

Acts 2:1-21 **“Salvation Days”**

Prayer

Harry Reichenbach was one of the early movie promoters in America.¹

- While promoting the film *The Return of Tarzan*, Reichenbach hired an actor called Thomas R. Zann to check into the Hotel Bellclaire in New York.
- After checking in, Zann had a huge crate hoisted into his room through a window, and then proceeded to order fifteen pounds of raw meat to be delivered to his room.
- When the Delivery man arrived with the meat he discovered inside the room was a real life lion, and he ran away screaming.
- The hotel called the police who questioned “Mr Zann” as to why he had a lion in his room.
- His explanation to them and the press that had gathered was simply that he was a huge Tarzan fan.
- Unsurprisingly this event made the news headlines and brought the attention of many people to the newly released Tarzan film.

At the start of Acts 2 we have another attention grabbing event.

- This event was spoken about hundreds of years before it happened.
- It was an event that started a whole new period of history called the Last Days.
- And it certainly got people talking.
- But unlike England’s Ashes performance, the swine flu pandemic, or the latest goings on in Eastenders, this is something really worth talking about because the meaning of this event is good news for all the world.
- Old or young, rich or poor, male or female, whoever you are, wherever you’re from, this good news is for you.

It’s the good news that we are living in salvation days.

- A period that began with the Day of Pentecost and will end with the Day of the Lord when Jesus returns in judgment.
- It’s a wonderful time in history when people can be saved from God’s judgment.

READ ACTS 2:21

- *“And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

The Bible clearly tells us that Jesus is going to return to judge everyone, but before He does there will be a time when people who call on the name of the Lord, who come to Jesus Christ trusting in Him will be saved.

- But, how do we know we are living in these salvation days?
- What proof is there?

This passage gives us two signs which prove to us that we are.

- The first sign that we are living in salvation days is that attention grabbing event we read about at the start of Acts 2.
- The big entrance of the Holy Spirit.

Firstly,

Point 1: God’s Spirit Came (v1-13)

It’s what Jesus in Acts 1 had told His followers to wait for.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Reichenbach

READ ACTS 1:4-5

- *“On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.*
- *For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.”*

Having proved to them that He was alive, Jesus told them to wait for the Holy Spirit which would help them to go into the world and tell people this wonderful truth.

So at the start of Acts 2, we find Jesus’ followers waiting for the Holy Spirit to come.

READ ACTS 2:1

- *“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.”*

It was 10 days after Jesus went back to heaven and the day of Pentecost had arrived.

- It was an important date on the Jewish calendar, and Jerusalem was jammed packed with possibly as many as a million people to celebrate it.
- It was a festival that came to have two meanings. It thanked God both for the harvest and the giving of the Law to Moses.
- And on this day, 120 followers of Jesus are gathered together somewhere in Jerusalem, when the Holy Spirit came, just as Jesus said He would.

READ ACTS 2:2-4

- *“Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.*
- *They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.*
- *All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”*

This big entrance wasn’t with Hollywood style special effects but rather signs taken from the Old Testament.

- In the Old Testament when God appeared it was often with wind and fire.
- Ezekiel saw a windstorm which turned out to be a vision of God².
- Before God spoke to Elijah in the gentle whisper there was a great and powerful wind and a fire³.
- God appeared to Moses in a burning bush⁴, and when the Israelites left Egypt He led them at night in a pillar of fire⁵.
- And here we have these well known signs which like the dove at Jesus’ baptism, showed that the Holy Spirit had come.
- Except there was no wind, it only sounded like there was. In the room where the 120 were it sounded like there was a hurricane raging but no hair was being blown about.
- And there seemed be tongues of fire on each of them but nobody was getting burnt. There was no need to call any emergency service.

The Holy Spirit had arrived and it filled all of Jesus’ followers.

- Not one of them missed out on it.
- And what followed is even more remarkable.
- Despite not having a modern language degree between them, they were able to speak fluently in languages they had never learned.

² Ezekiel 1:4

³ 1 Kings 19:11-12

⁴ Exodus 3:2

⁵ Exodus 13:21

Like the lion in the hotel room, this event didn't go unnoticed.

READ ACTS 2:5-11

- *"Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.*
- *When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.*
- *Utterly amazed, they asked: Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?*
- *Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?*
- *Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,*
- *Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs*
- *- we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"*

Jerusalem was full of Jewish people from all over the world gathered to celebrate Pentecost.

- It must have been a shock to them to hear that deafening sound which accompanied the Spirit's arrival.
- They would have been wondering what on earth was going on.
- So they investigate, and they get another shock.
- They hear the wonders of God (which I'm sure included the things Jesus said and did) being declared in their mother tongue, their birth language.
- The Jews from Egypt hear them being spoken of in Egyptian.
- The Jews from Cappadocia hear them being spoken of in Cappadocian Greek.
- Fifteen nations mention in verse 9-11, and each nation's language is being used to praise God.

If the Jews had spread to the East End of London I'm sure that the wonders of God would have been heard in Cockney.

- You know..."The time when Simon's finger and thumb-in-law was Tom and Dick in Uncle Ned and Jesus healed her".

These people are amazed and can we blame them for being so?

- Especially when the people speaking these languages are Galileans who had a reputation of being uneducated.
- And they respond in two different ways.

READ ACTS 2:12-13

- *"Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, What does this mean?*
- *Some, however, made fun of them and said, They have had too much wine."*

Some people wanted to know what was going on. What does this speaking in tongues mean?

- While others thought they were just drunks babbling on like idiots.

An explanation is needed and here comes another surprise.

READ ACTS 2:14

- *"Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say."*

Peter gets up and addresses the crowd.

- The same Peter, that denied he knew Jesus when a little servant girl asked him whether he knew Jesus.
- Look at him now.
- He's been filled with the Holy Spirit and he's bold and he's confident.
- And he raises His voice to the crowd and says "Listen people, I've got something to say and you don't want to miss this, let me explain what's going on..."
- Here's a chance for you to get the low down on what's been happening here in Jerusalem this morning.

He begins by telling the crowd what it's not.

READ ACTS 2:15

- *"These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!"*

It's not drunken behaviour.

- It's only 9AM! The pubs aren't even open yet.
- We haven't had a few pints before breakfast.
- And since when has getting hammered caused people to break out in Egyptian.
- What's going on is...

READ ACTS 2:16-17

- *"...what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people...'"*

He says "Don't you remember what the prophet Joel said was going to happen?"

- "Remember all the stuff he said about what was going to happen in the future, that God's Messiah (the King who would rescue His people) was going to come and start a new era."
- "Then all of God's people would receive His Holy Spirit so they could know God intimately and tell others about Him."
- "Well, this time has arrived!"
- "The strange noise, these people speaking in languages they've never learned, that's the proof of this."

The last days have begun. We are living in salvation days because God's Spirit has come.

But there is another way we know that we are living in salvation days, when everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Secondly,

Point 2: God's People Speak (v14-21)

In 1945, when the Second World War was almost over, the Soviet Army had surrounded Berlin in Germany.

- They were about to force their way into the city, but just before they did this, for a day or two, they paused to offer the Germans the chance to surrender.
- Announcements were made in German, leaflets dropped from the air.
- The Soviet Army were offering the Germans a chance to escape the destruction that would follow when they stormed the city.⁶
- It's an offer of peace, an offer of mercy, and an offer of rescue.
- The Soviets spoke of it. All the Germans had to do was to accept it.

In these last days there is an offer of rescue.

- Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.
- The Soviet Army was about to destroy their enemies the Germans.
- And a day is coming when God is going to destroy His enemies – which is everyone because everyone is a sinner who has rejected God's rule over their lives.
- God's judgment is coming.

READ ACTS 2:19-20

⁶ Illustration that I have heard both William Taylor and Jeremy Hobson use.

- *"I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.*
- *The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord."*

The great and glorious day of the Lord is that day:

- *"When God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ".⁷*
- When all those who don't know God, who have not called on the name of the Lord, *"will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord."*⁸
- This day will definitely happen because God's Spirit came.

But before this day of judgment comes, God gives people the chance to be rescued.

- He announces to sinners a way to be rescued as His people speak out this message of rescue.
- Before the events of verses 19-20 happen, there are the events of verses 17-18.

READ ACTS 2:17-18

- *"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.*
- *Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."*

In the Old Testament it was only certain people who God's Spirit came upon.

- And it was only certain people like priests, prophets and kings that God spoke to through the means of prophesy, visions and dreams, and they then passed this on to the rest of the people.
- But now all of God's people will receive His Holy Spirit and speak out God's Word.
- No-one misses out, age, sex, occupation are not an issue.

Every Christian has been given the Holy Spirit.

- And because every Christian has been given the Holy Spirit, every Christian is able to speak out God's Word to others.
- To *"declare the praise of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light".⁹*
- To *"give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have".¹⁰*
- To be Jesus' witnesses to the ends of the earth.¹¹
- That's what we saw at the start of the chapter Jesus' first followers doing.
- The ends of the earth had gathered for them in Jerusalem, and the Holy Spirit enables them to be witnesses, to speak out and tell what God has done in the languages of the ends of the earth.

A reversal of Babel was taking place.

- It was at Babel that human languages were confused and the nations scattered.
- Now in Jerusalem, the language barrier is overcome, as the same good news of Jesus is heard which unites those from different nations under the gospel.

But why is speaking out God's Word which the good news of Jesus is the centre of, so important?

- The answer is found in another part of the New Testament where this verse from the prophet Joel is quoted.

READ ROMANS 10:13-14

- *"for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved'.*

⁷ Romans 2:16

⁸ 2 Thessalonians 1:9

⁹ 1 Peter 2:9

¹⁰ 1 Peter 3:15

¹¹ Acts 1:8

- *How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"*

How would those Germans in Berlin know they could be rescued?

- The Soviet Army spoke to them, telling them that rescue is available.
- How can people know that they can be saved from their sins if they call on the name of the Lord?
- By God speaking directly to them through the pages of Scripture, or by people telling them that God has said this in the Bible.
- One of the reasons God gives all His people the Holy Spirit is to enable them to speak.
- To tell people that they can be saved if they call on the name of the Lord.

So, how do we know we are living in these salvation days, God's Spirit has come and God's people speak.

But salvation days have only come because of what took place 50 days before.

- 50 days before the first Pentecost was the first Passover when the lamb died instead of the firstborn Israelite son.
- 50 days before this Pentecost was the Passover when Jesus died.

As Jesus died on the cross, the earth got a taste of the signs spoken about in verses 19-20 that accompany God's judgment on the great and glorious day of the Lord.

- The reason being that as Jesus was dying on the cross God's judgment was taking place.
- Jesus died as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of the world taking upon Himself the full force of God's wrath and anger against our sin.
- Jesus' sacrifice was sufficient and God's acceptance was shown by raising Him from the dead.
- Now ascended and at the right hand of God the Father, as Lord of all, He sends His Spirit into the hearts of His people to give them the power to speak.
- To announce this good news that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord, who trusts in Jesus, will be saved from being judged by Him when He returns.

Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension start's this new period of history the last days, these salvation days.

- The proof of this is that God's Spirit came and God's people speak of the rescue that is available to everyone who trusts in Jesus.

So what should we be doing in these salvation days?

If you are a Christian:

Here's something you need to remember in these salvation days – you have the Holy Spirit!

- You haven't missed out on it.
- There is no such thing as a Christian who doesn't have the Holy Spirit.
- Peter says later on in verse 38 that when you repent, when you become a Christian, you receive forgiveness of your sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- Let this truth reassure you of God's presence in your life.

And another thing you need to remember is that you have everything need to speak of Him, to be Jesus' witnesses.

- You don't need a speaking qualification to speak of Jesus.
- One of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to enable God's people to speak of Him.
- You have the power to speak.
- Non-Christians need to hear the gospel because Jesus is returning in judgment, and if they haven't called on the name of the Lord, God will punish them in hell for their sins.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to give you the boldness to speak of Him.

- We might not have the opportunity to share the whole gospel, but there will be opportunities I'm sure to share some of the wonders of God.

But when it comes to speaking the gospel it's not just non-Christians we need to speak this to.

- We need to speak the gospel to each other, to other Christians.
- On a daily basis we need to be reminded of the God's rescue, to be reminded to keep trusting in Jesus.
- One of things I've observed is that sadly too often it is everything and anything but this that Christians speak to each other about.
- Parents need to speak to their children. Grandparents to their Grandchildren. Husbands to wives and wives to husbands. Friends to each other.
- How can we expect to talk to non-Christians about Jesus if we can't talk to other Christians about Him?
- Let's repent of failure to speak out God's Word.

In these salvation days, those who have the Holy Spirit are to speak God's Word of rescue.

If you are not a Christian:

You need to realise that you are living in a wonderful period of history.

- I realise that this might be difficult to see.
- What with the credit crunch, unemployment, swine flu, soldiers being killed in Afghanistan.
- But see the big picture this passage in Acts gives.
- One day you will have to give an account for the way you've lived your life to Jesus.
- If you haven't had your sins forgiven by Him you will face God's judgment in hell for all eternity.

In these salvation days, you still have a chance to call on the name of the Lord, to trust in Jesus' rescue on your behalf and be saved.

As the puritan Thomas Watson wrote¹²:

- *"O that we would therefore, while we are on this side of the grave, make our peace with God! Tomorrow may be our dying day, let this be our repenting day."*

¹² Thomas Watson, The Doctrine of Repentance