

Message Date: 05-17-20

Sermon Series: To the Ends of the Earth- ACTS Part 1: What Happens Next

Message Title: Week 4, Death loses its grip

OPENING

- *There's an old saying- pessimistic- ... "there are two certainties in life... Death and Taxes"*
- *This implies that there are two great powers in life- Mortality/Time, and Government.*
- *We don't like to talk about it, even though right now our generation is being confronted with it- the inevitable result of LIVING is dying! Life... death.*

- *At least that is how things seem. But 2000 years ago, 50 days after the first Easter, at 9:00 in the morning, we learned that Death isn't quite as powerful as we thought it was. Today, through one of the most important speeches ever spoken, we're going to see the place in human history where death loses its grip.*

- *SO, lets remember the setting we entered last week.*
 - *Day of Pentecost. There are God fearing Jews from all around the known world, gathered in Jerusalem for the celebration of the Hebrew Festival of Shavout.*
 - *The 120 disciples of Jesus had been praying continuously for the 10 days since Christ's ascension into heaven.*
 - *THEN, GOD SHOWS UP, as the Holy Spirit arrives and enters the disciples in a dramatic event of wind and fire.*
 - *As a result, the disciples- all of them- are enabled by the Holy Spirit to speak to these gathered crowds- in all of their native languages- the wonders of what God has done in Jesus Christ.*
 - *It's an incredible event, and the people are perplexed, bewildered, and amazed. As the event progressed, a question rose from the crowd... WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?*
 - *Even then, some mocked the event, accusing the disciples of being drunk.*

- *IN RESPONSE, Peter steps to the front, and in his speech gives what some have called the most important theological declaration in the entire New Testament.*

- *We are going to take two weeks to get through Peter's speech, and I want to start with exploring the overall great importance of the multiple speeches we will see throughout Acts... but for THAT, I'm going to head back home.*

- *SO, if you're ready to take another deep dive into this amazing story, LETS GO!*

BACK AT HOUSE

- *Let's talk about this big idea of the speeches we will see in Acts.*
- *7 Big, primary speeches. 3/Peter, 3/Paul, and 1/Longest/Stephen. Many others, including Peter's mini-speech in Chapter 1 about replacing Judas, but there are seven big ones, beginning with Peter's speech today.*

- *Fully 1/3 of Acts is comprised of these speeches, and they are distinctive and important.*

- *What's interesting is that when we think of the Book of Acts, we principally think of it as a historic narrative. A story of events that happened... and it is!*

- **BUT, Acts is also rich in theology. Teaching about God, about Jesus, Who He is, his work, and how he calls us to be a part of it. It is in these speeches that MOST of this theological content is found.**
- **The overarching theme of this theology, of these speeches, is WHO CHRIST IS. The significance of his Resurrection, and his ongoing work through the Holy Spirit**
- **Speeches will show that Christ is the fulfillment of the O.T. messianic hope of Israel- fulfillment of prophecy... And that IN CHRIST, A new age – a NEW COVENANT- has begun, an age inaugurated by Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection**
- **Also common to these speeches is a CALL TO FAITH. Through the speaker, God calls for repentance and offers Forgiveness, The Holy Spirit, and the promise of NEW LIFE.**
- **NOW... Over the years, the question has been raised about these speeches historic accuracy. In other words, to what extent do they represent the words that were actually said? (touched on this topic in addendum last week)**
- **ON ONE HAND- view that God gave Luke actual words spoken, and what we have recorded is exactly what was said.**
- **ON OTHER HAND- view that Luke invented these speeches himself, to make his own key theological points, and uses them as literary tools in progressing his narrative.**
- **THE REALITY IN THE MIDDLE OF THESE TWO VIEWS- that is consistent with our conviction that scripture is INSPIRED, TRUE, TRUSTWORTHY... is that these speeches DID HAPPEN, and they happened in the narrative setting Luke gives us. Peter really did stand up and give a speech on the day of Pentecost.**
- **AND LUKE, after doing his research on what was said, as a historian and LED BY THE SPIRIT, summarized these speeches for maximum clarity and impact as part of a written history.**
- **Evidence of this is how these speeches are very compact, very direct. Also, they contain Greek vocabulary that is much more common in Luke’s writings than in Peters.**
- **AND SO... We pick up the story here, in verse 14...**

READ ACTS 2:14-24

- **Luke records “Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd”**
- **We aren’t told that Peter is continuing to miraculously speak in ‘other tongues, but the word “Addressed” is unique- only used by Luke in NT, and has the connotation of being words inspired by God. GOD IS SPEAKING HERE, by the Spirit, through Peter!**
- **Peter is emphatic as he begins. LISTEN CAREFULLY! LET ME EXPLAIN the significance of what is happening! These people aren’t drunk! It’s only 9 in the morning!**
- **For all appearances, He starts with a humorous crack at the people who were saying the disciples had too much wine. But it’s not just a joke.**

- **Interesting- several times in the NT we see a correlation between WINE and the HOLY SPIRIT. EPHESIANS 5:18 Paul says “Don’t get drunk on wine... be filled with the Spirit”**
- **The image here is that the disciples ARE UNDER THE INFLUENCE, but not of wine. They are under the influence of the Spirit of God.**
- **NOW... Peter’s sermon here is going to just have ONE POINT: That Jesus Christ, who was crucified and rose from the dead, is both LORD and MESSIAH. THIS IS WHO JESUS IS!**
- **Peter makes his point by showing how the life of Jesus- Specifically his Death and Resurrection (which everyone knew had happened)... AND the coming of the Holy Spirit... which was happening RIGHT THEN... That all of this was a fulfillment of prophecy. Of scripture.... The fulfillment of everything God had been doing through entire history of Israel.**
- **AND NOW, as a result of Jesus’ resurrection, a NEW AGE had begun.**
- **TURNING TO THE PROPHET JOEL, the crowd- and all of us- hears this NEW AGE described as the LAST DAYS.**
- **READ VERSES 17-21**
- **OKAY- Start with big picture here. Peter quotes from Joel 2:28-31**
- **If you were a ‘God fearing Jew’ in Jerusalem that day, you KNEW this text. You KNEW this prophecy!**
- **You would have known that Joel, like other OT Prophets, spoke about the LAST DAYS- meaning (from your understanding as a first century Jew) the time when God would pour out His presence upon the world, come in Judgment, and fully usher in His kingdom on earth.... All this would happen on what scripture calls the GREAT AND GLORIOUS (Dreadful) DAY OF THE LORD.**
- **YOU WOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD that when that day came, that everyone who “Called on the Name of the Lord” would be saved.**
- **And by LORD, you meant YAHWEY. As in the Schema from Deuteronomy 6... “Hear oh Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is ONE” Hold that thought.**
- **PETERS POINT is both essential and unmistakable!**
- **For all who are waiting for the messiah... for God’s Kingdom to arrive, for His Spirit and Salvation to be fully revealed to humanity...**
- **THAT WAIT IS OVER. The last days have ARRIVED... THIS IS IT.**
- **We can see this emphasis in Peter’s first letter... 1st Peter 1:10-11.**

¹⁰ Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, ¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.

- ***In other words, through all the ages of the OT prophets, these prophets- who were guided by the Spirit of Christ (interesting)... they were searching for something. Searching, trying to understand WHEN AND HOW the messiah and God’s glory would be revealed.***
- ***Peter is proclaiming, “YOU don’t have to search anymore! It has happened! THIS IS THE TIME, and the Death, Burial, Resurrection of Jesus- and the coming of the Holy Spirit, these are the circumstances.***
- ***Down in verse 20 of 1 Peter 1, Peter says that Jesus “was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.”***
- ***Another of multiple NT references that Christ ushered in the last days is the opening of Hebrews... “In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son”***
- ***BUT HOLD ON! From our perspective, we look at the second half of Joel’s prophecy here, and we say ... UH... so, Peter is saying THEN that the last days had arrived... but its 2000 years later, and THAT still hasn’t happened.***
- ***THIS BRINGS up important perspective when we consider the scriptural concept of prophecy in general, and the ‘last days’ specifically. Concept of ALREADY but NOT YET***
- ***You see, when we think about the ‘last days’ we almost always are thinking about the NOT YET. The final conclusion of time as we know it, the second coming of Christ, and as it says in Revelation 21... when God “will wipe every tear from our eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” NOT YET!***
- ***And all of those promises are TRUE. But when we think of the ‘last days’ from a New Testament viewpoint, these NOT YET promises are not the primary perspective.***
- ***You see, when it comes to the concept of the end times, or last days, the broader theme of the N.T/ N.C.. .AND THE EMPHASIS OF PETER... is that these days have ALREADY BEGUN.***
- ***Think with me! What do we consider to be characteristics of last days?***
 - ***Second half of Joel’s prophecy here! Image of tribulation***
 - ***Wars, rumors of wars, the ‘birth pangs’ of the tribulation... things going from bad to worse, and all sorts of specific end times ‘sign’s from revelation and other prophetic texts.***
- ***BUT, if the last days did begin all those years ago on the day of Pentecost, what then are the characteristics of these days?***
 - ***HOPE! FREEDOM!***
 - ***Presence of God available to all through Holy Spirit... no human intermediary!***
 - ***Salvation and hope of God has been made known to all and available to all In Christ***
 - ***The fruit of the spirit in the lives of believers to bring Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, self-control.***
- ***Back in 1 Peter 1, Peter describes these ‘last days’ as a time when we have***
 - ***new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ***

- *time when we are able to greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.*
- *Time when even though we have not seen Jesus, we love him; and even though we do not see him now, we believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,⁹ for we are receiving the end result of our faith, the salvation of our souls.*
- **ALL OF THIS IS TRUE, and PRESENT, NOW... in these last days in which we live.**
- **FF BRUCE puts it this way... “The ‘last days’ began with Christ’s appearance on earth and will be consummated by his reappearance... they are the days during which the age to come overlaps the present age.”**
- **OKAY... Let’s look at this prophecy from Joel bit closer..**
- **VERSE 17... “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.”**
- **Image of torrential downpour on a parched earth- nourishing, healing.**
- **“Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.**
- **The concepts of ‘prophesying/ visions/ dreams... lots we could do about here, but simply put this is the image of God- through the holy spirit- bringing his presence, direction, and understanding to His people.**
- **God here emphasizes that His spirit will be for ALL PEOPLE... Really significant!**
 - *In past, spirit came temporarily... specific people, purposes*
 - *NOW, God’s presence, through the SPIRIT, is fully available to everyone, regardless of all the class distinctions we like to put upon ourselves*
 - *Sons and daughters: Spirit coming to men and women alike.*
 - *Old and young men: No age distinctions*
 - **HE GOES ON...**
- **“Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days”**
- **That’s the NIV... actual word for ‘SERVANT’ here is SLAVE.**
 - **This is huge! In the Roman world, the two classes of people who had the least rights, least standing, were WOMEN and SLAVES. AT THE BOTTOM of the societal structure were WOMEN SLAVES.**
- **And YET, God says, I am pouring out my spirit- equally- on slaves, both men and women. RADICAL CONCEPT.**
- **NOT ONLY THAT, God refers to these men and women as MY slaves. REMINDER of how God- throughout scripture- loves, calls, and uses in profound ways- people who our own social and even religious standards would cast aside.**
- **SECOND half of Joel’s prophecy is a picture of God’s JUDGMENT. Verses 19-21**
- **I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.**
- ²¹ **And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’**

- **You don't see the word 'Judgment' here, but this imagery is consistent with broader biblical imagery of judgment day**
- **Peter's point wasn't lost on the crowd- and shouldn't be lost on us.**
- **Just as Christ had ushered in the last days, these last days will ultimately result in God's judgment of humanity for our sin.**
- **This is something we don't like to talk about, but it is essentially biblical! Humanity WILL face the judgment of God.**
- **BUT... for the BELIEVER, the coming of this judgment day is not a matter of fear, but of HOPE. WHY? Because SALVATION is now available to ALL, and this Salvation- Peter is proclaiming- is found IN CHRIST.**
- **I mean, the entire REASON the prophecy of Joel points toward Judgement Day is to make that point that God has provided the opportunity of salvation for ALL.**
- **This takes us to verse 21: "Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"... For the Jews, "THE LORD" was Yahweh.**
- **What Peter goes on to demonstrate is that NOW, because of what the LORD- Yahwey- has done... to call upon the name of the Lord is to call upon CHRIST.**
- **VERSE 22: "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know."**
- **In other words, God has demonstrated WHO JESUS IS by WHAT JESUS HAS DONE- what GOD DID THROUGH HIM.... Which everyone had seen and knew!**
- **Peter is saying "Consider what you have seen! You know this to be true! You know that this is of God!**

VERSE 23-²³ This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

- **THIS IS HUGE. Peter proclaims that everything that happened to Jesus happened because it was GOD'S PLAN.**
- **God was NOT surprised by what Judas did, he was not surprised at what happened at the cross... furthermore, none of this would have happened without it being God's purpose and plan!**
- **At times people like to ask "Who is responsible for Jesus' death? The Jewish leaders? The Jewish people? The Romans? ALL OF US because of our sin?"**
- **Well, Yes, Yes, Yes, and Yes. BUT ULTIMATELY, the person responsible for Jesus' birth, life, death, burial and resurrection, IS GOD. AND GOD DID ALL OF THIS because it was his plan to bring about the REDEMPTION of His creation. Of you, and me.**

- **AND YET, directly and right then, it was the people of Jerusalem- cooperating with 'lawless' men- who put Jesus to death.**
- **Peter looks at the crowd, proclaims that Jesus was sent by God, and then says "YOU KILLED HIM" BUT FOR THE PEOPLE OF JERUSALEM- AND FOR US- that was not the end of the story.**
- **Peter: "The reason it was God's plan for you to put Jesus to death is so that DEATH ITSELF would be DEFEATED.**
- **VERSE 24: But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.**
 - **FACT: Jesus was raised from the dead. EVERYTHING hinges on that reality.**
 - **God set Jesus free from the Agony of death- greek word for 'Agony' directly means "PANGS"... Subtle metaphor here of the agony of birth pangs... and that out of suffering comes LIFE.**
 - **Most importantly, In this battle between the power of death and the Life of God, DEATH HAD NO CHANCE. In what God did through Christ, it was IMPOSSIBLE for death to win.**

CONCLUSION

- **THINK WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US, TODAY.**
- **In our world right now, we are being confronted with the reality of death. The reality that many things we thought we could control are beyond our control. FOR MANY PEOPLE, the result is the shattering of sense of security and the grip of FEAR.**
- **BUT BELIEVER! IN CHRIST, we are those for whom DEATH HAS BEEN DEFEATED.**
- **We don't want to die physically, no one does. BUT WE WILL, and we can face this reality with HOPE, not fear, because IN CHRIST our SPIRITS have already been brought from DEATH TO LIFE, and WE CANNOT DIE AGAIN!**
- **AND THAT'S NOT ALL. Just as we have already experienced resurrection spiritually, scripture promises we will one day experience resurrection PHYSICALLY.**
- **I want to end with two scriptures**
- **FIRST from Romans 6:8-11**
 - **What is true of Christ is true of us... Because IN Christ We have been raised from the dead, we cannot die again, death no longer has mastery over us. THAT IS HOPE!**
- **Second is from John 11:21-27... story of Lazarus, close friend of Jesus, along with Lazarus' sister, Martha.... Lazarus has died when Jesus arrived...**
- **The question for us, when presented the Truth that JESUS IS LORD, that He has defeated death, and he invites us into HIS LIFE... DO WE BELIEVE THIS? If we do, by God's Spirit and Grace... may we choose to LIVE with HOPE in the goodness of this truth.**