tomb was found empty. The temple was torn, or the curtain in the temple was torn. Jesus was in the tomb, and then Jesus walked forth from the tomb.

[3:05] And so for 40 days, Jesus walked with the disciples, and then he ascended into heaven, and he gave this promise that power would come to them.

And so the disciples have been waiting for 10 days, gathered together, praying, and waiting. And then suddenly heaven touches Earth. And so I suggest that what happened on the day of Pentecost is not a spectacular event in history to be admired from a distance.

No, it's a hinge of history. It's a cardinal moment in the history of the Church, where the sphere of glory descended so close that the old gravity of our fallen world shattered.

God invaded our world with fire and wind and supernatural speech. And all of this, as we'll see in this text, is evidence that the Lord Jesus reigns from the throne of David, and that the last days have arrived.

So today we're not looking backward. We're not looking back in history. We are standing in the era inaugurated by Pentecost. And I want to suggest the question for us this morning, do we discern the hour?

[4:18] Do we discern the hour, or do we live as if heaven has not yet touched Earth? How do we live in light of Pentecost? Well, let's pray as we come to this text.

Heavenly Father, it's a heavy task to preach your word. It's a heavier task to preach a sermon on a sermon, to preach by the power of the Holy Spirit on the Holy Spirit.

So we pray that you would take your word, your scripture that we just read, that you would give us ears to hear it, minds to receive it.

May my words be honoring to you, glorifying to your name. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Well, actually, before we jump into the text, I want to suggest, as we go through the book of Acts, I want to suggest a definition.

You guys got journaling Bibles, right? Everyone got journaling Bibles? If not, there's more in the back, grab one. I suggest you write down things, write down some of these themes that Dave mentioned last week, copy those into there.

[5:27] But also, here's a definition for spiritual gifts, a working definition for spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts, they're not personality traits. They're not natural talents.

They're not a resume of some unusual impressiveness. Spiritual gifts are manifestations of the Holy Spirit, distributed by sovereign grace for the common good of the church, and designed to be exercised in love.

So keep that in mind as we read the whole book of Acts.

And we'll start here in verse 1. And let's read again verses 1 through 4, as we do notice the unilateral action of God. Verse 1, Humanity did not initiate Pentecost.

There was no strategy session, no committee convened to figure out how to make Pentecost happen. No, this is the work of God. And you notice the timing.

[7:11] It happened suddenly. Suddenly. This word suddenly only occurs three times in the whole New Testament, and it's all in Acts. And as Luke is using this, he's trying to convey that something awesome and unexpected is happening.

Luke is accumulating these events of divine intervention, these theophanies of God, these terrifying moments when God breaks into the visible world.

It's the language of Sinai. It's the language of Elijah's whirlwind. It's the language of Isaiah's temple vision. God is moving, and when God moves, earth trembles.

And the timing is not just suddenly, but it's also this verb arrived. It actually has this, you could translate it as had fully come. It's the idea of something ripening into readiness, like a plum on a fruit tree.

It had fully come. It suggests not just a calendar date, but a ripening of purpose. God had filled up the appointed time. The promise of the Father in Acts 1, verses 4 and 5 that we saw last week, is coming to fruition on schedule.

[8:33] Hopefully you have that list that Dave talked about last week. If not, copy off your neighbor. Get this list. It's important. Maybe we should make a bingo card, and you can check off when a pastor mentions one of these in the sermons over the next couple months.

But first, we see here in Acts 2 that this message is triune-shaped. We talked about that last week. The Father planned the day, the Son ascended and is enthroned, and the Holy Spirit descends in power to empower the mission.

Father, Son, Spirit working in concert to accomplish the one great plan of redemption. And so what happens then? Well, tongues of fire. I think in the words of Tad, we'd say, that's weird.

Tongues of fire. What are tongues of fire? Well, I think the imagery is supposed to evoke the Old Testament imagery of the presence of the glory of God.

When we read about fire, Moses and the burning bush should come to mind. The pillar of fire that led Israel through the wilderness. The fire that fell on Elijah's altar.

[9:39] The fire that marked Ezekiel's call. The passage that says our God is a consuming fire. And so when we come to Acts, when we read this fire, we recognize the heavenly glory, the presence of God.

It's a theophany, an appearance of God, a manifestation of the divine presence, come to indwell his people. But what's really interesting about the fire here is it's not a general blaze over the room.

It divides. It distributes itself. It rests on each of them. The God whose presence dwelt behind the veil in the Holy of Holies. The God whose presence filled the tabernacle now rests, get this, on the heads of fishermen and tax collectors and ordinary men and women who love Jesus.

It's amazing. It's actually a very amazing moment in time. God is in this consecrating a new temple, not one built by hands, but one bought with the blood.

This theophonic fire coming down, resting on these people, equipping them to launch this mission.

And so what happens when these tongues come on them? Well, verse 4 tells us they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

[11:08] Well, what does this mean? We don't have to guess because down in verse 8 where it's clarified for us that they say, the people that hear them say, how is it that we each hear in his own native tongue? These are real foreign languages, Parthian, Elamite, Egyptian, the kind of languages a mother would sit her child on her lap and talk to them in.

These are the languages these people learned and these unlearned fishermen are speaking it. How do they know this language?

So this, speaking in tongues, is not unintelligible utterances. It's supernatural enablement for cross-linguistic proclamation.

The Spirit is enabling them to proclaim the gospel in other languages. And this is the only place where we read about the speaking in tongues in this way, where it's language given, the disciples given the ability to omni-speak.

And any of us who have studied Greek or Latin or Hebrew or Korean or Japanese or Spanish or anything are a little bit jealous here. The years spent learning a language, but they just speak it instantly.

[12:21] But what the Holy Spirit is doing here is translating the kingdom of God in real time, expanding the borders of his kingdom beyond Israel.

Now, let me kind of back up and say the speaking in tongues here in Acts 2 is quite different from the speaking in tongues that we read about in 1 Corinthians 12 to 14.

If you're in home groups, you're studying this. This is a difference speaking in tongues. We don't want to conflate the two. The difference is in purpose. The purpose here is proclamation. The purpose in 1 Corinthians is edification.

The purpose here is to proclaim the gospel to an unbelieving audience. In Corinthians, though, Paul is saying this is a gift for personal edification. In fact, it's an unintelligible utterance in 1 Corinthians. It's an utterance that requires an interpreter before it can build up the church. And the point here is not that one is genuine, one is not. They're both genuine.

[13:28] But the point is purpose. The purpose here is proclamation. The purpose in the other is edification. We see that in verse 11. These hearers say, we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.

It's doxology. It's praise. It's declaring what God has done. Pentecost positions us for what Dave called a generous orderly theology of the Spirit.

And this is one of those instances where it's non-normative. This isn't what we should expect every Sunday when we come to church. Invite all the foreign speakers in because the Spirit will interpret it.

No, this is non-normative. This is not to be expected in the daily life of the church. The Spirit is doing something unique here to inaugurate the church. Another thing to note is the Holy Spirit always uses these gifts to glorify God.

Never the person who is filled. So keep those in mind as we read through the book of Acts. Okay, so that's verses 1 through 4.

[14:42] Verses 5 through 13, Luke gives this catalog of nations. Parthians, Medes, Edomites, residents of Mesopotamia, et cetera, et cetera. This is not just a random list.

This highlights the nations to which the Jewish people had been dispersed. In a way, Rome claims this universal rule, but the Holy Spirit says, no, I've got more universal rule.

I can speak all the languages. In a sense, Luke is giving us a new table of nations that is comparable to Genesis 10. In fact, the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth are all represented here.

All the nations of the world are represented here. Not that every nation is there, but at least representatively, the whole world is there. And so when from the early church, the early church fathers interpreted this passage as a deliberate reversal of Babel.

We know the story in Genesis 11. Humanity gathered together, united in one language, united in this arrogance and said, let us build a city with a tower with the top in the heavens.

[15:57] Let us make a name for ourselves. At Babel, earth proudly tried to ascend to heaven, but God confused their language and scattered the people.

at Pentecost, heaven humbly descended to earth and God gathered the people and clarified his language to every tongue and nation. Now we do have to be careful that we don't press this parallel too far.

Interesting, Luke uses the word bewildered here. The people were bewildered. It's actually the same exact word as the Greek Old Testament, the translation of the Greek Old Testament uses when it talks about this place in Babel when it says confusion.

It's the same word. I think Luke's hinting at something here. Okay, Babel is, something new has happened here. Babel is beginning to be reversed, but it's not complete yet.

There's still a confusion there. In fact, there's a new confusion there. Pentecost begins the reversal of Babel, but doesn't complete it. That won't come until the second coming when every tribe and tongue and nation will be before the Lamb crying with a loud voice.

[17:12] We're told in Revelation, salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb. That day is coming. Pentecost is the down payment and the church serves today as an outpost of the kingdom, an embassy of heaven in this foreign soil as we wait for that day.

So when the church gathers in Christ-centered, spirit-empowered worship, the watching world will get a glimpse of the final kingdom. And that's what we are as a church, a visible manifestation of heaven touching earth.

So that's this introduction. There's a lot more in there, but we're going to use that to move into the second part where we have a sermon. Okay? We're going to have a sermon on a sermon here.

Verses 14 through 36 is this sermon from Peter. Well, look back at verses 12 and 13. The people, the crowd is amazed. Some are perplexed. What does this mean?

Others mock. They're drunk. Because the unregenerate mind cannot comprehend the sovereign movement of God. When the spirit moves, the world will diagnose it as madness.

[18:26] Even sometimes from within the church, people confuse the spirit's movement with madness. This is not madness, though. This is the majestic mobilization of the kingdom of God.

And so Peter stands up and remember, this is the same man who weeks prior to this, weeks prior to this, denied knowing Jesus to a servant girl by a charcoal fire.

But the spirit has transformed this cowering craven into a courageous crier. There you go for alliteration. He doesn't entertain the crowd, though.

He opens the scripture. He reads from the prophet Joel, and he says, this, this thing that Joel said you're witnessing right now. Now, look at the first words of what he quotes from Joel.

And in the last days, well, that's not what Joel said. Joel said afterward. Peter says, in the last days, it's not a slip of the tongue.

[19:30] It's apostolic authority and exegesis at its finest. Joel left the timing open. Joel didn't know when this was going to be afterwards. Sometime afterwards, but Peter says, no, it's now.

In the last days. In the last days. And it's here. The last days have arrived. And to the answer, what does this mean? It means that Jesus is Lord.

He's enthroned as the Davidic king on the throne. He's ushered in the last days, the age of the spirit in fulfillment of this ancient promise from Joel.

Israel's being restored and God is gathering this remnant into the new kingdom under the true king. Pentecost is the eschatological, the end time hopes of Israel realized.

Saints, for us, that means we are not waiting for the last days. We are in the last days. We're living in them. We heard the disciples question last week, Lord, will you at this time restore your kingdom to Israel?

[20:40] Pentecost provides the answer. The spirit is the promised gift of the end times, signaling that the kingdom is inaugurated and is broken into this present age.

And the spirit is poured out on all flesh, all flesh, every, not every individual irrespective of faith, every group irrespective of status, sons and daughters, young and old, male servants and female servants.

There's no distinction between age or gender or rank. And the purpose is for witness, for prophecy, for the prophecy of foretelling, not the prophecy of foretelling.

And in that sense, today, all the believers are a foretelling prophet. for the kingdom. Well, after this Joel quote, Peter moves to this section where he really shares the gospel.

He has four pillars here that hold up the roof of the gospel. So, we've got the man, the plan, the raising, and the reign. The man, the plan, the raising, and the reign. First, the man in verse 22.

[22:06] Verse 22, we read, men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst as you yourselves know. He's beginning with this full, genuine portrait of the humanity of Christ.

Jesus was a man, not a phantom, not some spiritual thing, not a myth. You all saw him. God publicly attested to him, accredited him with these mighty works and wonders and signs. We might want to conflate those three things, but they are synonymous in a sense, but not entirely. There's some differentiation between the three. Mighty works are these, the power of these, the nature of who Christ is.

Wonders are the effect, the astonishment that it brings out in others. And these signs are the purpose to proclaim the truth of who he is. And Peter is saying, you saw this.

You can't ignore that. You can't plead ignorance. This is the man. He walked among you, and we've seen him raised from the dead. Second is the plan in verse 23.

[23 : 22] This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. For Peter's sermon, this is the core of his message.

Jesus was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. It wasn't an accident. The cross was not plan B.

This was the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. What appeared to be a free concerted action by the Jews and Gentiles to crucify him was actually God's eternal plan unfolding.

This means Jesus did not die as a pathetic victim. He laid down his life in fulfillment of God's purpose.

Yet even so, we read in here, Peter pointing his finger at this crowd and saying, you crucified and killed him by the hands of lawless men. You're not off the hook.

[24 : 34] God's sovereignty does not excuse your guilt and your guilt does not frustrate God's purpose. We hold both of these in their terrifying glorious tension.

You killed him. But that was the plan. The man, the plan. Third is the raising. This is verses 24 through 32. We'll just read verse 24.

God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it. Death choked on the author of life.

It was not possible for him to be held by it. This is what the whole Psalter has been rehearsing. We read in our responsive reading this morning, the snares of death encompass me.

The pangs of Sheol laid hold on me. These are the very cords that are snapped at the empty tomb.

And so as Peter unfurls Psalm 16 here, David prophesied of a Messiah and of his resurrection.

[25 : 49] We know it wasn't David because he was dead and buried and look, his tomb is still here. He's not the one, but God promised that David would be on the throne forever. So how can that be? It can be because Jesus, the Holy One, would not see corruption.

And so the resurrection is vindication of Jesus' life and mission and proof that he still lives and rules. This unique person sharing all the attributes of the Godhead.

The man, the plan, the raising, verses 33 through 36 are the rain. Here Peter invokes Psalm 110 verse 1, which is the most quoted Old Testament verse in the New Testament.

He draws this devastating conclusion. Look at verse 36. Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.

Know for certain, beyond dispute. You thought you were executing a blasphemer. You were murdering your maker. He is Lord, Kurios.

[27 : 01] He is Christ, Christos. He is exalted at the right hand of the Almighty on high. The Galilean carpenter is actually the galactic king.

And you are guilty of cosmic regicide. Peter's sermon proclaims that the Spirit's outpouring is a sign that the last days, that the fulfillment of God's promises are at hand.

and most importantly, the proof that Jesus is vindicated. Jesus, the crucified one, now sits as both Lord and Christ and king.

The pouring out of the Holy Spirit is the undeniable proof that the Davidic king has taken up his throne. And Peter uses these two Psalms, 16 and 110, to prove that the descent of the Spirit is a direct result of the exaltation of the Son.

The Spirit is the experiential evidence of what's being proclaimed, the reign of the king. Again, we have this triune shape to this book.

[28 : 11] The Father ordains the throne, the Son takes his seat, and the Spirit is poured out. Father planning, Son exalting, Spirit descending. One God, one plan, one unstoppable mission.

That's Peter's sermon. And so we come to this final section, verses 37 through 41. And this is actually a question Pastor Tad teed us up for on Easter.

How does a dead sinner respond to such an indictment? Can these bones live? Verse 37, now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, brothers, what shall we do?

This word cut to the heart, it appears actually only here in the New Testament. Cut to the heart. It means to be stabbed, to be violently pierced, to be struck in the conscience.

In the Old Testament, it covers this range of anguish from anger to devastation. It's not some sentimental sadness from watching a sappy movie or something.

[29:21] No, this is a heavy moment, an agonizing awakening of the soul to its depravity and its desperate need for grace. Consider the contrast, though, to the story we read from our gospel reading this morning.

These men on the Emmaus Road, walking, talking with this stranger who opened to them the scriptures, but after he left, they said to one another, did not our hearts burn within us? Same spirit, same scriptures, same risen Lord proclaimed in Jerusalem, different hearts, different work.

When the risen Christ is preached, the spirit warms the hearts of the Christian, the believer, the weary, but that same spirit pierces the heart of the rebels.

Christ is the fire that warms the heart, but also the fire that burns the heart that is non-repentant. And so the spirit took these words that Peter preached and drove them in like a blade into the conscience.

[30:38] They don't wait for the soft piano music at the end of the sermon. They don't wait for the altar call. They cry out. The spirit creates this urgency. Hear it in their question.

Brothers, what shall we do? We've murdered God's Messiah. We are the enemies of verse 35. We are the guilty hands of verse 23.

Can the blood shed save we who shed it? The breathtaking beauty of the gospel is yes. The very blood they shed is the blood that washes them clean.

the precious blood of Christ, the lamb without spot or blemish. The murderers are offered mercy. The rebels are offered reconciliation.

The adversaries are offered adoption into the family of the king they killed. And Peter's answer in verse 38 is the answer to the core question of humanity.

[31:42] Peter said to them, repent repent and be baptized. Every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Repent. Repent. This word does not just mean be sorry. Some of you kids maybe you've done something and your parents say apologize to your sister. I'm sorry.

No, like you mean it. I'm sorry. It's not that, right? It's not even a sincere apology. Maybe it starts there, but repentance is turning. It's a total change of directions.

It's turning to Jesus in what is elsewhere called faith. Faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin. And this repentance is then expressed publicly through baptism and confirmed through the gift of the Spirit.

Okay, verse 39 then shatters the tribal, ethnic, generational, geographic limitations of the gospel. For the promises to you and for your children, for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God is calling to himself.

[32:54] That's the fulfillment of that covenant with Abraham. He promised to be a blessing to his offspring and a blessing to all nations. And so Peter is emphasizing all who are far off.

He's looking right past the borders of Israel. He's looking even to Wheaton, Illinois. The covenant is not bound by these floodlines or geographic limitations but by the sovereign call of God. And here we see the beginning of again what Pastor Dave talked about last week, the central conflict and great triumph of this New Testament community, the inclusion of Gentiles in God's covenant promises.

And this promise is secured by the sovereign call of God. everyone, everyone, everyone, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself. 3,000 souls, 3,000 souls received the word of that day.

3,000 rebels laid down their weapons. 3,000 pairs of knees hit the ground. Not because Peter was eloquent, though the Spirit gave him boldness.

Not because of these signs that were spectacular, though they did attest to the message. We might see this and think, oh, wow, what a revival.

[34:08] How do we imitate that today? Well, it's the sovereign God of heaven and earth calling dead sinners to life. Can these bones live? Not by anything I can do.

He does it. He does the calling. He does the adding. He does the saving. He is the Lord. And forming a new spirit restored community. But the climax of Pentecost is not merely in these 3,000 individuals.

It's the creation of this distinct, visible community called the church, who devotes themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship and the breaking of bread and prayers. That's next week.

Acts 2.42. Come back next week for more of that. The immediate result, though, is that this spirit transforms the community into this life that proclaims who God is.

So what does Pentecost mean for us? Not 2,000 years ago, today, in this room, in 2026. Four things. First, it means we live in the age of the spirit.

[35:13] We're not living in some lesser post-apostolic twilight. The spirit who fell at Pentecost, the spirit who works throughout this book of Acts is the same spirit who is at work in our church, in our nation, in our city, in our area today, in each of our lives.

It's the same spirit. I encourage you to keep that in mind as we read this book of Acts. The same spirit is at work with us. Not for spectacle, not for our glory or glamour, but for witness, for holiness, for endurance, for mission.

Second, it means that the church is a bridge between two worlds. the ancient biblical text on one side firm and unchanging, and the modern world on the other, restless and changing by the hour. That's our mission field. That chasm is too wide for any of our ingenuity to breach. We're called to reach a generation that streams everything but hears nothing.

We can't do anything for that. It's a work of the Holy Spirit. The bridge is spirit built, or it's not built at all. Secondly. Thirdly, the church is a preview of the coming kingdom.

[36:30] Every time we gather in Christ-exalting worship, people from different backgrounds, people from different generations, different stories, bowing before one exalted Lord, we're a picture of Revelation 7.

We're Babel in reverse. Not complete, not perfected, but the world should be able to look at the church and see the future.

They should see generosity that defies market logic. They should see hospitality that crosses social lines. They should see belonging that depends not on usefulness.

That's what the Spirit produces in the church. Fourth and finally, it means the gospel demands a response. Peter didn't offer his audience a think about it moment.

repent. He said, repent and be baptized. Save yourselves from this crooked generation. That same command echoes across centuries and falls on our ears this morning.

[37:33] Repent. Be baptized. Save yourself from this crooked generation. If you've never bent your knee, today's the day. Because Jesus is either your resurrected Christ, is either your sovereign judge, or your supreme joy.

It's one or the other. The blood that he shed on the cross will either condemn you or cleanse you. But you must repent. You must believe. Be baptized. Invitation to be baptized.

If you've not been baptized and you're a believer and you want to be baptized, talk to one of us pastors. Secondly, though, if you are a believer who's grown cold, remember what you have.

Every week we confirm, I believe in the Holy Spirit. But do we live like it? He's a person. He works. He speaks. He convicts.

He empowers. He comforts. He sins. Yield to him afresh this morning. Finally, for the whole church, we carry the message that turns the world upside down.

[38:40] The wind blows. The fire spreads. The Spirit speaks. Not our wisdom, but his wonders. So the call for us is to go. Go to the nations. Go with the gospel on your lips and the Spirit within you.

Because it's a promise that's for you and for your children and for those who are far off. Pentecost is the day that heaven touched earth. The church is the place where that keeps happening week after week.

The second coming is the day when that will happen finally and fully and forever. So until then, we preach, we pray, we go, and we trust the sovereign God to work mightily in and through us.

[39:44] that the joy we have in that knowledge would shine forth in our lives, that others would see it, that others would see the church gathered together and recognize something different.

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