

D. The Testimony of Pentecost: The Establishment of David's Kingdom (2:22-36)

Confronted with the meaning of what was transpiring that day, Peter responded that it indicated the fulfillment of the long-standing promise of God's eschatological kingdom. The prophets had proclaimed that the messianic age would be marked by the outpouring of Yahweh's Spirit, and what the multitude was witnessing was precisely that; the Spirit had come, and His presence meant that the kingdom of heaven had been inaugurated. But a kingdom must have a king, and the Scriptures revealed that God's everlasting kingdom was to be presided over by His messianic Servant – the Servant identified by covenant oath as the royal Branch of David (2 Samuel 7:1ff). The prophets subsequently echoed this oath as the sure hope of Israel and the nations, while at the same time affirming the impending end of David's house, throne, and kingdom: The Davidic kingdom raised up and administered under the Sinai Covenant was destined for destruction, yet Yahweh would remain faithful to His covenant with His chosen king. He would yet usher in His everlasting kingdom and set on its throne His Servant, the Branch of David – the king-priest according to the order of Melchizedek (cf. Psalm 110 with Isaiah 7-12; Jeremiah 23, 30-33; Ezekiel 34, 37; Hosea 1-3; Amos 9; Zechariah 3, 6).

According to the prophets, the outpouring of the Spirit signaled the onset of the messianic age, but that development, in turn, implied the enthronement and reign of Messiah. God had pledged to send His Spirit in connection with establishing David's Son as His Shepherd and Prince (ref. again Ezekiel 36:16-37:28), and now that day had arrived. *The manifest presence of the Spirit meant the Davidic King-Priest was at last seated on Yahweh's throne* (ref. again John 14:12-20, 16:5-7), and thus Peter immediately redirected his hearers' attention from the prophetic meaning of the tongues phenomenon occurring before them to what it testified concerning Jesus Christ.

1. The Son of David had ascended His throne, but His coronation in the heavenly realm followed upon His earthly ministry and self-attestation to Israel. God hadn't sent His Servant-King in a secret manner; for more than three years Jesus had openly manifested Himself and displayed His messianic credential to the sons of Israel, showing Himself to be the One promised in all the Scripture (John 18:19-21).
 - a. Hundreds of years earlier Joel prophesied that the messianic age would be marked by supernatural signs and wonders, and Yahweh had now born witness to the man, Jesus the Nazarene, by just such divine evidences (2:22; cf. John 5:36, 10:22-25, 14:8-11, 15:18-25; also Matthew 8:16-17, 11:1-24).
 - b. Though many in Israel sought to find other explanations for Jesus' mighty works in the Spirit, the fact remained that the Father provided powerful, overt and irrefutable testimony to His Son as the Deliverer and King prophesied by the Scripture. Those who had eyes to see and ears to hear recognized Him in those works (Matthew 12:1-23, cf. 15:22, 21:1-15; John 7:14-31).
2. Yahweh had at last enthroned His Messiah-Son after testifying of Him by means of countless supernatural proofs. The Father and the Spirit affirmed Jesus as the Christ, but the "sons of the kingdom" rejected their witness; that rejection, in turn, was the key for the Son's glorification at the Father's right hand (2:23-24; cf. Psalm 2:1ff, 118:22-23).

- a. Israel's rejection of Jesus wasn't for lack of a messianic vision. The Jews of Jesus' generation had a well developed theology of Messiah and His kingdom, but a *perverse* one, inasmuch as human nature and Israel's history of captivity and subjugation had drawn a veil tightly over their eyes (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:12-15). They understood David's covenant son to be the Messiah (Matthew 22:41-45) and that His reign would mark the messianic age of the kingdom revealed in the Scriptures. The problem was how they envisioned the kingdom and its King.

The Jews read and interpreted their Scriptures with natural minds, finding in them a promise of another David who would, like his namesake, throw off the yoke of their oppressors and restore the dominion, power and glory of the former Israelite theocracy. Such a view was not entirely unwarranted since the Scriptures speak of the future messianic kingdom in the language and forms of the Old Covenant kingdom. Nevertheless, a careful, considerate reading free of personal and national bias would have revealed crucial distinctions between the two kingdoms.

- Despite the fact that Israel was a theocracy – Yahweh was the ultimate sovereign, David's kingdom had been *natural* and *earthly*. The sons of the kingdom were sons in name only, as the vast majority of Israelites didn't know their God. Being prophetic and preparatory, the theocratic kingdom of Israel bore crucial similarities to the promised messianic kingdom, but the latter was far more than a glorified reinstatement of its predecessor.
- The messianic kingdom was to be *spiritual* and *consummate*, and therefore transcendent and everlasting. It represented the fulfillment of God's Edenic promise to overthrow the curse and restore the creation through a descendent of Eve. Thus the prophets used the imagery and symbolism of Eden to describe the features and character of Messiah's kingdom (cf. Isaiah 2:1-4, 9:1-7, 11:1-12:6, 35:1-10, 55:1-13, 65:1-66:23; also Ezekiel 34:20-31, 39:21-29; Hosea 2:1-18; Joel 2:28-3:21; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 4:1-8; Zechariah 3:1-10; etc.).

The sons of Israel hoped for a messiah who would arise to vindicate them and reestablish their glory and the glory of their kingdom in the sight of all nations. They longed for a deliverer whose triumph on their behalf would attest their own righteousness and privileged status as Yahweh's chosen people. In sharp contrast, Jesus emerged on the scene proclaiming Israel's condemnation and need of repentance; He hadn't come to exalt the nation and deliver it from its earthly subjugators, but to rebuke and abase it and deliver it from itself. Israel's enemy wasn't the Gentile powers, but its own unbelief and disobedience; hence its deliverance wouldn't come through military conquest but vicarious atonement.

Everything about Jesus was at odds with Israel's theological understanding, sensibilities and expectations, and this drove the Jews to oppose Him at every turn. As the prophets had predicted, the Servant-Messiah proved to be a stumbling stone to the houses of Israel (cf. Isaiah 8:11-15; Luke 2:25-35; Romans 9:30-33).

- b. Israel rejected its Messiah, but this had been predicted by the prophets from the beginning (ref. 3:18, 13:26-29). And the reason the prophets could declare this future outcome was that Yahweh Himself had preordained it. *The messianic kingdom is the kingdom of the new creation first promised in Eden, and this creational renewal and restoration would come through the purging work of the Servant and the transforming power of His Spirit* (Isaiah 49-55; Ezekiel 36-37).

The triune God's eternal purpose for the created order depended upon the atoning sacrifice of the Son, and this was to be accomplished through His rejection at the hands of His own countrymen (John 1:1-11). The Father had sent His Son to die (John 12:23-27), but it was those who claimed the title of "sons" that were to be His betrayers and murderers (2:23, ref. also 3:12-15, 4:9-11, 5:29-32, 7:51-52; cf. Matthew 8:1-12, 21:33-46; Luke 13:22-30; John 8:31-59; etc.).

Israel's rejection of its Messiah was a matter of prophetic prediction, but it equally foreshadowed what was to come: Jewish opposition to Jesus didn't end with His ascension; it was simply redirected toward those who carried on His life and the ministry of His gospel in the world. Jesus had warned His disciples of this before His death (John 15:18-25), *and Luke recognized in this dynamic the mechanism for the accomplishment of the Great Commission* (which is simply the Abrahamic promise of global blessing) (cf. again Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:1-8).

Opposition to Jesus' followers began in Jerusalem immediately following Pentecost (4:1ff) and continued to escalate to the point that the fledgling Church was driven out into the surrounding areas of Judea and Samaria (8:1ff) and then as far as Syria (9:1-22). Later Paul would take the gospel westward into Asia Minor (13:1-14:28) and finally into Europe, going as far as Italy and perhaps even Spain (16:1-18:11, 28:1ff; cf. Romans 15:18-28).

In every place, the proclamation of Christ met with Jewish opposition and persecution, but that resistance simply pressed the gospel further into the world. *So Paul would later explain to the Romans that Israel's unbelief was fully culpable, but yet a matter of fulfillment of divine purpose*: The nation had become a vessel of wrath, sustained by God in its unbelief in order that His mercy should be made known to vessels of mercy, namely those He was calling from among the Gentiles as well as the Jews (Romans 9:1-33). Israel's fierce, relentless opposition was in accordance with "*the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God.*"

- c. The kingdom of the new creation depended upon the serpent bruising the heel of Eve's Seed (Genesis 3:15), but this wasn't to be a mortal blow:
- The central redemptive principle of *life out of death* found its consummate expression in Jesus' death as the source of creational renewal. Jesus' death had its goal all along in His resurrection by which His own humanity was fully and forever glorified (ref. Matthew 16:13-21 within the larger context of 16:13-17:13; cf. also 17:22-23, 20:18-19).

Peter understood this truth (v. 24) and sought to convey it to his hearers by referring to the suffering associated with Jesus' death as *birth pains* (NAS: "agony"). *The agony of His death was actually the pain of labor by which new life was brought forth*; Jesus' resurrection was His emergence into eschatological life: mortality yielding to immortality; the perishable yielding to the imperishable; weakness and frailty yielding to the power of indestructible life (ref. 1 Corinthians 15:35-55).

- As Paul declared to the Corinthians, this renewal has its focal point in man, and man finds his own "life out of death" in connection with a *new Adam*. The life of the new creational kingdom has come to God's image-bearer precisely because the True Man has Himself first entered into this consummate life (ref again Matthew 16:13-21).

The sons of Israel killed their Messiah and in this way the serpent gained his apparent victory. But this was only a "flesh wound"; Eve's Seed had prevailed to crush the serpent's head, destroying his dominion and overturning the curse. *The Seed's life out of death is the fountainhead of the new creation which is the messianic kingdom of God*. And so, having announced to the multitude the Spirit's outpouring as indicating the kingdom's inauguration (2:14-21), Peter turned his attention to how that kingdom has its life, basis and foundational principle in Jesus' resurrection/glorification. Proclaiming the kingdom of God means proclaiming the gospel of Christ: His identity and mission; His purging and renewing work; His everlasting dominion over the new creation.

3. The Jews recognized the Davidic nature of the messianic kingdom, but they didn't understand the relationship between its particulars. They couldn't conceive of David's royal seed being put to death, let alone undergoing the ignominious death of Calvary. The messiah they imagined would triumph over his enemies, not succumb to them in disgrace on a Roman cross. But if the sons of Israel had understood their Scriptures, they would have realized that this King of Israel – the covenant Son of David – had to endure exactly what He did in order to fulfill what the Scriptures had prophesied concerning Him.
 - a. First of all, Messiah's ordeal and triumph were predicted indirectly by means of **David's typological role**. Peter highlighted this by interacting with Psalm 16. Proclaiming to the crowd the fact of Jesus' resurrection from the agony of death, Peter showed it to be a matter of scriptural fulfillment (2:25-28). As he had done with his citation from Joel, Peter interpreted David's words *christologically*, finding their ultimate meaning in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

In the context of the psalm, David gives no indication that he wasn't speaking of himself, yet Peter discerned under the Spirit's leading that David's words extended beyond him to the greater "David" to come – the son of the covenant in whom David was to find his own ultimate identity, purpose and significance. The Spirit had highlighted the extent of this typological connection by referring to this man under the name *David* (Ezekiel 34:11-24, 37:21-25; Hosea 3:1-5), and now He was leading Peter to recognize and draw upon it.