

Suddenly

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Lorain Avenue Church of Christ (03-31-2024)

Good morning.

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Our lesson this morning ... will highlight the second chapter of the Book of Acts.

Today ... with much of the religious world is focusing on the resurrection of Christ ...

I'd like to focus on what He accomplished ... by His death and resurrection.

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Acts 2 ... is an amazing chapter.

But ... sometimes ... it seems like we just hit the highlights.

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There's a wealth of information ... we don't often take time to unpack. Awesome and beautiful things.

In one single chapter ... we have the prophecy of the coming of the kingdom.

We have the prophecies of Jesus rising from the dead ... ascending to Heaven ... and taking His throne.

We have proof that the kingdom did come ... on the day of Pentecost about 2000 years ago.

We learn that baptism is essential for salvation ... and that one must first believe that Jesus is the Christ ... must then repent ... and be baptized.

We understand that baptism forgives our sins ... and saves us.

We learn that it is the Lord ... who adds us to the church.

It's an amazing chapter.

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Let's begin.

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This morning ... the title of our lesson ... is ... "Suddenly"

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Jesus' Apostles were all together that morning. It was the first day of the week. It was the feast day of Pentecost. It had been 50 days since God raised His Son from the dead. 53 days since His horrible mock trial and agonizing crucifixion. Ten days since He ascended to the Father.

They were waiting. Patiently. Well ... maybe not Peter. Waiting ... just as they had been doing for the last ten days.

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SUDDENLY!!

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This always reminds me of an atomic bomb explosion. Critical mass. When you assemble enough of the right material in one place ... and bunch it together ... and trigger it ... you start an unstoppable chain reaction.

Boom. Suddenly.

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For centuries ... God had been preparing the world for a one-of-a-kind, earth-shaking event.

The coming of the Messiah. God's Son on the earth.

Jesus shed His blood to free the world from sin. He was buried. He arose. He gave His Apostles final instructions. Told them to wait in Jerusalem. He ascended.

Then nothing ... for ten days ... nothing.

Then when all had been made ready ... when all the pieces and parts ... that only God could arrange and sort ... had been brought to bear ... He triggered the explosion.

Suddenly. Christ's Kingdom arrived. The church Jesus promised to build in Matt 16:18 had been built ... and was ... excuse the common language ... was open for business ... to all ... anyone ... who desired forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

The Kingdom and the Church are one and the same.

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So, this morning, let's study this very important chapter.

Let's set the stage

Daniel ... interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's Dream while captive in Babylon ... foretold of this day in the second chapter of the book of Daniel.

In the ensuing years ... the Persian empire would conquer Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian empire.

Next ... the Greeks would overpower the Persians.

And then finally ... the Roman empire would overthrow the Grecian empire.

Daniel prophesied this chain of events ... this succession of empires.

In Daniel 2:44 ... Daniel prophesied ... "In the days of those Roman Kings (Emperors) ...

... the God of Heaven would set up a New Kingdom. It would be more powerful than all these other Kingdoms that rose and fell. More powerful than any other kingdom ... ever. It would never be overthrown or destroyed. It would stand forever.

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The prophet Isaiah foretold more ... in Isaiah two verses two and three.

God would establish this new kingdom in the last days of the Jewish nation.

This timing reinforces Daniel's prophecy.

Isaiah calls it ... "The mountain of the Lord's house." Higher and more powerful than anything ever.

It would known by all. People of all nations would stream into it.

They would seek to learn God's laws and His pathways.

The word of the Lord ... would go out from this new kingdom, from Zion (the church) ... in Jerusalem.

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The gospel of Christ would be proclaimed by the church beginning in the city of Jerusalem, just as the Hebrew writer said it did ... in Hebrews 12: 22.

We're not talking about Mount Sinai where the Law of Moses was given. We're not talking about the Temple Mount where the Law of Moses was practiced.

We're not talking about continuing under the law of Moses.

No, we have come to Mount Zion to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. The Church Jesus built. The heavenly kingdom He established.

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In Matthew 16:18 ... Jesus proclaimed that the gates of Hades would be powerless to prevent Him, the Christ, the Son of God, from building His church, from establishing His kingdom.

David foretold this in Psalm 2:6-7.

When Jesus was crucified, God would mock the angry crowds ... saying you are powerless to prevent Me from establishing My new kingdom ... with my risen Son as My anointed king.

Psalms 2:6-7 ... I'm adding a little bit of paraphrasing.

Despite your feeble attempts to prevent me, I have installed my king Jesus Christ.

This very day ... I have installed my king upon Zion upon my holy mountain as head of the church.

I have raised My Son's body from the grave and returned His soul from Hades.

This day I have begotten Him from the dead.

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The prophet Joel weighs in ... in Joel 2:28-32

"I will pour out my spirit" ... God says

"I will pour out my spirit upon all mankind."

"I will pour out my spirit in those days ... and it will come about ... that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Whoever. Anybody. Anybody who wishes to. Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved ... because on Mt Zion ... and in Jerusalem ... there will be deliverance.

Salvation ... in the church ... beginning in Jerusalem

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In Gen 28:14 ... God told Abraham that "in your Seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"

In Gal 3:16 ... Paul made it crystal clear ... that God was referring to His Son, Jesus Christ ... not just any descendant of Abraham.

When God made that promise to Abraham ... of the Messiah coming and establishing a new kingdom ... it ignited a flame, a flame of hope, a flame of salvation in Christ Jesus.

Prophets kept the flame alive ... each adding fuel to the fire. God never allowed the flame to flicker.

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It had been about 400 or so years since Malachi prophesied. 400 years of silence.

And then ... John the Baptist appeared proclaiming ... "repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

John is the messenger Malachi spoke of in Chapter 3. The messenger preparing the way for Christ and for God's new kingdom.

It's almost here.

Wow.

The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

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Six months later ... Jesus began his work at the age of 30.

The year was 27 AD.

It was the days of the Roman emperors ... as Daniel prophesied.

Jerusalem would be destroyed by Rome in just 43 more years ... in 70 AD. It was the latter days of the Jewish nation.

Jesus would be crucified in just 3 more years.

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His ministry lasted 3 years

And culminated in His final entry into Jerusalem a week before His crucifixion.

Something is going to happen in Jerusalem. Something BIG.

God was assembling the final pieces to create the explosion.

This is Jerusalem, right? This is what the prophets talked about.

This is Jerusalem.

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Jesus was crucified ... paying the price for the sins of the world, past, present, and future.

He was laid in his tomb on a Friday.

On the third day, on Sunday morning, the first day of the week ... God raised his Son.

It was just as David prophesied in Psalm 2. Jesus was begotten from the grave never again to die.

The risen Jesus showed Himself to witnesses for 40 days.

He's just about ready to establish his Kingdom ... to build His church.

It's not far in the future. The kingdom isn't quite here yet.

God is just about to install his son on Zion, His figurative holy mountain.

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Just prior to his ascension, Jesus talked with His chosen Apostles.

There were 11 of them at this time.

In Luke 24:49, Jesus says, "Behold ... I am sending forth the promise of my Father upon you (The Holy Spirit). But you are to stay in the city of Jerusalem until that happens. Until you are clothed with power from on high."

We need to recall what Jesus said earlier to his Apostles, in the presence of a multitude.

This is just before he went up on the mountain of transfiguration.

Mark 9:1 ... "Truly I say to you ...that there are some of those who are standing here ... who shall not taste death ... until they see the kingdom of God coming with power."

Hear what Jesus said? Some of the crowd listening to Him right then and there ... would still be alive ... when they saw the kingdom come with power.

Wow.

From these two passages, we see that the new kingdom (the church) ... would be established in the very near future. Not ten or twenty or thirty ... or hundreds of years later. But in the very near future ... in these people's lifetimes.

The Kingdom would come into being ... with power ... and the Apostles were to wait in Jerusalem ... until they were clothed with that power from on high.

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Jesus continues in Acts one, four through five.

He gathered his apostles together and commanded them, "Don't leave Jerusalem."

Do not leave Jerusalem.

Wait until ... what the Father has promised ... happens. "You heard of me that John baptized with water ... but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Not many days from now. Again, He's talking to his Apostles..

"You shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

"You shall receive power ... when the Holy Spirit has come upon you ... and you shall be my witnesses."

"Both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, even to the remotest parts of the earth."

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Jesus instructed His Apostles to sit tight in Jerusalem ... until they were baptized with the Holy Spirit.

At which time ... the Holy Spirit would give them the words to preach the Gospel of Christ to the whole world.

Beginning at Jerusalem ... the Word of the Lord would go forth from the Church ... the church which would be established in power.

When Jesus promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit ... He's speaking only to His chosen Apostles. Not to anyone else ... or to us today.

Jesus says in John 14:16, "I'm not leaving you alone."

"I will pray the Father and he will give you another helper, another comforter."

Who is that? The spirit of truth.

Only the apostles had the authority (and ability) to speak for Christ.

Jesus said to them, in John 14:26 ... "The Helper ... the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name ... will teach you all things ... and will bring to remembrance all that I have taught to you."

And in John 16:13 ... He told them ... "When He ... the Spirit of truth ... has come ... He will guide you into all truth."

Once the Holy Spirit comes upon the Apostles ... and they receive the power ... and the kingdom is established ... the Holy Spirit is going to help them remember everything Jesus taught ... and is going to guide them into all truths they had yet to learn

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Now as Acts 2 begins ... Matthias was chosen by God. And we have the 12 waiting in Jerusalem.

For 10 days they're waiting.

It's day one, day two, day three, day four.

Jesus didn't say, "Be ready on the morning of the first day of the week in ten days."

He just said wait until ...

"You'll know it when you see it."

Anybody that knows me ... knows I'd had a zillion questions.

"Tarry"

"I won't leave you alone"

So, they had to wait until something unmistakable happened.

They're waiting, they're waiting, they're waiting.

It was early in the morning on the first day of the week on the feast day of Pentecost.

A few million Jews in attendance in Jerusalem.

50 days after Jesus arose from the dead.

10 days after he ascended back to heaven ... King of kings and Lord of Lords.

The promises of the Messiah are about to be fulfilled.

The fire God ignited with Abraham ... is about to become a spiritual explosion.

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SUDDENLY

There was no doubt in the minds of the Apostles ... nor is there in our minds.

Suddenly ... This is it!!

Acts 2:1-4 ... "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they (the Apostles ... follow the grammar back) ... they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them split tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

In languages other than their native tongue ... not gibberish ... but in known foreign tongues.

What just happened? What just happened? The apostles were clothed with power from on high by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The church was up and running.

Christ was on the throne and the Apostles were the spokesmen for Christ. The Holy Spirit guiding their words.

As Peter preached the first ever Gospel sermon ... he was unlocking the doors to the Church.

The doors of the church were open for spiritual business, for salvation.

The word of the Lord was going forth from the church, from Zion in Jerusalem.

Every person within earshot was hearing the plan of salvation in Christ Jesus in their own native tongue.

Many present would carry the good news back to their home parts of the world.

Acts 2:5 ... “Now there were staying in Jerusalem, God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard the Apostles speak in his own language.”

Verse seven, utterly amazed ... they ask “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? How is it then that each of us hears them in his own native tongue? We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues?”

Verses 9-11 ... list at least 15 different languages that were present within that hearing.

And 12 apostles. At least 15 languages and 12 apostles.

Verse 12 ... the people all continue ... amazed and perplexed ... “What does this all mean? But others were mocking and saying, ah, they're just full of sweet wine.”

They're drunk. Don't listen to them.

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But Peter, verse 14, taking his stand with the eleven ... “Raised his voice and said to them ... ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.’”

Now ... we have just one Galilean being heard in 15 different languages.

Verse 15 ... “These men are not drunk as you suppose. It's only the third hour of the day. This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel (verses 17-21).

Remember how Joel weighed in ... prophesying ... that ... “in the latter days (of the Jewish nation) ... that God was going pour out his Spirit upon all men?”

Peter says, “What you are witnessing is exactly what was spoken by the prophet Joel.”

“In the latter days of the Jewish nation, God will pour out his spirit upon all mankind.”

“And everyone, anyone and everyone, who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.”

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Recall what Ananias told Saul (Paul) ... when he was praying in Damascus after witnessing the risen Jesus (Acts 22:16)?

“What are you waiting for? Get up and be baptized. Wash away your sins ... calling on the name of the Lord.

This is how one calls on the name of the Lord for salvation. He or she rises up and gets baptized.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

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Verses 22 & 23... "Men of Israel listen to these words."

"Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst ... just as you yourselves know ..."

"This Man was delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God."

"You nailed Him to a cross ... by the hands of godless men."

"You killed Him"

You hear what Peter is saying?

"You there ... and you there" ... as good as nailed Jesus to the cross yourselves.

You put out a contract on him.

You are just as culpable as the godless Romans who did your dirty work.

You killed Him ... literally.

Verse 24 ... "And God raised Him up again ... putting an end to the agony of death .. since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power."

Isn't that what Jesus said in Matt 16:18 when He promised to build His church? "The gates of Hades are powerless to hold me."

Let me summarize what Peter says in verses 25 thru 31

God had promised ... speaking of Christ ... that He would establish a blood descendant of David ... as King over His people.

In these verses ... first ... David, being a prophet of God ... reveals the trust Jesus had in the fulfilment of this promise.

"I (Jesus) saw my Lord, My Father, always before Me ... because He is at my right hand."

"I will not be shaken." "Therefore, my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices."

"My body will also live in hope ... you'll not abandon me to the grave ... nor will you let your holy one see corruption"

Jesus was confident ...the Father would not allow His body to stay in the grave ... nor His soul in Hades ... even though His sacrifice for sin was planned from the very beginning.

Next ... David reveals the confidence that he, himself, had that God would fulfill His promise to raise up Jesus and establish Him as King.

Now ... in verses 32 and 33 ... Peter says ... "And you are all witnesses of this fact."

Therefore, Jesus, having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured this forth, which you both see and hear.

What you see right now is what the prophet Joel prophesied.

The Apostles performing miracles and preaching the Gospel ... by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In verse 34 ... through David's prophecy ... we see the Father welcoming His Son home to Heaven and seating Him at His right hand.

The Jews had no problem honoring King David, but were slow to see that these Old Testament prophecies were a pattern for Christ's spiritual kingship.

David on the throne of physical Israel ... Christ on David's throne over spiritual Israel.

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So ... here it comes.

Therefore, Acts 2 36 ... "Therefore ... let all of Israel be assured of this. God has made this Jesus whom you have crucified both Lord and Christ."

"Yet I will set my king on the holy hill of Zion." (Psa 2:6-7)

God has made this Jesus ... whom you crucified ... both Lord and Christ.

Put yourself in the place of those Jews ...

The scripture says that ... God fearing Jews were in the audience.

God-fearing Jews. They wanted to get it right.

At least some did ... and were willing to listen and change.

God-fearing Jews.

Can you imagine what it was like ... when suddenly it dawned on those who received Peter's message with open minds and hearts ... that Jesus really was who He said He was ... and what they'd done?

It must have felt like being hit with a ton of bricks

They had just killed the long-awaited Messiah.

What were they going to do? Despair!

Acts 2 37 ... "When they heard this, they were pierced." "They were cut to the heart."
"And they said to Peter and the rest of the Apostles ... men and brethren ... what are we going to do?"

"Help us."

Now ... here's the verse that's in everyone's Bible.

95% of the world ignores this verse. Most don't even realize the verse even exists.

But it's a verse that's in everyone's Bible. "And Peter answered them," Acts 2 38, "Repent and be baptized ... everyone of you ... in the name of Jesus Christ ... for the remission of your sins"

By Christ's authority ... turn from your ways ... and be baptized ... in order that your sins be forgiven"

"What shall we do?" ... "This is what you shall do!"

"In order to have your sins washed away and forgiven" ...

A couple of verses later ... Peter pleads with them to accept this commandment of the Lord ... to save themselves from that perverse generation.

Repentance, baptism, forgiveness of sins, and salvation ... all go hand in hand.

The path was clear for them.

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The path is clear for us.

If you believe what Peter just preached, that God has made his Son, both Lord and Christ, then repent.

Turn from your sinful ways.

Submit to baptism ... a water burial ... in order to have your sins forgiven.

As Ananias told Saul in Acts 22:16, what are you waiting for? Get up and be baptized.

Wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Belief in Christ, as important as it is, by itself does not save.

However, what does belief do? It leads to repentance.

And repentance leads to baptism.

It's baptism that forgives sins.

It's baptism that saves.

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In Acts 4:12 ... Peter says that ... “There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Nor is there salvation in any other.”

No other ... “than the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead.”

In Acts 2:38 ... Peter adds ... “If you want to share in the blessings that are afforded by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit ... then you must become a child of God ... baptized into Christ.

The hope promised to Abraham ... the hope that anchors our souls ... has been gifted to us by God through the Holy Spirit.

Verse 39 ... These promises are to you and your children (the Jewish nation) ... and for all who are who are far off (the Gentiles, the rest of the world.)

Those who answer God's call are those who will find salvation.

Peter and the rest of the Apostles continued to teach and exhort.

Verse 41 ... tells us that 3000 received the Gospel ... and obeyed from the heart that very day.

And Verse 47 ... tells us ... that the Lord added them ... and all who subsequently submitted to baptism ... to the church.

Those who were being added to the church... were those who were being saved in baptism.

If you want to live in Heaven one day ... you'd better have been “added to the church” ... when Jesus returns to take it Home with Him to the Father

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Jesus rested in the grave in hope. So can you!

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It is our custom at the close of a lesson to extend the invitation of Christ, which we'll do in a minute.

So let me ask the question.

If you are not among the saved ... and you clearly ... clearly ... can see from Acts 2 what it takes to be saved ...

... why don't you allow the Lord to add one more to that number?

Let that be you this morning.

If you have not been baptized for the forgiveness of your sins ... there's no other way to say it ... you have no hope beyond the grave.

If you are a Christian and have fallen away, won't you repent and pray. Ask God for forgiveness. We'll pray with you if you like. We'll help you in your struggles.

That's our lesson for this morning, and I kindly thank you for your attention.