

Pentecost: God Exalts and Enthrones Jesus

SPEAKER	Steve Hawthorne
DATE	Sunday, May 28, 2023
PASSAGES	Acts 2; Joel 2; Psalm 16; Psalm 110
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:04:14 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Peter's Pentecost message is built to land on one sentence, and it is not about the wind or the fire. God has made this Jesus both Lord and Christ. The Spirit poured out on a crowd of pilgrims is the visible, audible evidence that a human being is now seated on the throne of God.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Pentecost was a pilgrimage feast — Shavuot, seven weeks and a day after Passover. Jerusalem was packed with Jews from across the empire. The crowd that heard its own languages that morning was not an accident of timing.
- ◆ The "they" who were filled were not the twelve. About a hundred and twenty had been praying together for ten days, and what they spoke were the mega-deeds of God.
- ◆ God's greatest works take generations, not seconds. He could finish instantly; he does not, because he is drawing people who come of their own will.
- ◆ Prophecy is not fortune-telling. It describes what God is doing and toward what purpose — it is more about why than what, and its job is keeping the main thing the main thing.
- ◆ Until that morning the Spirit had rested on a short list of leaders. Joel promised sons and daughters, old men, young men, male and female servants. The list ends at Pentecost.
- ◆ Peter makes four claims about Jesus and supplies a witness for each: attested by God, delivered to death by God's plan and their hands, raised, and exalted.

- ◆ The fourth is the crescendo and the one we routinely skip. We are used to celebrating that Jesus is alive; Peter is announcing that he is enthroned.
- ◆ The promise is for you, your children, and all who are far off — which is why this message ended in prayer for peoples who have never seen Jesus followed in their own language.

► 1:04:14

Matt Ryniker introduced him as "the illustrious Dr. Hawthorne of international ministry fame — but to us he's Steve, and Grandpa," and named what he was hoping for: Steve has a talent for taking passages we mangle thoroughly and straightening them out, and Pentecost is one of those. Steve set the terms immediately. "I'm just gonna do the points as they appear in the scripture. I'm not going to make stuff up and go on and on and on."

1. What happened, and to whom

► 1:09:03

Penta, five — fifty days. The Jewish name is Shavuot, a plural of weeks: seven weeks, forty-nine days, plus one. It was a harvest festival, a commemoration of the law given at Sinai, and a pilgrimage every Jewish man was required to make if he could. That is why the city was full.

And the "they" of verse one is bigger than most of us picture — roughly a hundred and twenty, ten times the number of apostles, who had been gathering and praying daily since Jesus left.

► 1:10:27

"When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."

ACTS 2:1-4 ↗

Two different kinds of tongues sit in that paragraph — flames and languages. Steve compared the noise to standing near a tornado, and noted we do not actually know whether air was moving; what we know is that it came from heaven, it filled the house, and it was loud enough outside to pull a crowd. As for being filled: they were not empty beforehand. "There was something extra that was added and infused into their beings."

2. What they were saying

► 1:13:34

They were speaking the mighty deeds of God — *mega* deeds, in the Greek. Steve's guess about the content is grounded in what those ten days had been spent on: Peter had already stood up and said the scripture had to be fulfilled, and Jesus' parting words in Luke were that everything written about him in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. They had been praying the scriptures. Now they were declaring them.

And the mega deeds are slow on purpose. "He could finish things like that if he wanted," Steve said, "but he loves that he's drawing people of their own will and love — and so that's taking quite a long time." Generations is how Bible time rolls.

► 1:18:34

Out in the street it was nine in the morning and nobody was waiting for a concert. Then people started picking their own speech out of the noise — the dialect of the village where a grandmother came from. Luke lists ten regions and five peoples, most of them with several languages apiece, and on a map they scatter in every direction. Twice the text insists on the same detail: each one heard his own tongue, telling the mighty works of God.

3. "This is that"

► 1:24:39

Peter stands with the eleven and gives a two-part outline: *let this be known to you*, and *give heed to my words*. First he explains the phenomenon; then he delivers a message. Steve was sharp about the difference. "It was not a speech. He was telling them a clear message that he knew God wanted declared."

► 1:25:17

“But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.’”

ACTS 2:16–18 ↗, QUOTING JOEL 2:28–29 ↗

Up to that morning the Spirit of God had come on a short list: Moses and the seventy elders, Bezalel the craftsman who made the tabernacle beautiful, Gideon, Samson, Saul briefly, David, some prophets, a few women in the era of the judges, John the Baptist. Special people, special purposes. Joel's promise is all flesh — young and old, male and female, servants and working people. "Not something for just a few high-placed leaders."

► 1:31:47

Which raises what prophesying is. Not foretelling, Steve insisted, and not a parlor trick with your future. "It's more about why than it is what. Prophecy describes what God is doing and toward what purpose. It's about keeping the main thing the main thing." And the main thing is not our comfort: "we tend to make the story all about ourselves." God's main thing is the relational fullness he intends to have with a people gathered out of every people.

► 1:35:20

"And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke... before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

ACTS 2:19-21 ↗

Israel expected the day of the Lord to arrive as a military victory. Peter says it arrives as a rescue, and the way in is to call on the name — to name him, pray to him, publicly declare covenant trust. "Making it clear: I belong to this one."

4. Four things God did with Jesus

► 1:37:26

Peter numbered four, and Steve simply tracked him. First, Jesus of Nazareth, attested by God with mighty works and wonders and signs. "Attested" is a courtroom word — an attorney's word, not a witness's — for setting forth a case. The evidence Peter offers is the room itself: *as you yourselves know*.

Second, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, and crucified by the hands of lawless men. The witnesses here are the guilty party. The nails were driven by Romans; the verdict was theirs. God did not kill Jesus, Steve was careful to say — God knew. He reached for C. S. Lewis's deeper magic and for Paul's version of it: had the rulers of this age understood, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

► 1:42:08

Third, raised — because it was impossible for death to hold him. Peter proves it from a psalm:

“I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.”

ACTS 2:25–27 ↗, QUOTING PSALM 16:8–10 ↗

Every phrase there is physical — flesh, soul, decay. And David cannot be describing himself: he died, he was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. He was a prophet looking down the line at one of his own descendants. Witness for this one: “we are all witnesses.”

5. The fourth point, which most of us skip

► 1:45:55

“We emphasize the death and the resurrection of Jesus because we're guilty for our sins and we know it, and we're afraid of death and we should be. What we miss is the exaltation.” Not a complaint about Easter — an argument that Peter's own crescendo is somewhere else. Jesus was not merely restored to being alive. He was raised into a kind of life that had never existed before, and then seated.

► 1:47:55

“Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.”

ACTS 2:33 ↗

There is that word *this* again — the third or fourth time Peter has hammered it. The noise and the languages are not the headline; they are the receipt. Jesus had told them to wait in the city until they were clothed with power from on high, and said *I am sending* it. So the outpouring is the work of the exalted Lord. “Pentecost is more about Jesus being raised to the throne than it is with the Spirit coming down.”

Steve knows why this lands softly. We cannot see heaven, our cosmology is naturalistic, and what we do picture is mostly clouds, halos and mansions — a story we have managed to make about ourselves. But the one thing scripture shows about heaven, over and over, is God enthroned.

6. Lord and Christ

► 1:53:19

“For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”’ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

ACTS 2:34–36 ↗, QUOTING PSALM 110:1 ↗

Watch the seams. *Christ* came from Psalm 16, *Lord* from Psalm 110 — and the same argument covers both, since David neither escaped the grave nor ascended. "This is a tightly crafted message," Steve said. Christ is a title, not a surname. And the conclusion is not that Israel's Messiah has been given Israel: he has been given all lands, languages and lineages. "I declare to you King Jesus, king of all the world."

► 1:55:25

He guarded it from the obvious misreading — the old new-age idea of ascended masters, ordinary humans who transformed their way into divinity. This is the reverse. "The living God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has in Jesus taken on full humanity." A human son of man at the throne. And note the grammar one more time: *God has made him*. He did not promote himself.

7. Repent, be baptized, receive

► 1:57:36

They were cut to the heart and asked what to do, and Peter told them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Not earned — a gift. Baptism is how you join yourself to him: "it's a symbol of dying, of being under the water. His death becomes my death, so his life can become my life."

Steve pressed the invitation without pressing the room. "He'll never force you to serve him. Have you noticed? You can't name one thing that God made you do — but you chose to love him." And the life that follows is not solitary: "You can't follow Jesus alone and do what he tells you, because he says love one another. Have you ever tried to love one another all by yourself?" Three thousand received the word that day and devoted themselves to the teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers.

8. All who are far off

► 2:03:47

“For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

ACTS 2:39 ↗

Pentecost is also the global day of united prayer for Jerusalem and the nations — well over a hundred million people praying that weekend, Steve said — and for the last six years, the International Day for the Unreached. He defined the word carefully. Unreached does not mean nobody has tried, or that they have never heard of Jesus. It means no one among their own people yet follows him in a way their uncles and cousins could join, in their own language and art, without it feeling like cultural suicide. Something like forty-two percent of the world lives there.

So the message ended with the congregation standing in threes and fours, reading verse 39 aloud one line at a time — whole families, then people far off, then the many God himself calls — and answering each line the same way: *do it, Lord*.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Acts 2:1–4](#)
- [Acts 1:15–16](#)
- [Luke 24:44](#)
- [Acts 2:11](#)
- [Acts 2:16–18](#)
- [Joel 2:28–29](#)
- [Acts 2:19–21](#)
- [Acts 2:22](#)
- [Acts 2:23](#)
- [1 Corinthians 2:8](#)
- [Acts 2:25–27](#)
- [Psalm 16:8–10](#)
- [Acts 2:29–32](#)
- [Acts 2:33](#)
- [Luke 24:49](#)
- [Acts 2:34–36](#)
- [Psalm 110:1](#)
- [Acts 2:37–38](#)
- [Acts 2:41–42](#)
- [Acts 2:39](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Peter dated the last days from that morning rather than from some point still ahead. What changes when you think of yourself as living inside the fulfillment instead of waiting for it to begin?
2. Steve said prophecy describes what God is doing and why — it keeps the main thing the main thing. Where in your life have you quietly made the story about yourself instead?
3. The Spirit used to rest on a short list of leaders; Joel promises sons, daughters, old men, servants. Which part of that promise is hardest to believe about yourself, and why?
4. We are practiced at celebrating that Jesus is alive and unpracticed at celebrating that he is enthroned. What would praying to a seated King sound like for you?
5. "The promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off." Who are the far-off people you will pray that verse over this week, and what will you do about them?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Steve Hawthorne was introduced by Matt Ryniker as "the illustrious Dr. Hawthorne of international ministry fame — but to us he's Steve, and Grandpa," and as a mentor to Matt over many years. He and his wife Barbara have three children; their daughter Sarah, an artist with a studio in Leipzig, Germany, was in the service with her husband Philip, a pastor there. He publishes a prayer guide called 10 Days of Praise, and was asked to preach on Pentecost.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SC4f8jaWswk&t=3854s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.