

Acts 2:25-39 — The Spirit and the Kingdom

Introduction

Two weeks ago, we saw that it was by explaining the *meaning* of Jesus' life (2:22) and the *meaning* of His death (2:23) that Peter was calling the people to see, by faith, the *meaning*—and so also the *divine necessity*—of the resurrection (2:24). Later, Peter will say, “This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses” (2:32). That there were eyewitnesses to the historical fact of the resurrection was important—it was even essential, but the ultimate ground of saving faith could never be this eyewitness testimony. The ultimate ground of faith in the resurrection is the true *meaning*—and therefore the *divine necessity*—of the resurrection. It *had* to happen, and so we rejoice now to know that it *has* happened. The physical and bodily resurrection of Jesus is therefore more certain to us than any other fact in the universe. It's this true meaning—and the consequent divine necessity—of the resurrection that Peter continues to proclaim to us, now, as he quotes from Psalm 16:

I. Acts 2:25–28 — “For David says of Him [of Jesus], ‘I saw the Lord continually before me; because He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; moreover my flesh also will live in hope; because You will not forsake my soul to Hades, nor give Your holy one over to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of gladness with Your presence.’”

How can Peter say that these words of David are a prophecy about the resurrection of Jesus when, in fact, they're a prayer that David was praying for himself? When Peter says that David says these things “of Jesus,” what he means is that David speaks in the 1st person (I, me, my) as if it's not just himself (or even primarily himself) speaking, but the Messiah (Jesus) who is speaking with his words. But how can this be? How are we to make sense of this?

The first thing we need to acknowledge is that in their original context, the words of Psalm 16 are David's own personal prayer and testimony. Peter isn't denying this or excluding this sense of David's words. And yet we can't forget—and David never forgot—that he had been appointed by God as a public person (the king of Israel) and also as the father of that royal line through which Israel's ultimate Messianic King would come into the world. So we read in 2 Samuel chapter 23:

➤ 2 Samuel 23:1–4 — David the son of Jesse declares, the man who was raised on high declares, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, “The Spirit of Yahweh spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me, ‘He who rules over men as a righteous one, who rules in the fear of God, is as the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, from brightness of the sun after rain, with the tender grass springing from the earth.’”

Who is the one “who rules over men as a righteous one, who rules in the fear of God”? David knew that this ideal had not been realized in his own reign as king over God's people, and that it could never fully be realized in the temporary reign of any single one of his descendants. So we

ask again: Who is this one “who rules over men as a righteous one, who rules in the fear of God”? In whom is this ideal to be realized? And David himself answers:

- 2 Samuel 23:5 — “Truly is not my house so with God? For He has made an everlasting covenant with me, ordered in all things, and secured; for all my salvation and all my desire, will He not indeed make it sprout forth?”

David concludes, based on the everlasting covenant that God had made with him (2 Sam. 7), that his own salvation and the salvation of all his “house” (cf. 2 Sam. 23:6-7) would one day “sprout forth” in that king who would indeed rule over men as “a righteous one” and “in the fear of God”—whose reign would be everlasting even as the covenant itself was everlasting (*o-lam*). It’s in this light, then, that we must read all the prayers that David prayed as God’s anointed king. Though these prayers were really and truly David’s own “personal” prayers, he never forgot that he was himself—by virtue of God’s everlasting covenant with him and with his house—a prophetic figure both in terms of his kingly *office* (which foreshadowed the ultimate kingship of Israel’s Messiah) and in terms of his royal *person* (as the father of that line through which Israel’s ultimate Messianic king would come into the world). David’s personal prayers, therefore, were invested with a fundamentally prophetic character—some of these prayers being more explicitly and intentionally prophetic than others. Psalm 16 is one of those personal prayers of David that’s more intentionally prophetic.

- Psalm 16:1–7 — Keep me, O God, for I take refuge in You. O my soul, you have said to Yahweh, “You are my Lord; I have no good without You.” As for the saints who are in the earth, they are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight. The pains of those who have bartered for another god will be multiplied; I shall not pour out their drink offerings of blood, nor will I take their names upon my lips. Yahweh is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; indeed, my inheritance is beautiful to me. I will bless Yahweh who has counseled me; indeed, my mind instructs me in the night. I have set Yahweh continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely. For You will not forsake my soul to Sheol; You will not give Your holy one over to see corruption. You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

Do you hear in David’s words an intentional prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus? Does David speak these words as his own? Or does he speak them only as the words of someone else? Or both? On the one hand, these words are David’s own personal prayer and testimony. In the face of some specific threat to his life as the king of Israel, David is confident that he won’t die and see corruption (not yet). He’s confident that he’ll go on living (for a time) and enjoying the pleasures of the presence of God at His temple. On the other hand, these words can be David’s own prayer and testimony only insofar as God has made an everlasting covenant with him and with his house. David’s prayer is consciously rooted in the everlasting covenant that God has made with him. Therefore, whatever temporal salvation David may envisage for himself, it can only have ultimate meaning when seen against the backdrop (as part and parcel) of the future everlasting salvation of his house—a salvation that he confessed by faith would “sprout forth” one day in the everlasting reign of a King who would rule in righteousness and in the fear of the

Lord.” What does David’s personal salvation (as king) mean apart from the everlasting salvation of his “house”?

Notice how in the middle of all of David’s first-person references (I/me/my), he suddenly refers to himself in the third person: “You will not forsake my soul to Hades, nor give *Your holy one* over to see corruption.” Who is God’s holy one? At one level, it’s David. But again, this is true only insofar as God has made an everlasting covenant with David concerning his house. God’s “holy one,” therefore, is not just David as a private person. He is, in one sense, whoever is sitting on David’s throne; and he is, in the truest and most ultimate sense, that future King who comes from David’s “house”—whose rule is “as the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, from brightness of the sun after rain, with the tender grass springing from the earth.” Any personal and temporal rescue of David from death at the hand of his enemies can only have ultimate meaning when it’s placed against the backdrop of that future King who will *never* see corruption, but whose rule and reign will be everlasting even as the covenant with David was an everlasting covenant. Otherwise, David’s own personal and temporal deliverance as Israel’s king could only be a mockery of hope. Whatever David prays concerning God’s “holy one” is a prayer that ultimately concerns the Messiah. This David knew better than anyone else. David knows that the prayer he prays for himself will only be “fulfilled” when a king who comes from his house has finally experienced a permanent and everlasting deliverance from death. This is the true and ultimate meaning that David himself intended. And so Peter continues:

II. Acts 2:29–31 (cf. 1 Chron. 17:11-14; Ps. 89:3-4) — “Men, brothers, 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. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to set one of the fruit of his body on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of *the Christ [the Messiah]*, that He was neither forsaken to Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.”

Now let me ask you a question: For Peter, is this just a “proof-text” for the historical fact of the resurrection? Is Peter only quoting this verse in an effort to “prove” to the people that Jesus isn’t dead, but alive? Not at all! Peter is proving from Scripture the *meaning* of the resurrection. What does the resurrection mean? It means (according to Psalm 16) the arrival of Messiah’s kingdom. What does the resurrection mean? It means the fulfillment of God’s everlasting covenant with David and with his house.

To see, then, by faith the true meaning of the resurrection is also to see by faith the true necessity of the resurrection. And so now we understand that it’s not just the resurrection that Peter is proving from Psalm 16; it’s also the messianic and kingly rule of Jesus that Peter is proving from the resurrection. The resurrection is not simply that which needs to be proved, but that which is, itself, the ultimate proof. If Jesus has been raised from the dead, then He must be—according to the Scriptures (according to Psalm 16)—the promised King from David’s house who is ruling even now in righteousness and in the fear of the Lord—whose rule is “as the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, from brightness of the sun after rain, with the tender grass springing from the earth.” Because, by faith, we see the meaning of the resurrection in fulfillment of the Scriptures, therefore, the resurrection must be more certain to us than any other fact in the universe. The resurrection of Jesus means that He is reigning even now over the

house of Jacob on David's throne (cf. Lk. 1:30-33) until that day when all His enemies are made a footstool for His feet. So Peter concludes:

III. Acts 2:32–36 — “This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. 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 out this which you both see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says [Peter quoting now from Psalm 110:1]: ‘The Lord [Yahweh] said to my Lord [*a-don*; my greater Son who will come one day from my house], ‘Sit at My right hand, until I put Your enemies as a footstool for Your feet.’” Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Let all the house of Israel know *what* for certain? Not simply that Jesus has been raised from the dead, but that God, *by* raising Jesus from the dead (a fact to which the apostles were all witnesses), has made Him to be both Lord and Christ. Why does Peter focus on the resurrection? Because it's the resurrection that proves Jesus to be the King, and therefore it's the resurrection that proves the arrival of Messiah's kingdom.

And now what does all this have to do with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit? “This Jesus,” Peter says, “God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. 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 out this which you both see and hear.” The outpoured Holy Spirit, very simply, is the means by which Jesus is even now ruling and reigning over us from heaven (vv. 34-35). We could even say that the outpoured Holy Spirit *is* the rule and the reign of Jesus.

Notice how Peter says that “having been exalted to the right hand of God,” Jesus “received from the Father the *promise* of the Holy Spirit.” In Galatians chapter three, Paul says that “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law so that we would receive the *promise* of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:13-14). In Ephesians chapter one, Paul says that we were “sealed in [Christ] with the Holy Spirit of *promise*” (Eph. 1:13-14). There are even places where the Holy Spirit is referred to as “the promise of the Father” with no other qualification. In Luke 24 Jesus said to the disciples, “Behold, I am sending *the promise of My Father* upon you” (Lk. 24:49). In Acts 1, Luke tells us how Jesus commanded the disciples not to leave Jerusalem, but to “wait for *the promise of the Father*” (Acts 1:4). In just a moment, Peter will say, “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” (Acts 2:39). This “promise of the Holy Spirit,” then, is not to be seen as one among many promises of the Father, but rather as *the* promise of the Father par excellence—the promise that encompasses and sums up and communicates to us all the rest. It's this promise, then, that *is* the kingdom; it's this promise that *is* the rule and the reign of Christ.

The Spirit as “promise” points us to the Old Testament where we learn first of all that the coming Messiah was to be uniquely anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

➤ Isaiah 11:1–2 — Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. **The Spirit of Yahweh will rest on Him**, the spirit of wisdom and

understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh.

- Isaiah 42:1 — “Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul is well-pleased. **I have put My Spirit upon Him**; He will bring forth justice to the nations.”
- Isaiah 61:1–3 — **The Spirit of Lord Yahweh is upon me** because Yahweh has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim release to captives and freedom to prisoners, to proclaim the favorable year of Yahweh and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a headdress instead of ashes, the oil of rejoicing instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.

In the Old Testament, the coming Messiah was to be uniquely anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and so in Luke chapter 1 the angel Gabriel said to Mary: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and *for that reason* the holy Child shall be called the Son of God” (Lk. 1:35). In Luke chapter 3, when Jesus was baptized by John, “heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon [Jesus] in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, ‘You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased’” (Lk. 3:21-22). In Luke chapter 4 Jesus returned from the Jordan “full of the Holy Spirit... and was being led around by the Spirit in the wilderness” (Lk. 4:1-2). Later in chapter 4 Luke says that “Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit” (Lk. 4:14). And then again, in that same chapter, Jesus stood up in the synagogue at Nazareth and found the place in Isaiah where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor... [etc.]” After reading these words, Jesus began to say to the people, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk. 4:16-21). In Acts chapter 10, Peter will sum up the entire ministry of Jesus by saying that “God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power” so that “He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil” (Acts 10:38).

The Spirit as “promise” points us back to the Old Testament where we learn first of all that the coming Messiah was to be uniquely anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and where we learn second of all that the coming kingdom age is to be above all else the age of the Holy Spirit.

- Isaiah 44:1–4 — Do not fear, O Jacob My servant, and you Jeshurun whom I have chosen. For I will pour out water on the thirsty ground and streams on the dry land; **I will pour out My Spirit** on your seed and My blessing on your offspring; and they will spring up among the grass like poplars by streams of water.
- Isaiah 59:20–21 — “A Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” declares Yahweh. “As for Me, this is My covenant with them,” says Yahweh: “**My Spirit which is upon you**, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your seed, nor from the mouth of your seed’s seed,” says Yahweh, “from now and forever.”
- Isaiah 32:14–17 — Hill and watchtower have become caves forever, a joy for wild donkeys, a pasture for flocks, **until the Spirit is poured out** upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful orchard, and the fruitful orchard is counted as a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and **righteousness** will live in the fruitful orchard. And the work of righteousness will be **peace**, and the service of righteousness, quietness and security forever.

- Ezekiel 39:25–29 (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38; 37:11-14) — “Now I will return the fortunes of Jacob and have compassion on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name... Then they will know that I am Yahweh their God because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then collected them again to their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer. And I will not hide My face from them any longer, **for I will have poured out My Spirit** on the house of Israel,” declares Lord Yahweh.
- Joel 2:28–29 — “And it will be afterwards that **I will pour out My Spirit** on all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men will dream dreams; your young men will see visions. Even on the male slaves and female slaves **I will in those days pour out My Spirit.**”

In the Old Testament the coming kingdom age was to be above all else the age of the Spirit, and so in the New Testament Paul contrasts the Old Covenant age of “the letter” with the New Covenant age of “the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:3). He contrasts the Old Covenant “ministry of death, in letters having been engraved on stones” with the New Covenant “ministry of the Spirit”—he contrasts “the ministry of condemnation” with “the ministry of righteousness” (2 Cor. 3:6-9). In the Old Testament, which makes up more than three quarters of our Bible (77%), the Holy Spirit (or “the Spirit of God,” or “the Spirit of Yahweh”) is referred to 79 times. In the New Testament, which makes up less than one quarter of our Bible (23%), the Holy Spirit is referred to four times as often (239 times). In just Luke and Acts alone, the Holy Spirit is referred to nearly as many times (71 times) as in the entire Old Testament. We are living in the age of the Spirit, *which is to say* that we are living in the age of the rule and reign of God’s Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The coming kingdom age is to be above all else the age of the Holy Spirit. Why? Because it is the Spirit-anointed and Spirit-filled messianic King who Himself baptizes with the Holy Spirit (Lk. 3:16), and who Himself “gives the Spirit without measure” (Jn. 3:34; cf. 7:37-39). Here in Acts chapter 2, it is the resurrected King Himself who, “having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit... has poured out” the Spirit upon all of us, His people. Which is simply to say that the outpoured Holy Spirit is the means by which Jesus is even now ruling and reigning over us from His throne in the heavens (vv. 34-35). Jesus said to the Pharisees: “[I]f I cast out demons by **the Spirit of God**, then **the kingdom of God** has come upon you” (Mat. 12:28; cf. Lk. 11:20). Paul affirms: “No one can say, ‘Jesus is **Lord** [King and Messiah],’ except by the **Holy Spirit**” (1 Cor. 12:3; cf. Jn. 3:5). “The **kingdom of God**,” says Paul in another place, “*is*... righteousness and peace and joy in the **Holy Spirit**” (Rom. 14:17; cf. Isa. 32:14-17). It’s by the Holy Spirit poured out upon us that all the blessings of Christ’s present mediatorial reign (righteousness, and peace, and joy, and every other spiritual blessing in the heavenly places; cf. Eph. 1:3) are communicated to us. And this is so because the Holy Spirit is, *Himself*, all of these blessings; because the Holy Spirit is, *Himself* (poured out upon us and even living within us) the rule and the reign of Jesus.

Do you have righteousness? Then this is simply to say that you have the Spirit. Do you have peace? Then this is simply to say that you have the Spirit. Do you have joy? This is simply to say that you have the Spirit. Do you have the forgiveness of sins? Then this is simply to say that you have the Spirit. Do you have a future and a hope? This is simply to say that you have the Spirit. Do you have any other blessing of Christ’s rule in the heavens? Then this is simply to say that you have the Spirit. And so we read in verses 37-39:

IV. Acts 2:37-39 — Now when they heard this [that this Jesus whom they had crucified was the one whom God had made both Lord and Christ], they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men, brothers, what should we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ [the King] for the forgiveness of your sins; **and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**. 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.”

Have you received the gift of the Holy Spirit? Which is to say: Have you received the gift of the kingdom? In Luke’s Gospel there are two things that the Father is said to give to Jesus’ disciples (cf. Gaffin; “In the Fullness of Time). Jesus said:

➤ Luke 11:13 — “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more* will your heavenly Father **give the Holy Spirit** to those who ask Him?”

And then again:

➤ Luke 12:32 — “*Do not fear*, little flock, for your Father is *well pleased* to **give you the kingdom**.”

No stingy or reluctant giver is our heavenly Father! So let us come to him in repentance and faith, asking. And let us rejoice to know that in the very asking is the giving. In so freely giving to us the Holy Spirit, our Father has given to us the kingdom; He has given to us in Christ the King everything that there is to give, and therefore more than an eternity with Him will ever be able to exhaust.