



## 'Acts' - Extra Teaching Points #3

### Acts 2:14-41 (NASB)

Pages 30-43 in 'Acts For Everyone' (Part1) by N. T. Wright

#### Acts 2:14-21 (NASB)

But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. <sup>15</sup> "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; <sup>16</sup> but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup> **'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,'** God says, **'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; <sup>18</sup> EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT** And they shall prophesy. <sup>19</sup> **'AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. <sup>20</sup> 'THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. <sup>21</sup> 'AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.'**

**Q: When Peter quoted Joel and said these were the "last days", what would his listeners have understood that phrase to mean?**

- "It was a general term for 'the time has come', the time when promises would be fulfilled. The story would arrive at its climax, the journey reach its destination, and so all sorts of new things would start to happen." P. 32
- "It was a challenge: We've arrived! The journey is over! Here are the signs of the destination! Time to have a fresh look around, and see where we are! P. 32

**Q: Is there a difference between 'the last days' and 'the last day'?**

- "There remains another 'day', (not necessarily a period of 24 hours, but 'a moment', a 'coming time'), which the prophets referred to as 'the day of the Lord'." P. 32
- "The early Christians believed, in other words, that they were living in a period of time between the moment when 'the last days' had been launched, and the moment when even those 'last days' would come to an end on the 'day of the Lord'—the moment when, with Jesus' final appearance, (already promised in [Acts 1:11](#)), heaven and earth would be rejoined together in the great coming renewal of all things (see [Acts 3:21](#))." P. 33

**Q: Do you think Peter's audience expected to literally see "blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke", or the "sun... turned into darkness, and the moon into blood"? If not, why not? And what should that tell us?**

- "But those who were used to the language of biblical prophecy knew well enough that these were regular ways of referring to what we would call 'earth-shattering' events, things in society and global politics that would shake to the foundations what we call 'the fabric of society'. Terrifying times, in other words; times of great instability and uncertainty." P. 33
  - In our time, people often pick and choose which pieces of the Bible they think are figurative and which ones are literal... especially when they read prophecies such as Revelation and other eschatological (the ultimate destiny of humanity) passages.
  - If we are to understand these passages, we will need to do our best to understand them the way the author intended their first readers to understand them.
- "But the prophet didn't just warn of times of fear and trembling. Part of the point of 'the last days' was that they were the time of new creation – and the new creation would start with God's own people! P. 33

- We are still living in ‘the last days’.
- God has begun His new creation... and we are part of it! ([2Cor 5:17](#), [Gal 6:15](#))

**Q: What does Peter (quoting Joel) mean when he says, “EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED”?**

- “‘Being saved’ doesn’t just mean, as it does for many today, ‘going to heaven when they die’. It means ‘knowing God’s rescuing power, the power revealed in Jesus, which anticipates, in the present, God’s final great act of deliverance’. P. 34
- Peter will now go on to encourage his hearers to ‘call on the Lord’s Name’, and so to know that ‘salvation’, that rescue, as a present reality as well as a future hope. If these really are ‘the last days’, then ‘salvation’ has already begun. Anyone who knows they need rescuing, whatever from, can ‘call on the Lord’ and discover how it can happen.” P. 34

### Acts 2:22-36

“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 — <sup>23</sup> this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. <sup>24</sup> **“But 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.** <sup>25</sup> “For David says of Him, ‘I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. <sup>26</sup> “THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; <sup>27</sup> BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. <sup>28</sup> “YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.’

<sup>29</sup> “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. <sup>30</sup> “And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, <sup>31</sup> he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. <sup>32</sup> “This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. <sup>33</sup> “Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. <sup>34</sup> “For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, <sup>35</sup> UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.”’ <sup>36</sup> “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ — this Jesus whom you crucified.”

**Q: Vs. 24 is where Peter’s sermon hits the gas, and his audience knows it. Why would Peter’s words have been so startling to the crowd?**

- “Up to now, he has been showing that the extraordinary phenomenon of the wind, the fire, and the babbling tongues are best explained by claiming the ‘last days’ have arrived, the time which the prophet Joel had spoken of. But now he changes tack. The reason the ‘last days’ are here is because of the resurrection of Jesus, nothing more nor less. But the resurrection of Jesus demands to be explained, not as an odd, isolated ‘miracle’, as though God suddenly thought of doing something totally bizarre to show how powerful He is. The resurrection of Jesus is best explained as the fulfillment of specific promises made by God through King David. And they show that the one who has been raised from the dead is the true son and heir of David. He is, in other words, **the rightful King of Israel**. This is the point where the journalists go scurrying off to file their reports: **revolution is in the air!** P. 36

**Q: What is resurrection, and what are the implications of Peter's claim that Jesus has been 'resurrected'?**

- “Note how Luke insists that, for him, as for all the early Christians, ‘resurrection’ wasn’t about a disembodied spirit going off to heaven, leaving a body behind in a tomb. That is precisely what the word ‘resurrection’ did *not* mean. **‘Resurrection’ was, and is, about a physical body being very thoroughly dead, but then being very thoroughly alive again, so that the normal corruption and decay which follows death wouldn’t even begin.** P. 36-37
- “God’s plan of salvation, Peter is saying, was always intended to reach its climax with Israel’s Messiah undertaking His ultimate rescuing task. The anointed King would come to the place where evil was reaching its height, where the greatest human systems would reveal their greatest corruption (Rome, with its much-vaunted system of justice revealing itself rotten at the core; Israel with its celebrated Temple and hierarchy, revealing itself hollow at its heart), and where this accumulated evil would blow itself out in one great act of unwarranted violence against the person who, of all, had done nothing to deserve it. That, the early Christians believed, was what God had always intended.” P. 38-39

**Acts 2:37-41**

Now ***when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”*** <sup>38</sup> Peter said to them, ***“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*** <sup>39</sup> ***“For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”*** <sup>40</sup> ***And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!”*** <sup>41</sup> ***So then, those***

*who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.*

**Q: Why were the people “pierced to the heart”?**

- This is, perhaps, the first beginning, the first small glimpse, of the Church’s developing understanding of the purpose of the cross. That understanding doesn’t begin as an abstract theory about ‘sin’ or ‘judgment’. **It begins as the very concrete and specific awareness: ‘this generation’ is heading for disaster, but Jesus stands in the way, and can stop them from falling over the cliff.** The message then is clear: ‘Be rescued’ – in other words, let God rescue you, let Jesus rescue you – from the ruin that will come upon the city and the nation, **not as specific punishment for rejecting Jesus, but as the necessary consequence of that entire way of life of which rejecting Jesus was a key, telltale sign.**” P. 42

**Q: What does Peter’s call for the people to repent mean?**

- “The Key thing to realize in the early chapters of Acts, is that Jesus Himself had warned His fellow Jews that they were precisely in danger of accelerating toward a cliff. If you read Luke’s gospel straight through, you will notice the warnings of Jesus seem to increase in quantity and volume all the way to chapters 19, 20, and 21, where He solemnly declares that if the nation as a whole, and the city of Jerusalem in particular, don’t stop their headlong flight into ruin, their enemies will come and destroy them. The warnings are very specific. Israel (so Jesus declares) has bought into a way of life which is directly opposite to what God wants: a way which ignores the plight of the poor, which embraces violence, which denies God’s call to His people to become the light of the world. Again and again Jesus warns, ‘If you don’t turn back, you’re heading for disaster’ (Luke 13:5).” P. 40-41

**Q: How do you repent? How do you steer toward Jesus?**

- You need to turn back. But the way you do that is to become part of the Kingdom-movement that is identified with Jesus, part of the people who claim His life, death, and resurrection as the center and foundation of their own. **You need, in other words, to be baptized, to join the company marked out with the sign of the ‘new exodus’, coming through water to leave behind slavery and sin, and to find the way to freedom and life.** You need to allow Jesus Himself to grasp hold of you, to save you from the consequences of the way you were going, (‘forgiveness of sins’), and to give you new energy to go in the right way instead (‘the gift of the Holy Spirit’). To do all that is to ‘turn back’ from the way you are going, and to go in the other direction instead. **That is what is meant by the word ‘repent’.** P. 42

**Q: What does it mean to be “Saved?”**

- “What we are witnessing, in this passage, is the beginning of the Christian theme called ‘Salvation’. It isn’t simply about ‘going to heaven’, though of course, it includes that promise, not only of heaven after death, but, beyond that, **of resurrection into God’s new creation.**” P. 43
- ‘Salvation’ is therefore pointing toward a very concrete and particular reality in the future. If God’s ultimate intention was to ‘save’ only disembodied ‘souls’, that wouldn’t be *rescue from death*. It would simply allow the death of the body to have the last word. ‘Salvation’ regularly refers constantly, not least in Luke and Acts, to specific acts of ‘rescue’ within the present life: being ‘saved’ from *this* potential disaster, here and now.” P. 43
- “That, of course, is something Luke stresses throughout his work. **What God has promised for the ultimate future has come forward to meet us in Jesus Christ. We should expect signs of that future to appear in the present.** And, whenever we are in a mess, of whatever

sort and for whatever reason, we should remember this: We are ‘turn-back-and-be-rescued’ people. We have the right, the birthright, to cash-in that promise at any place and any time. No wonder 3,000 people signed up that very day. P.43

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**Follow Up Assignment**

Q: Since you are living in the last days, what kinds of things should you expect?

Q: Have you repented and been baptized?

- If so, did you realize you were taking part in the ‘New Exodus’?
- What does being a part of the ‘New Exodus’ mean?

Q: How would you describe what salvation has looked like in your life?