

Acts 2.¹⁻¹²

Every nation

Background

Luke's record of the life and ministry of Jesus is very deliberately a 2-volume work. In the book of Acts he clearly means his readers to see and understand his narrative of the early church and the spread of the gospel as the *continuation* of that ministry of Jesus which he has so fully set out in his 'gospel'.

In his gospel record Luke helps his readers to see that Jesus has come as the 'true man' to do what the first man, Adam, so signally failed to do – and to undo the damage consequent on that failure.

The first man and woman, of course, were given authority by God to *rule* ([Gen.1.28](#)): that is, to be those through whom God's kingdom was to be governed. In the garden of Eden, however, that authority was usurped and abused in an act of open rebellion, and everything fell to pieces. Or *dis-integrated*.

The man and woman were banished, kept away and separated from God. Tensions crept into relationships between the man and the woman, and such 'tensions', in the next generation, spilled over into murder. Brother set against brother, community set over against community. The tower of Babel was nothing more than an 'accident waiting to happen', the garden of Eden, mark 2 – and the result simply ramped up the *dis-integrative* process which had been operative since the first sin.

Separation. Geographically – into different parts of the world: culturally – with the confusion of language: and relationally – with the misunderstanding, suspicion, and animosity which ensued.

Luke's whole gospel record has at its core the awareness that Jesus came as the 'true man' to get right what Adam and Eve got wrong, and to start reversing the pattern of *disintegration* which has been so pervasive throughout human history. It's for that reason that the second volume of Luke's work begins, on the back of what Jesus accomplished in His life, death and resurrection, with the remarkable narrative of the day of Pentecost, which illustrated in a powerful manner the re-integration of peoples and the start of a new humanity.

The kingdoms of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ ([Rev.11.15](#)): and in a similar fashion the nations of the world will be drawn back from their 'separateness' into the one, new, 'holy nation' of the twice-born ([1 Pet.2.9](#)). That's what Luke was concerned to highlight from the start of this second volume of his work: the ministry of Jesus is a ministry of 'reconciliation', putting back together again what the sin of humanity had left so thoroughly smashed in pieces – both at the 'macro' level of the nations, and at the 'micro' level of individual lives.

'Days' (6) and (7) address the specific passage introducing the day of Pentecost, and in addition to those two 'days' I suggest that 'day' (5), recording what happened immediately prior to the day of Pentecost, is also considered. In each case there are additional questions which I hope will prove useful in your CG discussions.

1) Monday 16th May – kingdom

Read [Acts 1.1-3](#)

“He appeared to them .. and spoke about the kingdom of God ..” (Acts 1.3)

Jesus’ ministry went ‘go global’ in the aftermath of His death and resurrection: and His ministry, from the outset, had everything to do with the kingdom of God – over against the kingdoms of this world. A new day has dawned: a new kingdom has come!

Jesus continues His ‘doing’ and ‘teaching’ ministry through the church: how will people see that in the life of your church?

In what ways are you hastening the coming of His Kingdom?

Prayer: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your Name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. In my life, today, Lord, be glorified.*

2) Tuesday 17th May – ministry

Read [Acts 1.4-5](#)

“Do not leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift My Father promised ..” (Acts 1.4)

It is Jesus’ continuing ministry which the church is called to exercise – not *our* ministry, for which we ask His help. Ministry, therefore, can only ever be exercised in and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Don’t even try it on your own!

Later in the story we read that believers in Ephesus hadn’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit ([Acts 19.1-2](#)): have you been taught clearly about Him?

The promise to which Jesus refers is articulated by Peter in [Acts 2.17-21](#): what do you find most striking and most thrilling about this promise?

Prayer: *Thank You, O my Father, for giving us Your Son, and leaving Your Spirit ‘til the work on earth is done. Empower me afresh today by Your Spirit in all I do.*

3) Wednesday 18th May – strategy

Read [Acts 1.6-8](#)

“.. ‘You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem .. and to the ends of the earth’ ..” (Acts 1.8)

You don’t need to know ‘times or dates’: just the basic strategy and the Spirit’s power. From the moment things turned turtle in the garden of Eden God has had the nations in view: and in an orderly way, the good news of Jesus will be taken now to the world!

In what ways may you be able, in the Spirit’s power, to bear witness to Jesus today?

Humbly dependent on the Spirit, should you be developing 'strategies' for proclaiming Jesus in expanding circles of influence?

Prayer: How gracious You have been to me, my Father, in not only bringing me into Your family as Your beloved child, but calling me to Your service as Your co-worker.

4) Thursday 19th May – Jesus

Read [Acts 1.9-11](#)

"This same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven will come back" (Acts 1.11)

The ministry which the church exercises is always now with a view to the future and in prospect of Jesus returning to complete in person His work: our living and serving in the here and now is shaped and defined by that still-to-come day.

Are you pre-occupied with Jesus? What (if anything!) excites you about His promised return?

To what extent, and in what ways, is your living directed towards the future?

Prayer: Impress on my heart, Lord, the sweetness there is in the prospect of Your return: help me to live today a holy and godly life and thus to speed that day's coming.

5) Friday 20th May – together

Read [Acts 1.12-14](#)

".. they all joined together constantly in prayer .." (Acts 1.14)

The impact of Jesus' death, resurrection and exaltation was felt immediately: the disciples were found together, gathered together as the start of a new and renewed humanity under the Lordship of Jesus. Corporate prayer was how this was expressed.

Joining with fellow believers to pray was a foundational feature of the early church: how is this given expression in your fellowship?

How would you answer someone who asked why corporate prayer is given such a priority in your church's life?

They were praying in anticipation of the promise of the Holy Spirit (see [Acts 1.4f](#)): do you pray fervently with others for the Spirit's work among you?

Read [Acts 2.42-47](#): in what ways, beyond gathering for worship at our Sunday services, can believers give expression to this constantly 'joining together'?

Prayer: 'Pour out Your Spirit from on high, Lord, Your assembled servants bless: graces and gifts to each supply and clothe Your priests with righteousness' [J Montgomery]

6) Saturday 21st May – community

Read [Acts 2.1-4](#)

“.. they were all together in one place ..” (Acts 2.1)

In one place geographically, and ‘at one’ relationally. This was the initial ‘trailer’ for the story now being played out across the globe: integration rather than separation, unity rather than discord. The story of reconciliation, a glorious new community.

For a whole variety of reasons believers can rub each other up the wrong way!
What can keep you ‘at a distance’ from your fellow believers?

Why is our gathering together so important a part of our response to the gospel?

How have you found the Holy Spirit equipping you to share in proclaiming Jesus?

What expectations do you have as you look forward to gathering with fellow believers tomorrow?

Prayer: *‘Let the fragrance of our prayers arise, lead us on the road of sacrifice, that in unity the face of Christ will be clear for all the world to see’* [[Getty/Townend](#)]

7) Sunday 22nd May – nations

Read [Acts 2.5-12](#)

“Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, ‘What does this mean?’” (Acts 2.12)

A sizeable crowd (see [Acts 2.41](#)) now came together. The hundred plus disciples expanded into thousands, as the Spirit of God grew this new community of believers. ‘Every nation under heaven’ being woven into a rich tapestry of reconciling grace.

What factors contribute to the multi-national composition of our fellowship?

What factors can militate against there being a real diversity of nationalities within a congregation’s life?

How does the Spirit equip you to ‘speak the language’ of those from other cultures as you gather with them for worship?

What are ‘the wonders of God’ that you’ll be declaring today?

What are the features of our communal life which might prompt that same question (‘What does this mean?’) on the part of people today?

Prayer: *You make me glad by Your deeds, LORD; I sing for joy at what Your hands have done. How great are Your works, LORD, how profound Your thoughts!* [[Ps.92.4](#)]