

Acts 4, Psalm 2 & Acts 5

Acts 4:21-22 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all [*men*] glorified God for that which was done. **22** For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

Further threatened them ... These were not idle threats. Later, the apostles were arrested and beaten (Acts 5:17-40); and still later, Stephen was stoned to death for preaching the gospel (Acts 6:8-7:60). There is a progression in this inspired history toward that murderous fury which at last signaled official Israel's total rejection of Jesus Christ. For the moment, the popularity of the apostles with the people prevented all but the threats.

forty years old ... Luke added this bit of information regarding the age of the man who was healed, making the marvel of the miracle all the greater.

Acts 4:23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

Having been threatened by the hierarchy, the apostles might have been expected, by those In power, to flee from the area; but instead, they, together with the whole Christian community, went to their knees in prayer to Almighty God.

No, they would not flee - yet. The battle for the soul of secular Israel would be continued for forty years; THEN the Christians would flee from Jerusalem, and the accumulated wrath of centuries would humble forever that city which rejected Jesus.

Acts 4:24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou [*art*] God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

The Christians met the crisis through going to God in prayer ...

With one accord ... This expression occurs eleven times in the Acts, and only once elsewhere in the New Testament (Romans 15:6). It stresses the unity of the Lord's followers, and thus reveals one of the great secrets of the success of Christianity during those first years.

O Lord ... The holy reverence of prayers recorded in the Bible is notable and, in all ages, a loss of reverence in prayers has proved to be a loss of effectiveness. "Lord" in this place is from the Greek term meaning "Master".

Thou art God which hast made heaven, and earth ... the reference to creation, it has the force of acknowledging God's unlimited power over all that he made. "The church in danger finds support and solace in the thought of God's absolute sovereignty."

Acts 4:25-26 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? 26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

Peter here teaches Psalm 2 regarding the Psalms as inspired scripture. To him, inspiration was not mere genius, or literary skill, or prudent foresightedness; it was an impartation of the Holy Spirit which endowed the author of Scripture. Thus the words were true and accurate and his commands authoritative.

Acts 4:27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

Peter only quotes part of Psalm 2 ... often when you study the whole Psalm you get more information.

Psalm 2:1-12 This Psalm in its original context celebrates the great victory David had over the Philistines in II Samuel 5. David has conquered Zion and the Philistine armies are coming together before he can establish his Kingdom.

This Psalm is Remarkable for its eloquent change of persons. It is like a heavenly stage play with many different speakers, the prophet speaks, the many enemies speak, God speaks and the Messiah all speak during this Psalm. ... foretells of the coming Messiah or Christ and the result of the Messiah's ministry.

The Prophet Speaks:

Psalm 2:1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

Psalm 2:2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, *saying,*

Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound;

Now the Enemies Speak:

Psalm 2:3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

The Prophet Answers the Enemies and warns them of the result of their actions:

Psalm 2:4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

***Derision* is mocking ridicule.**

Psalm 2:5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

When did God speak to the Jews in His wrath? When Jesus came in judgment in the 70 AD destruction of the Jewish nation, the Temple and the city of Jerusalem is when He spoke to them in His wrath.

Now in Psalm 2 God Speaks.

Psalm 2:6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

The exact meaning of the Hebrew verb here translated in the clause: “I have set” has caused much discussion since the first century. The rabbinic text Midrash Tehillim of the book of Psalms has several meanings for the verb we translate “set”: “I have set my King, I have anointed Him as in Daniel 10:3; I made Him firm or literally cast Him cf: Exodus 32:4; or I raised Him up literally exalted Him or made Him great as in: Micah 5:4 or Ezekiel 32:30.

Psalm 2:6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

No matter what the Jews and the Romans do to the Messiah, God will overcome them by anointing Him, raising Him up, casting or making Him firm as His Anointed King and sitting Him upon God’s Holy hill of Zion.

Zion is symbolic ... God describes His people, the Churches or Congregations of Christ as a city ... “the heavenly Jerusalem”.

Hebrews 12:22-23 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

The Messiah Speaks

Psalm 2:7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

“I will declare the decree” The decree is that God promised King David that David’s son, his descendant, seed, or child will be the Messiah and in some miraculous way God would also be the Messiah’s Father cf:

II Samuel 7:12-16 And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. 7:13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom forever. 7:14 I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: 7:15 But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I put away before thee. 7:16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever.

Jesus finished the work God gave Him to accomplish and declared the decree of God.

John 17:1-4 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 17:2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. 17:4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

Psalm 2:7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

When did God declare: *Thou art My Son*? Psalm 2:7 Before He was born, at His Baptism, at His Transfiguration and when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand.

When did God declare: *Thou art My Son?* Psalm 2:7 ... Before He was born,

Luke 1:30-33 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. 1:31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 1:32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 1:33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

When did God declare: *Thou art My Son?* Psalm 2:7 ... At His Baptism

Matthew 3:13-17 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. 3:14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? 3:15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. 3:16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: 3:17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

When did God declare: *Thou art My Son?* Psalm 2:7 ... at His Transfiguration

Matthew 17:5 While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

When did God declare: *Thou art My Son?* Psalm 2:7 ... At His resurrection.

Romans 1:4 And declared [*to be*] the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

Hebrews 1:5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

Hebrews 5:5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.

When did all these Glorious things happen? Speaking of King David prophecy of Christ's resurrection cf:

Acts 2:30-31 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; **31** He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

When has God sworn that He himself would set on David's throne?

Psalm 132:11 The LORD hath sworn [*in*] truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.

God Answers the Messiah

Psalm 2:8 Ask of me, and shall give [*thee*] the heathen [*for*] thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth [*for*] thy possession.

Psalm 2:9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. cf:

Revelation 2:27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

The rod is the means by which stubborn, rebellious men would be broken.

It is a rod of iron because it, itself is unbreakable cf

John 10:35 ... the scripture cannot be broken;

The rod is a shepherd staff for the protection of the sheep. To rule comes from the Greek word poi-man-ei. Dash them in pieces is a figure of speech showing that the old nature of the rebellious man will be completely destroyed.

Revelation 12:5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and *to* his throne. cf:

Isaiah 66:7 Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child.

Isaiah 66:8 Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? *or* shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

When did a “a nation be born at once”? Christ’s rule over His people called the “Church” is pictured as a government and a nation in the bible. We are the Kingdom of God in the world but not of this worldly system.

Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of [*his*] government and peace [*there shall be*] no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Acts 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Christ conquers with His word ... Which is pictured as a sharp two edged sword or the word of His mouth and the breath of His lips

Revelation 19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Smite is from the Greek word *pa-taxe* which means strike gently using a weapon of love. Christ will strike the enemy Gentile nations by making them friends.

The figure of speech a sharp two-edged sword means the word of God will go forth from His mouth such as a sower going forth to sow the word of God cf: Matt. 13:1ff and conquer the world with the Gospel cf:

Isaiah 11:4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

Effortlessly shall the Christ conquer with the word of His mouth ... breath ... lips

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Isaiah 49:1 Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.

Isaiah 49:2 And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;

Now the prophet advises the enemies to submit to God and His Messiah cf:

Psalms 2:10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Psalm 2:11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

Psalms 2:12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him. cf:

Hebrews 6:18 That by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Ephesians 1:19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

Power in Greek is krat-os meaning vigor, strength and dominion. The great knowledge of everlasting life, our glorious inheritance.

Ephesians 1:20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

If a dead Savior can save us from our sins, how much more powerful is a living Savior seated in the heavenly places at God's own right hand making intercession for us in the Kingdom of Heaven, the church.

Ephesians 1:21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

Far above all kings, princes, magistrates, and Angelis tic beings, either good or bad.

Ephesians 1:22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

Not just the ruler, but the head of the body, which gets life from the head.

Ephesians 1:23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

The church is His spiritual earthly body living and united in union with the head. The fullness of Him is the visible manifestation of the fullness of Him living from the dead and fills all in all with His glory, majesty and power.

The last four verses describe Christ's glorious resurrection.

His exultation to God's own right hand.

His supreme dominion over all things.

His being the head of the church, which is His body on earth.

Since God and Christ did all these things for us how ought we to live our lives?

Acts 4:27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

Thy holy child Jesus ... Certain critics have attempted to deny that Jesus identified himself with the suffering Servant of Isaiah.

The key to most of the New Testament theology is in the Old Testament, especially in the Servant Songs of Isaiah and the seventh chapter of Daniel ... Jesus clearly saw his Messianic ministry from Jordan to Golgotha, as a fulfilling of the prophecies of the Servant of the Lord.

Thus, it is no surprise that in the very beginning of the gospel proclamation by the apostles strong emphasis upon the role of Jesus' sufferings should appear.

We find Peter four times in the early chapters of Acts (Acts 3:13,26; 4:27,30) calling Jesus "God's Servant." A little later, Philip expressly tells the Ethiopian eunuch that Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah 53 (Acts 8:26-40).

The fulfillment of the prophecy from Psalms 2:1,2, as quoted in this prayer, is declared by this verse. Herod and Pilate were representatives of kings and rulers who would oppose the Lord, and they were Gentiles. The implication, although not stated so bluntly, is that the Jewish religious leaders in the Sanhedrin were representatives of other rulers and of the children of Israel.

Regarding the question of why the mighty men such as rulers and kings and priests would with nearly unanimous hatred of the Christ unite their efforts to oppose and destroy Jesus and his teaching, the reason for it was deeply

embedded in human nature. The Jewish rulers were mortified, disgusted and outraged that one so poor and lowly would claim to be the Messiah. Their pride, ambition and selfishness simply could not accept Jesus as the fulfillment of an expectation they had so long cherished of some spectacular leader on a white horse who would overthrow the power of Rome and restore the defunct Davidic (sol-o-MON-ic) empire. In the case of the Romans, human nature at last turned upon the new faith with the fury of a vicious animal; and, although at first not opposed to Christianity (because they did not understand it), when it finally became clear to Roman authorities that the new religion was not merely seeking a place ALONG WITH OTHER RELIGIONS, but was exclusive in its claims, the Gentile authorities launched the great persecutions in the hope of exterminating Christianity.

Acts 4:28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

Perhaps the profoundest question in theology appears in what is stated here. This is the same problem on a cosmic scale that appears in the more limited instance of Judas' fulfilling prophecy by his betrayal of Jesus. Did God's foreordaining such rebellion against his authority become, in any sense, the cause of it? There are mysteries here beyond any complete human understanding of them; but any solution of the problem must take account of the freedom of the human will, either to obey or disobey God. Any resolution of the question that denies such freedom must be rejected.

In the case in hand, God desired the salvation of men through the death of Christ; but it was the wickedness of evil men which became an instrument of the fulfillment. That fact stands in bold relief in this apostolic prayer. God "foreordained" the sufferings and death of the Saviour of the world. We may only bow the head and say with the incomparable Paul, "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out" (Romans 11:33).

Acts 4:29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

This is reminiscent of Hezekiah's prayer (2 Kings 19:14ff) in which he spread the insulting letter of Sennacherib before the Lord in the temple, pleading with God "to see and hear the words of Sennacherib." The praying saints did not propose any solution, leaving the matter wholly in the hands of the Lord; but their petition

was concerned with their own basic need of power to "speak the word with boldness."

Acts 4:30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

This was a petition that God would continue to perform the great signs and wonders such as the healing of the impotent man; but the apostles accurately read the connection between such signs and the preaching of the word; for, in the previous verse, they had prayed first that they themselves should not flinch in the proclamation of the truth.

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

The place ... was shaken ... God gave this visible sign that his promise of miraculous power to the Twelve would continue to be honored.

Filled with the Holy Spirit ... This was not a repetition of the wonder at Pentecost, but a continuation in the apostles of that power "from on high" which had been promised, the result of which (their speaking the word with boldness) was also a proof of the purpose of such a gift.

Acts 4:32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any [*of them*] that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

The things which he possessed ... Thus it is clear that private property had not been abolished. What is taught here is not that the institution of private possessions had been abolished, but that the Christians held their possessions, not as their own, but as subject to the will of God in the use of them for the relief of the needy. This was an emergency, and all were willing and anxious to use whatever they possessed for the common good. In the fact of the "emergency" mentioned by Boles and so many others, there is a clue suggesting that all of the events mentioned thus far in Acts occurred within a very short space of time after Pentecost; because the most logical reason for any emergency, which is actually inferred rather than plainly stated, lies in the fact that vast throngs in Jerusalem for Pentecost, after obeying the gospel, continued to remain in Jerusalem for a time in order to hear the preaching of the apostles, and perhaps

to aid in evangelism. Naturally, such a situation would terminate after a while; and the extreme generosity of the Christians prolonged it as long as possible.

Acts 4:33-35 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. 34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid [*them*] down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

Great grace was upon them all ... The result of such overflowing generosity was that the effectiveness of the apostles' message was multiplied, and what might be called a revival of the most fantastic proportions ensued.

Possessors of lands or houses ... As Lange observed:

We are authorized by the literal import of the text to assume that all the owners of real estate who belonged to the church, sold property, but not that they sold ALL the real estate of which they were the possessors. Each one contributed a certain portion, but it is not said here that each one disposed of his whole property; we are not even distinctly told that a single individual relinquished all that he owned.

Unto every man according as he had need.... "This shows that only the needy received anything, and that those who were not needy were the givers." As McGarvey further noted:

This church was not at this time a commune, or a socialistic club, as many interpreters have fancied. There was no uniform distribution of the property of all among the members; neither was the property of all held and administered by the apostles.

Upon Luke's first mention of this matter of "all things common". (Acts 2:43), the comment was made that it was the result of no clear commandment of either Christ or the apostles; and while this is true enough, there yet remains the overwhelming impact of this generosity of the first Christians as an example for the church of all ages

In reality this church was setting an example for all other churches in all times, by showing that true Christian benevolence requires that we shall not let our brethren in the church suffer for food, even if those of us who have houses and lands can prevent it only by the sale of our possessions. It teaches that we should share the last crust of bread with our brother.

"It was not a matter of providing for the whole church, but of supplying the needs of those who lacked."

Despite McGarvey's comment, above, it is never the less true that the scheme of having all things common was not long continued, nor is there any evidence that it became a policy of the apostolic church.

No universal selling of property is mentioned, and no general instructions were issued that members of the church ought to distribute to the poor all that they possessed ... Many of the owners of property, of their own free will, from love of the brethren, used from time to time to sell their property and bring the proceeds to the apostles.

Acts 4:36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, [*and*] of the country of Cyprus, 37 Having land, sold [*it*], and brought the money, and laid [*it*] at the apostles' feet.

It should be noted that not a word is said to the effect that Barnabas "sold all that he had," there being no evidence at all that he did any such thing. Then, there is the further consideration that the sister of Barnabas, Mary, the mother of John Mark, appears in Acts 12 as the owner of a large residence in Jerusalem, capable of housing a considerable portion of the church for a prayer meeting, the house having a courtyard and a gate which was attended by the serving girl, Rhoda.

Barnabas ... This was the faithful and distinguished Christian who accompanied Paul on the first missionary journey.

Having related the example of the generosity of Barnabas, Luke would at once relate the story of Ananias and Sapphira and their scheme of imposing upon the Twelve apostles. This incident, about to be narrated in Acts 5, has the utility of shedding even more light on the so-called "Christian communism" of Acts.

Sources: KJV, theWord.com, The Commentaries of: Coffman, McGarvey, Boles, Root, Lange, De Welt, Bruce, Ramsay, Barnes, Dummelow, World Conquest