

Acts Chapter 2 Con't

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[0 : 00] Well, this is our March 29 class, and we are in Acts chapter 2. Before we get underway, I want to give an opportunity for any questions that may be hanging over from last week or any issues that need resolving that we perhaps did not address last week.

If there are any, feel free to bring them to our attention now. Otherwise, we'll plow right on into Acts chapter 2 here. This is a monumental chapter, and we have already explained to you in the past how that the contents of this chapter have probably been responsible for more divisions that exist in Christianity than perhaps any other single chapter in the Bible.

And that all has to do with the manner in which this content is interpreted, because people tend to act on the basis of what they believe.

And a belief is what you arrive at by way of interpreting a passage of Scripture. We have also taken the position in time past, and I feel very strongly about this, that there is but one correct interpretation of any passage of Scripture.

Only one. There is a right interpretation of Scripture, and of course, many, many wrong ones. How do we know what the right one is?

[1 : 32] The right interpretation of Scripture has to do with what the writer had in mind when that passage was penned and what the recipients understood by it.

Now, there are additional applications that can be made, and are often made from every passage of Scripture. But if you'll just keep this key in mind, Scripture has but one interpretation.

That is the meaning that the writer intended to convey. That's the interpretation. However, it may have multiple applications.

There are lots of truths that surface from that interpretation. There are lots of cases that can be established that remind us of something in that passage. So, while the applications of a passage of Scripture are almost limitless, the interpretation is singular.

And that's a very important point to keep in mind. So, when we look at this passage in Acts chapter 2, we are going to see a number of sacred cows dragged up to the altar and slain right before our eyes because we are going to try and divorce ourselves from human, traditional, denominational interpretations of a given passage and do the best we can, recognizing that we are certainly not infallible.

[3 : 08] We are as subject to failure and misunderstanding as anybody else. But we want to try as much as lies within us and let the text speak for itself and let the Scriptures interpret themselves.

And when we do that, we will be on a better footing than we would be otherwise. The typical way of interpreting Scripture, and this is built into all of us, we all have a natural bias when it comes to the understanding of Scripture.

And the bias is this. We tend to want the Scriptures to say what we want them to say. We tend to want the Bible to confirm what I already believe, not go against it.

And if it goes against what I already believe, then obviously that's not the right interpretation. And that's the way it's very common to approach the Bible that way. We all have a grid.

We all have a history that has been constructed during our past personal history. And it is filled with all kinds of things, some of them right, some of them wrong.

[4 : 17] And those things contribute to our thinking and to the conclusions and the positions we hold. And one of the most difficult things that a person ever has to do is change their position.

That's precisely what these people are going to be confronted with here in Acts chapter 2. When Peter preaches this message and tells them that they have crucified the Messiah, the very one that God sent, for whom we have been waiting for 4,000 years, you crucified him!

And these people are going to say, some of them at least, we'll see, are going to say, you know what? The man's right. We did.

We did. Now, what shall we do? Men and brethren, what shall we do? This is coming in chapter 30 or verse 36 or 37.

What shall we do? And Peter, as much as says, you can't go back and run that through again and do it differently. What is done is done.

[5 : 28] But you can admit you were wrong and change your position. That is precisely what the word repent means.

It means change your mind. And the reason why you should change your mind is because you have been given new information that contradicts the previous information from which you reached your conclusion.

You were wrong. Jesus was the Messiah. You didn't think he was. You crucified him. You were wrong. Are you big enough to admit it?

Whether you're talking about salvation or some other doctrinal aspect, repentance, changing one's mind, is the toughest thing you will ever have to do. I haven't done anything more difficult than that. And the reason repentance and changing your mind is so difficult is because you have to admit you were wrong. And there are people who, even if they suspect they're wrong, they will dig their heels in and not be moved.

[6 : 45] Because this is what I've always believed. Therefore, that makes it right. And that is a fatal position to hold. But there are a lot of people that hold it.

And what we're trying to do is get everybody into a position of neutrality where we can think afresh and anew using just the scriptures as our guide.

And this is one of the reasons that I rely heavily upon the sheet that you've been given. This is a copy from the 26th translation, New Testament.

And as you look down the text and the sheet here, you will see that each verse begins in bold print. The bold print is the King James Version of the Bible.

And the translations that follow dealing with the same verse are from various translations. For instance, in verse 3 of Acts chapter 2, it says, And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire.

[7 : 52] Then right below that, we have the authorized standard version. That's the ASV. And it translates it. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder.

Immediate below that is the 20th century New Testament translation. The TCNT. And below that is Weymouth's translation.

So, what we are doing is trying to trying to capitalize on the various translations that are available because there is no such thing as a perfect translation.

The only perfect copy of the Scriptures that was ever given is the original copy. That original copy was the one on which the author actually penned the words of Scripture as they were inspired of God.

We don't have access to those. If they still exist, we don't know where they are. We cannot say they don't exist because of the phenomenon of the Dead Sea Scrolls and things like that.

[9 : 02] But the likelihood is the actual original autographs, that which Moses, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, John, actually wrote, that very original first copy, that's the perfect one.

and all we have as a result of that copies and translations. But textual critics have done a marvelous job over the years in manuscript comparison and in the art and the science of the criticism and comparing texts and it's a very thankless and time-consuming task.

You have to have a special kind of mentality to even go into that because it's very rigorous, very demanding. Textual criticism is a very, very involved subject and all of these translations give us the benefit of this textual criticism.

Now here in Acts chapter 2 we have the description of a day of Pentecost and I want to emphasize this is not the day of Pentecost, it is just a day of Pentecost because Pentecost is one of the feast days in the Jewish calendar and it comes at the same time every year.

So please keep in mind this is a very big key, very big key. The thing that made this the day of Pentecost is not the arrival of the Holy Spirit and their speaking in tongues and the manifestation of miracles.

[10 : 32] That's not what made this the day of Pentecost. What made it the day of Pentecost was the Jewish calendar. It just so happened that the Spirit of God chose the day of Pentecost for this dramatic new outpouring and manifestation that had never been experienced before by anyone.

And it is extremely significant as to who the recipients of this information are and where they are from. And we'll get into that.

So let us move on down if we may. I'm at the top of page actually down in the corner it's page 438 it's Acts 2.2 Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled all the house where they were sitting and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire.

I can't imagine what this must have looked like. It was a visual phenomenon nobody could identify with and the various translations are given here Weymouth says tongues of what looked like fire he doesn't say it was fire but it was like fire.

In other words they are groping for some word to use to describe what they're seeing. And when you try to describe something that you have never seen before all you can do is reach back into your mental reference box and bring forth what it looks like or reminds you of and that's the best anybody can do.

[12 : 20] And if this this cloven tongues like as of fire sat upon each of them and Weymouth says and on the head of each person a tongue alighted this must have been an absolutely mind-blowing thing to see and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

Now I don't want to spend a lot of time with this but ghost is not a good translation and virtually every place where the word is used in the Greek it's the word pneuma P-N-E-U-M-A pneuma and pneuma is a word from the Greek that is translated air wind breath and sometimes ghost.

Now if you think in terms of air and wind with pneuma P-N-E-U and think of the tires you ride on they are pneumatic tires they are filled with air we use pneumatic tools that simply means they are air driven we even have a disease of the lungs called pneumonia I used to call it pneumonia when I was a kid reading that word. Mom, what is pneumonia? No, you don't pronounce the P.

It's just pneumonia. And in this case, it is pneuma hageon in the Greek, and it means spirit, the holy one, as to be distinguished from all other spirits, some of which are unholy or evil spirits. There are plenty of those in the scriptures too. But this Holy Spirit is a member of the triune Godhead, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, subsisting in one God manifested in three persons. We've talked a little bit about that in the past, but I don't want to devote any more time to it now. However, all of these individuals who are present are filled or under the control of or deeply influenced by this manifestation of the Spirit of God. And the only thing that is physical about it are these cloven tongues like as of fire. And they began to speak with other tongues.

tongues. That too is grossly misunderstood. Many times the Bible uses the word tongues for language.

[15 : 04] It's a synonym. We talk about every tongue. We're talking about every language that is spoken. And that is the meaning of the word here. That is why this is so key. These individuals are going to be speaking eloquently, fluently, in a language they had never learned. Now, you do not just have the ability to do that. That's why the Spirit of God came, was to infuse these people with this ability because of the critical nature of the message and because of the strategic makeup of those who are in attendance. And that's what makes this very, very important. Let's read on.

He began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. In other words, they were controlled. They were dominated by the Spirit of God in much the same way that a writer of Scripture was inspired by the Spirit of God as he wrote the original text. These people were inspired or controlled by the Holy Spirit as he gave them utterance. And Moffat says, as the Spirit enabled them to express themselves. Williams renders it, as the Spirit granted them to utter divine things. And Philip surrenders it, gave them power to proclaim his message. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. I cannot tell you, fellas, how deeply important this is, how strategic this is. Take a look at your map, if you will. It's a depiction of Paul's second missionary journey. And I want you to look down at Palestine in the lower right-hand corner.

And there you see Jerusalem. That's where this event is taking place. It is in the temple complex in Jerusalem. We've already talked a little bit about the upper room and why I do not believe this was in the upper room. Because I think the venue has moved and they are now in the temple area. And that is right there in Jerusalem. And we read back to our text again, every nation under heaven. And when this was noised abroad, and the American Standard Version says, and when this sound

was heard, Weymouth says, so when this noise was heard, and when this speaking was heard, and when this sound occurred, the New American Standard Bible, the multitude came together and were confounded. In other words, this noise, this noise, the noise of the rushing mighty wind, and all of these languages being spoken by people who had not learned them, created a real commotion. I mean, it just raised a huge stir.

[18:18] And everybody, all of the people who were there, and how many were there? There were thousands there. We know there were thousands because there are 3,000 who are going to respond positively.

How many more thousands there were that were present that did not respond positively, we don't know. But we suspect that that was the majority. The 3,000 constituted, I believe, a minority. And we'll see that as we move on through the book of Acts. So this created a tremendous stir. And people are hooking up their ears and saying, what is that? What's going on now? Down at the other end, what's going on? And all at once, a crowd just en masse just starts congregating and moving down there where they hear this noise coming from. If you've ever heard the noise of a rushing mighty wind, like some people who have actually experienced a tornado, they say it is deafening. It is just like standing right beside a rapid freight train that is moving down the tracks. And the noise is just overwhelming. This is a noise as of a rushing mighty wind. And it was localized where these people were. So it is going to draw a lot of attention. And everyone is attracted to what's happening in this particular area.

[19:39] And they start congregating in mass. The multitude, we are told in verse 6, the multitude, and you know the Bible uses the word multitude many, many times.

And it never defines it. It never tells us how many people constitute a multitude. What does it take to make a multitude a multitude? Yeah, a whole bunch. But is it a thousand?

Or ten thousand? Or a hundred? We're not told. We're just told it's a lot of people. A multitude. Great number. And they were confounded. That simply means they were perplexed. Everybody's wearing a big question mark and they're saying, what is it? What is this anyway? What's happening here? What's going on there?

What's this all about? I've been here many, many times. I've never seen anything like this. What in the world is this? What's going on? And the word just spread like wildfire and the crowd is gathering quickly. They are confounded. They are amazed.

Rames Douai version, which is the Roman Catholic version, is right after that. It says, the throng came together and were thrown into confusion. The crowd rushed together in great excitement.

[20:54] The RSV says they were bewildered because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans?

Now, of whom is he speaking principally? He's speaking of the apostles. The apostles were all Galileans. They were from up north.

Jerusalem is in the south. The only apostle, the only apostle of all of the twelve that was not a Galilean was Judas.

He was from Iscariot. If you were from Galilee, you had an accent. You had a northern accent that gave you away.

Remember when Jesus was before the Sanhedrin and Peter was denying him and the little Jewish maid said, I know you. You're one of his followers. Your speech betrays you.

[22:05] And Peter said, I don't know what you're talking about. I don't know the man. I don't know. And he spoke with that northern accent. Gave him away right away. She knew he was from Galilee. Now, all of these are from Galilee.

And they've all got that northern accent. Here, I guess we would say maybe like a southern brogue. Or if somebody is from New York or Boston, they have the accent to go with it.

Well, it was no different in Israel. And they knew these to be all Galileans. They are from up north. And how is it that we hear every man in our own tongue wherein we were born?

Well, why did they have all of these different tongues? Because all of these people, all of them are Jews.

How do we know they were Jews? This was a Jewish feast. This was a Jewish celebration. You were not welcome if you were not a Jew.

[23 : 07] If you were not a son of Abraham, you had no business being here. This is a Jewish feast, a Jewish occasion for Jewish people in a Jewish city, in a Jewish temple. They're all Jews. But they are from all over the Mediterranean world.

Why aren't they all from Israel? Because as a result of their disobedience and their idolatry in the past, God said, I'm going to scatter you.

I'm going to scatter you throughout the nations. I'm going to distribute you. These people came to be known as the Diaspora. D-I-A-S-P-O-R-A.

The Diaspora. Jews who live in the United States of America today are part of the Diaspora. And if you take a Jerusalem post, you'll see them referring to the Diaspora all the time.

It's published in Jerusalem. But it talks about the Diaspora. These are Jews that live outside Israel. American Jews are part of the Diaspora. Spanish Jews are part of the Diaspora.

[24 : 11] German Jews are part of the Diaspora. The word Diaspora means dia, from which we get the word diameter, means through. And spora, from which we get the word spore, S-P-O-R-E, or seed, it means through seed or through spore.

They are scattered, strewn all over, so you find Jews all over the world, even to this day. They are a scattered people. Here, they are scattered all over the Mediterranean world.

Look at this, if you will. It's quite a lineup. Every man in our own tongue wherein we were born, they are Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, and Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes.

Now, a proselyte was a Gentile. He was not born a Jew, but he embraced Judaism and the God of Israel as his religion, and he was inducted into the religion of Judaism via confession and circumcision.

That made him a proselyte. He was not born a Jew, but he was converted to Judaism. These people are not to be confused with God-fearers.

[25 : 49] Cornelius in Acts chapter 10 was a God-fearer. That's someone who embraces Judaism, but he doesn't go all the way. He has not been circumcised. He is not considered a child of Abraham.

But these individuals are all Jews, and they are Cretes and Arabians. We do hear them speak in our languages the wonderful works of God.

Now, if you look at your map, you can pretty well identify these people as to where they are from. As you spot them on the map here, you can see very easily.

And by the way, when it talks about them being from Asia, it's not talking about Japan or China. It's talking about Asia Minor, which is present-day Turkey. And all of the other areas that are located here are different areas into which the Jews were scattered from Israel and Jerusalem.

As part of the divine discipline, he said he would scatter them, and he did, and they remain scattered. But he's going to regather them one day. And now all of these Jews are scattered all over the Mediterranean world.

[27 : 01] Now, what are they doing in Israel? They're on a pilgrimage. The law of Moses prescribed that every male Jew, 20 years of age and upward, should attend, whenever possible, the three chosen feasts of the year.

Passover and Pentecost and Tabernacles. And this is Pentecost. Passover was already gone.

That was in connection with the crucifixion and the passion of our Lord. This is 50 days after Passover, and it's called Pentecost, from which the word five comes, P-E-N-T-E.

And they are there because they come to present themselves before the Lord. How do you do that? If you're a Jew, of course, you can't do this today.

And we talked about that last week, about animal sacrifice no longer being part of Judaism. But if you were a Jew then, you would make your pilgrimage. Sometimes these people would save up.

[28 : 12] They would save money for years to be able to make this pilgrimage because it was expensive to travel. And you would have to travel from wherever you were, and very often involved hundreds of miles.

You were going on a pilgrimage. Today, Israelites still do that. They still go on a pilgrimage to Israel. And so do Muslims.

And they go to Mecca. And it's called the Hajj. And they do this at least once a year in their lifetime. It is their dream to go to Mecca as a Muslim. But for the Jew, they went to Israel.

And if you were going to be obedient to the law of Moses and present yourself before the Lord, what did that mean? That meant you went to Jerusalem, to the temple area.

There was no other place in the world where you could do that. This was it. This was the only place. Because God said, I will manifest My presence there in the temple, in the Holy of Holies, the Ark of the Covenant.

[29 : 16] So when they went to present themselves before the Lord, they would go to Jerusalem, go to the temple, secure an appropriate animal for sacrifice, bring it to the priest.

The priest would offer it in sacrifice. That was presenting yourself before the Lord. And you used the animal sacrifice as a stand-in for yourself. And when the animal was slain, that was tantamount to your saying, this animal is undergoing and suffering what I deserve.

And I am offering this animal as a sacrifice for myself. What has befallen this animal, this poor, dumb, innocent animal, is actually what I deserve.

And herein, fellas, we find the very heartbeat, not only of Judaism, but of Christianity. And the heartbeat of it is sacrifice.

It is the innocent dying in the place of the guilty. And this taking place thousands of times over hundreds of years was designed to condition the Jewish people to the principle of sacrifice, substitution, the death of the innocent in the place of the guilty.

[30 : 32] Only in Christianity do you find this. It is called grace. It is called grace. It is not justice. It is grace. Justice is exacted on someone who did not deserve it in order to let someone who did deserve it go free.

That's grace. And that's the very heartbeat of Christianity. And it is a belief that is common only to Christianity. Every other faith in the world operates on the merit system of the one who is engaged doing certain things to make themselves acceptable to God.

Biblical Christianity says God has done something on our behalf in order to make us acceptable to God. So all of these locations are involved here.

And they involve a great deal of travel, a great deal of expense, a great deal of sacrifice and discipline. And many times a Jew was able to do this only once during a lifetime because it was an expensive proposition.

And yet all of these people are gathered here. And here's the problem. Most of them are probably second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth generation Jews because they've been scattered for a long time.

[31 : 55] Hundreds of years when Pentecost took place. God scattered them way back starting with Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian captivity. And they were scattered then. And many times they were scattered because they fled for their lives.

They were undergoing persecution. The country would be invaded by an enemy. And the people would just light up. Just like today. You see throughout the world, wherever there is real blood conflict that breaks out, one of the first things that's always produced is refugees.

People start fleeing the area. They start leaving. They're fleeing for their lives, whether it's Africa, Asia, wherever. They're getting out, going someplace else where it's safe. And that's exactly what they did back then.

In addition to God having driven them out. So, as they are third, fourth, fifth, sixth generation in a foreign land, what language did they speak?

Well, they all started out speaking Hebrew. When they were chased out of their own land and went to another land, they took their language with them.

[33 : 01] But the problem is this. When they got to this new strange land where they were going to settle down, the people there didn't speak Hebrew. They spoke whatever it was they spoke.

And there were all kinds of different languages. And if you're going to get along and survive in the midst of these people, you've got to learn the language. And you start teaching your children the language wherein they are born.

So, as these children are born and the next generation is born and the next generation is born, Hebrew begins to fall by the wayside in these families.

Some would maintain it, but many would lose it. And the new language is taken up. We saw that time and again with our own immigrants.

We had people from Germany, from France, from Italy come over to the United States, particularly in the 1800s, by the hundreds of thousands.

[34 : 00] And virtually all of them spoke their native language that they had back home. And when they came to the States, English was a problem. And they'd send their children to school.

And when they send the children to school, the children would learn English. And they would come home and teach their parents the English language. Now, today, we know there's a big confab going on regarding the learning of Spanish and people in this country who are not able to speak English.

And it's become a very controversial issue. So, all of these people are representing all of these different languages. And if the apostles are going to just stand up and speak in Hebrew or Aramaic, these people from all of these different areas are not going to be able to understand them.

So, the Spirit of God literally reversed the Tower of Babel and the confusion of languages that God pronounced upon them back in Genesis chapter 10 or 11, where he scattered them and they couldn't communicate with their languages.

So, they all began peeling off into different language groups. And that's where they settled. And that's where they remain today, many of their descendants. So, this language barrier is enormous.

[35 : 26] But there's such a tremendously important message to be communicated. And what is it? What is the message? The essence of the message is this. Jesus of Nazareth really was the Messiah.

Israel crucified their Messiah. But God raised him from the dead and he has made him both Lord and Christ over all.

That's the essence of the message. Death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And it was so dynamic, so different, so completely extraordinary to everything that anybody had ever heard.

And when all of these people get this message, what do you think they're going to do with it?

They're going home after the pilgrimage is over. They're going back to all of these areas that they came from.

You see, Jerusalem, for any of these feast days, was just like Indianapolis, Indiana, at the running of the 500.

[36 : 32] You can't rent a motel room within 50 miles of Indianapolis. Because the population of Indianapolis just mushrooms for a few days.

It was the same way. Same way in Jerusalem. Whenever there was a feast day, people came from all over everywhere. And the population just exploded for a few days.

And that's what these people are doing here. And they are being prepared by God to receive the most significant message that the human mind has ever been able to conceive.

That God was incarnated in human flesh, died a death on the cross, and was raised from the dead the third day. The food is here, and I'm going to, I'm not finished, but I'm going to quit.

All right, questions or comments real quick? Anybody? Anybody? Yes.

[37 : 34] You talked about the crowd. You didn't know how many there were. And it says here, you know, there was at least 3,000 converted. So we know that the crowd was bigger than 3,000.

We sure do. We sure do. You're right, Dennis. Yeah. That's a minimum. And it's just not possible to estimate how many more there were. But I tell you what I always thought.

And this was something, fellas, that I had to change my mind on. I had to repent on this. I thought, and I remember reading this as a young Christian. And I thought, man, talk about the ultimate invitation given and the ultimate response.

Can you imagine the elation that Billy Graham would have if he was preaching to a crowd of people? And all of them responded. And that's what I thought the text was saying here.

That everybody who heard the message believed. No, they didn't. No, they didn't. The text is very clear. And it goes on to say that then those who received the word.

[38 : 37] Not everybody received the word. Not everybody does. There are people who hear the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. And they say, no, thank you.

And there are those who say, yes. And they are glad to receive it. And then there are those who say, I don't know about this. This is, I've never heard this before. I need to think about this.

And they are the undecided. And there's always those three groups everywhere. And I'm sure that that was the case here. And probably the 3,000, I think. My opinion, red flag up, a Wiseman opinion.

I think this was a small minority of the number who responded, of the number who were there, I think. And this, the Temple Mount area, as it was being refurbished and redone under Herod the

Great, fellas, this encompassed an area the equivalent of 12 football fields. This was a big area. Now, the temple itself was relatively small. The temple was only 45 feet long and 15 feet wide and 45 feet high, kind of like a cube. [39 : 53] But it was, but the huge area of the temple complex was much greater. And it would accommodate a huge number of people. And we'll see that. We'll see some of that later on.