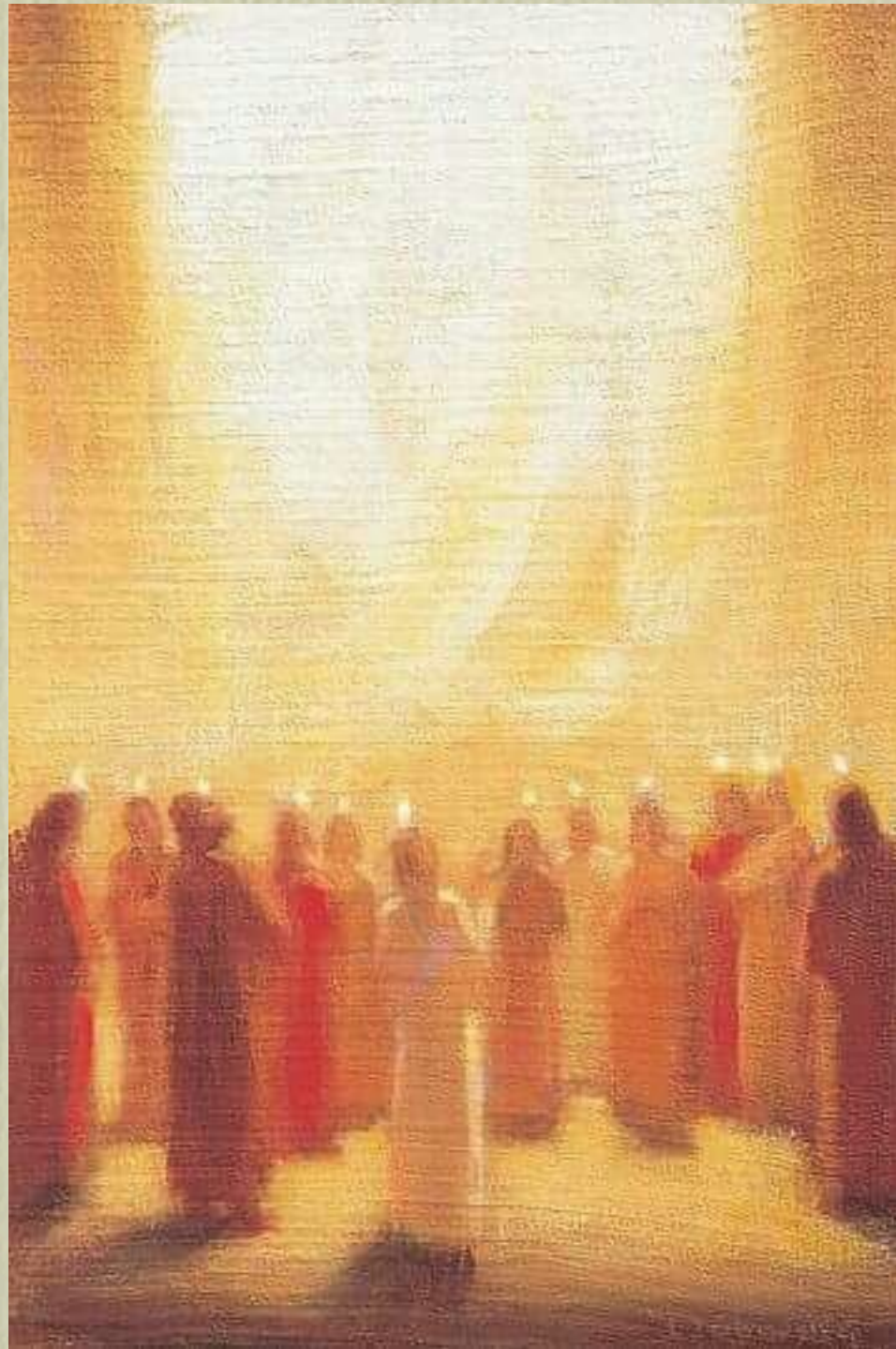


02. Acts 1:12 - 2:41



Acts 1:12

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

The Mount of Olives (see Luke 19:29; 21:37) is associated with the final judgment. We are about to see that this judgment is one of love, when God pours out over the whole world the fullness of the Spirit of love that burns in the heart of the risen Jesus. The prophet Ezekiel sees the glory of God moving to the Mount of Olives as it prepares to leave Jerusalem to go out to the exiles (Ezekiel 11:23). God promises to be 'a sanctuary for them while in the countries where they have gone' (Ezekiel 11:16). That this will be so, God promises to give them a new spirit, a share in his own Spirit.

Acts 1:13-14

When they had entered the city, they went to the **room upstairs** (ὕπερθεον) where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of **James** [see Luke 6:14-16]. (Mark 3:18 Thaddaeus)

All these were constantly devoting themselves with the same heart and mind to prayer, together with certain women, including **Mary the mother of Jesus**, as well as his brothers [Luke 8:19-21].

Jesus assured them: ‘**the heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him**’ (Luke 11:13). So here they are as a community devoting themselves to trusting prayer and waiting in hope for the promised gift.

Acts 1:15-20

In those days **Peter** stood up to address the assembled believers who numbered about one hundred twenty persons and said, ‘Brethren, the scripture **had to be fulfilled**, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus — for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry [διακονία].’ (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness (contrast Acts 2:45; 4:34-37); and falling headlong [Wisdom 4:19], he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their language Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) ‘For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘Let his homestead become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it’ [Psalm 69:25] and ‘Let another take his position of overseer.’ [ἐπισκοπή - Psalm 109:8]

(compare Matthew 27:3-10)

Acts 1:21-25

One of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us — one of these **must** become a witness with us to his resurrection.'

So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, 'Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry (διακονία) and apostleship (ἀποστολῇ) from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.'

Before Jesus chose the twelve he spent time in prayer (see Luke 6:12). Likewise here, the community prays, for they want the risen Lord to be the one to choose Judas's replacement.

Acts 1:26

And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias;
and he was added to the eleven apostles.

Lots were cast to determine which areas of the Promised Land were to go to which tribal group (see Numbers 26:55-56), who was to be king in Israel (see 1 Samuel 10:20-21), and which priests were to carry out which sacred duties (see 1 Chronicles 24-26). We read in the Book of Proverbs: 'The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is the Lord's alone' (Proverbs 16:33).

The twelve: Luke 8:1; 9:1, 12; 18:31; 22:3, 30, 47; Acts only 6:2.

Acts 2:1

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

‘The day of Pentecost’ (‘the fiftieth day’) is the name used by Greek-speaking Jews for the harvest festival, the ‘Feast of Weeks’, celebrating the conclusion of the grain harvest. The fifty days were counted from the Passover (Leviticus 23:15-16).

At least from the time of the fall of the temple in 70 Pentecost also celebrated the gift of the Torah at Mount Sinai in the third month after the Hebrews left Egypt.

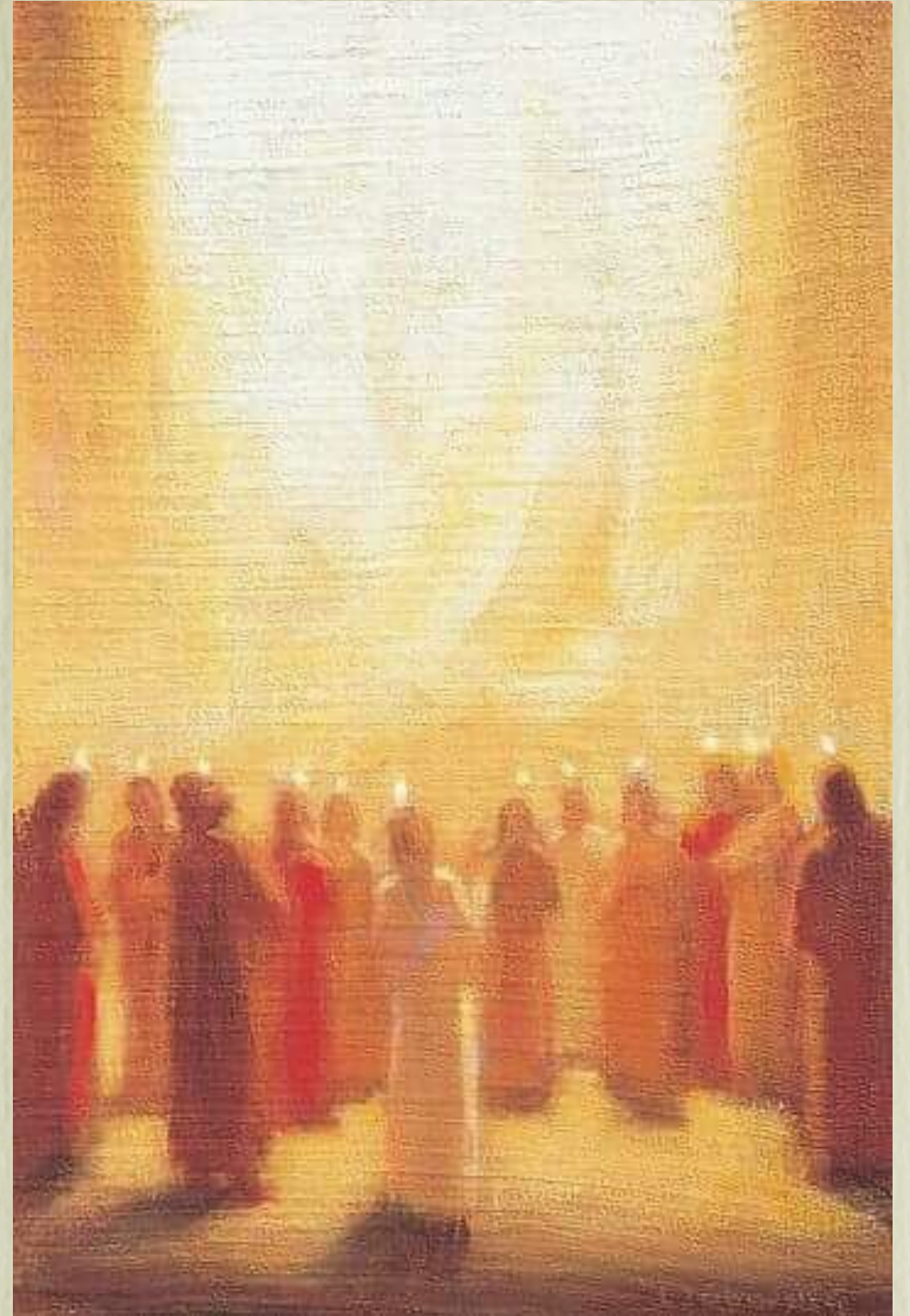
Acts 2:1

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

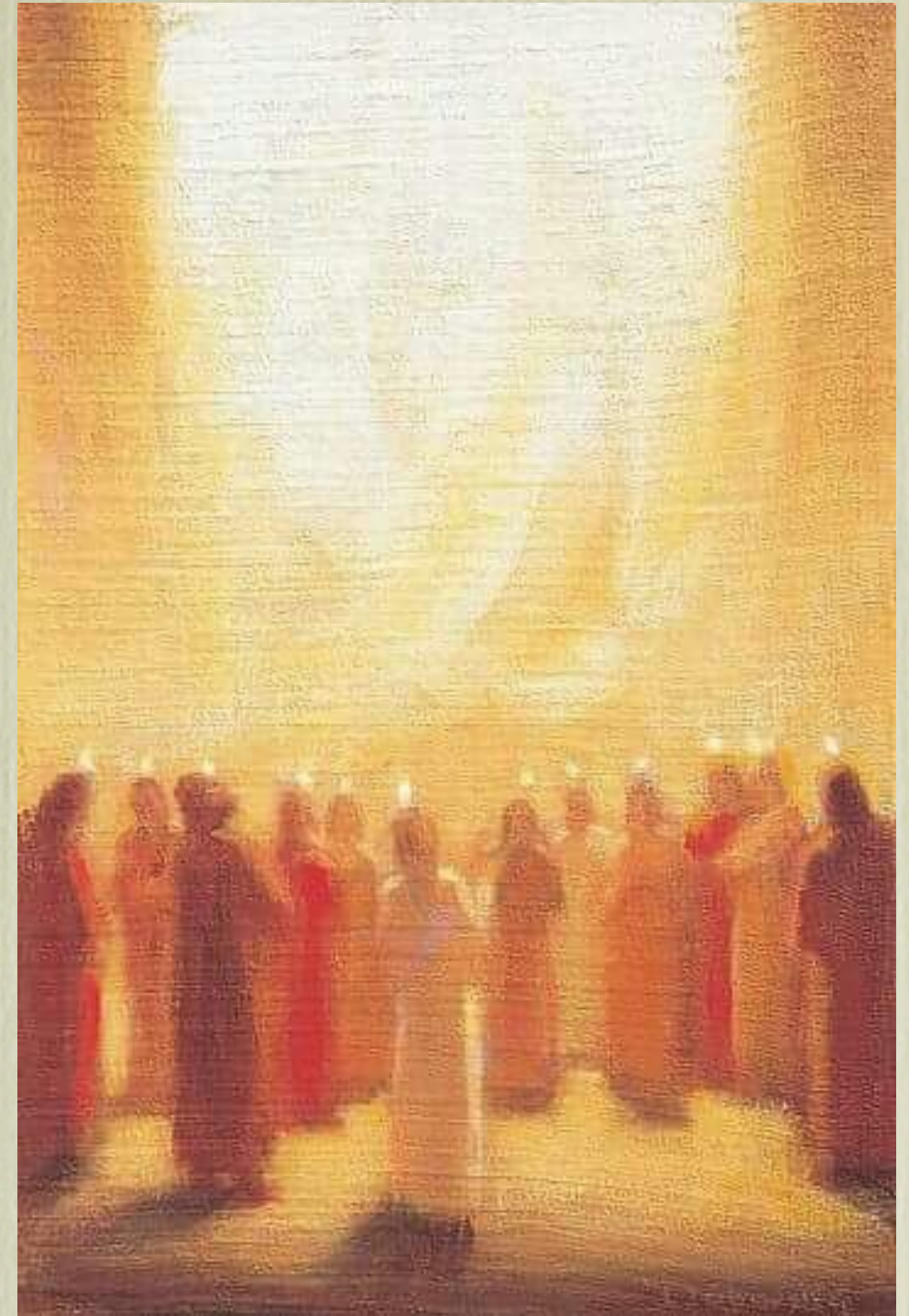
The disciples are still together, gathered in prayer. 'They were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers' Acts 1:14), awaiting the baptism of the Holy Spirit promised them by Jesus (see 1:5).

Acts 2:2-4

Suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled **all** the house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. **All** of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.



‘When he ascended on high he gave gifts to his people ...The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry (διακονία), for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ’ (Ephesians 4:8-13).



Luke borrows from the dramatic and symbolic language of the Book of Exodus to highlight the connection between the outpouring of the Spirit and the revelation on Mount Sinai:

‘On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled. Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. They took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because **the Lord had descended upon it in fire** ... while the whole mountain shook violently’ (Exodus 19:16-18).



‘He who is more powerful than I will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire’ (Luke 3:16)

‘I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!’ (Luke 12:49).

Inspired by the Spirit, they were able to speak ‘**in other languages**’.

‘If the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your mind”? (1 Corinthians 14:23).

God is reversing the divisions brought about by human pride at Babel (see Genesis 11:7-9). The words of the Spirit transcend the boundaries of human languages and bring together into a communion of love all the peoples of the earth (see Acts 10:45; 19:6).

“The church in its humility recovers the unity of languages that Babylon in its arrogance had dispersed. At the spiritual level the variety of languages points to the gifts of different forms of grace” (Bede of Jarrow died 735AD).

Acts 2:5

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem.

‘The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together’ (Isaiah 40:5).

‘I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. From them I will send survivors to the nations ... to the coastlands far away that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the nations ... For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, says the Lord; so shall your descendants and your name remain ... all flesh shall come to worship before me, says the Lord’ (Isaiah 66:18-23).

Acts 2:6-II

At this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs.



Acts 2:12-13

In our own languages we hear them speaking about God's mighty deeds." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

Acts 2:14-16

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel.

Acts 2:17-21 – (quoting Joel 2:28-32)

‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon **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 upon **my** slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

Acts 2:22

‘You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with **deeds of power** (δυνάμεις), **wonders** (τέρας), and **signs** (σημείον) that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know.

Miracles (δύναμις - ‘deed of power’)

‘All in the crowd were trying to touch Jesus, for **power** (δύναμις) came out from him and healed all of them’ (Luke 6:19).

‘God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with **power**; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him’ (Acts 10:38).

Since God is LOVE, the ‘deeds of power’ are expressions of the powerful love that binds Jesus to the Father.

By 'miracle' we are not speaking of God intervening in history and setting aside the so-called 'laws of nature'. These 'laws' model and describe behaviour. They do not claim to exhaust the dynamism of nature or the relationships, processes, and causal interconnectedness of the natural world.

The surprise of a miracle alerts us to something that is ever present but which our achieved knowledge can obscure: namely, that it is the mysterious initiative of God to which we are responding in everything we do and seek to do. It is our longing for communion with God that is the mainspring of our desire to know and love.

When we come to some understanding we may fall into the temptation of forgetting this and thinking we are the organisers and initiators. A miracle surprises us into recognising that we are wrong.

‘miracles, wonders, and signs’ (Acts 2:22)

By ‘miracle’ we mean wonderful happenings that take place through natural causes that are beyond our present modelling: causes held in being and propelled by God’s self-giving love, drawing the whole of creation into divine communion. They function as signs of God’s mysterious presence and action.

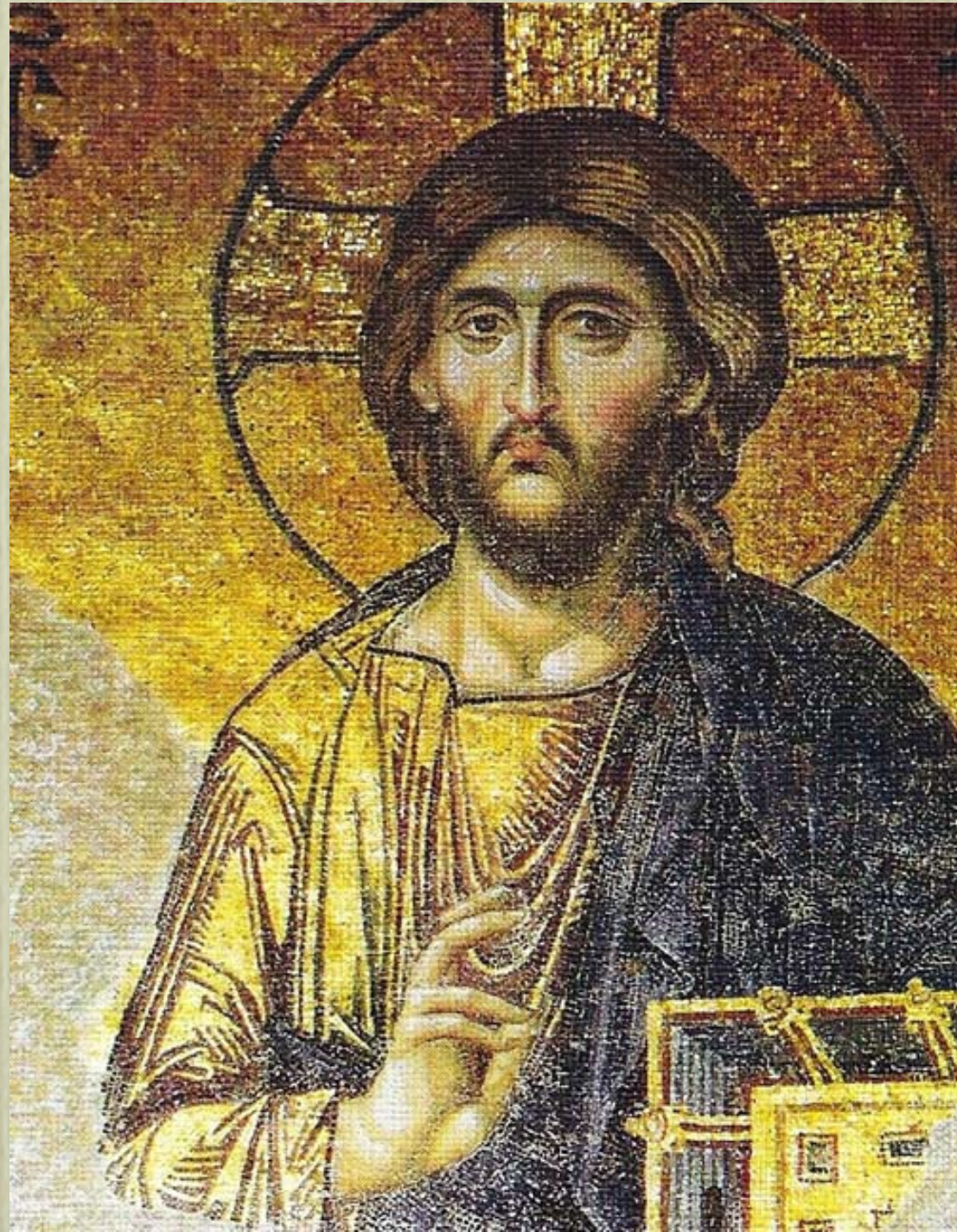


‘Whenever something new arises, whenever life is awakened and reality reaches ecstatically beyond itself, in all seeking and striving, in every ferment and birth, and even more in the beauty of creation, something of the being and activity of **God’s Spirit** is manifested.’

(Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 227).

‘God gives to creatures themselves the capacity for the new. Because of God’s creative and redeeming presence to creatures, they can become something they were not. When matter comes to life on earth, when life becomes self-conscious and personal, this occurs through God enabling creation to transcend itself and become something new. Above all when one of us in the human and creaturely community, Jesus of Nazareth, is so radically open to God, so one with God, that we rightly see him as God-with-us, then we can say that in this person creation transcends itself into God.’

(Denis Edwards, *How God Acts*, 158).



Jesus was fully open to God's Spirit, God's creative action. God gives the Spirit to Jesus 'without measure'(John 3:34). Jesus loved perfectly.

'**Miracles**' show what perfect love can do when it is welcomed in 'faith'.

'If it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you' (Luke 11:20).

‘God did extraordinary miracles through Paul’ (Acts 19:11)

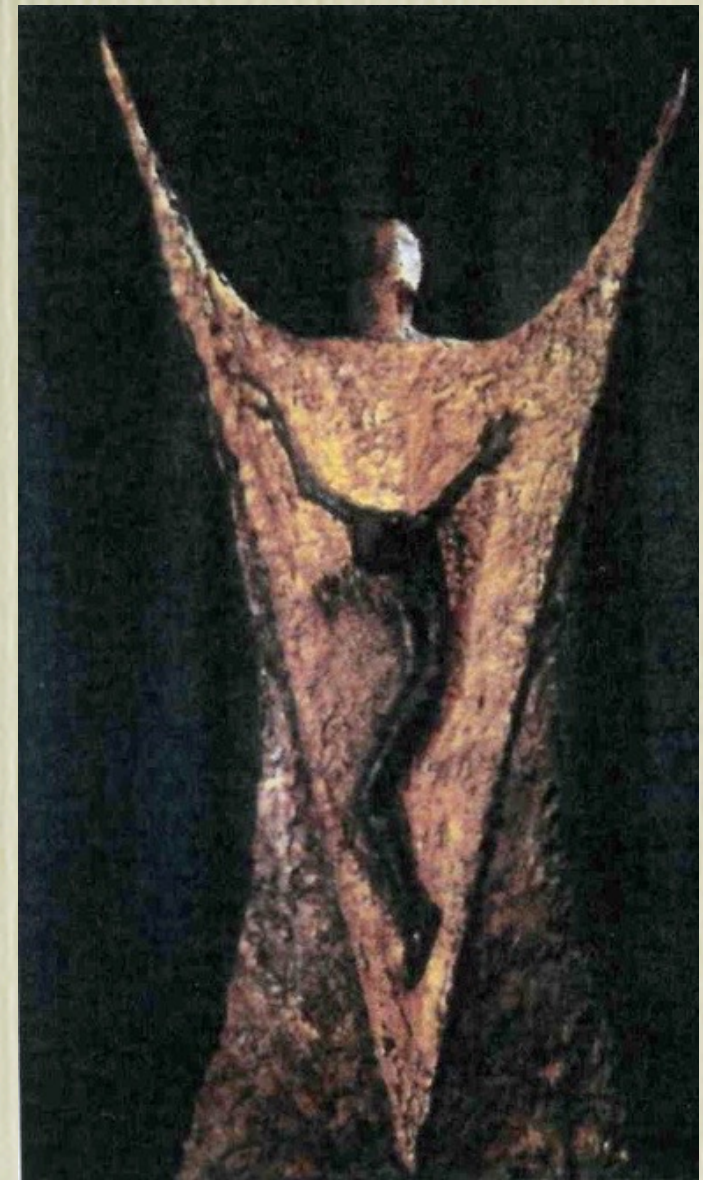
Jesus revealed God as love = self-giving. Creation is an explosion of this self-giving. We become what we are called to be to the extent that we love = to the extent that we ‘participate in the divine nature’ (2 Peter 1:4).

Acts 2:23

This man was handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.

On the level of human activity, the level of cause and effect, we have a story of sin, a story of injustice, a story of human failure to listen to God and to obey God's will. We are challenged, however, to rise above the human plain in order to gaze upon the unchanging fidelity of God, revealed, not in the human sin of crucifying Jesus, but in the faithful love of the one being crucified.

God's will is seen in the outpouring of the Spirit, which points in turn to the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is alive, beyond death. It is his Spirit that they are witnessing, powerfully acting in their midst to share with them his life.



Acts 2:23-24

You crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law.
But **God** raised him up, having freed him from death,
because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.



YOU crucified him **GOD** raised him

NOT Why did the controlling God
have Jesus crucified?

BUT Where is the loving-liberating
God on Calvary?

Acts 2:25-28

For David says concerning him [Psalm 16:8-11],

‘I saw the Lord always before me,

for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;

moreover my flesh will live in hope.

For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,

or let your Holy One experience corruption.

You have made known to me the ways of life;

you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’

Peter is presenting Jesus as the promised Messiah. God is, indeed, ‘restoring the kingdom to Israel’ (Acts 1:6) through Jesus who has been ‘taken up to heaven’ (Luke 1:2). Enthroned as king in God’s presence, he is pouring out on the world the powerful, saving, Spirit of God. This is cause for joy. We recall the joy experienced at Jesus’ conception (Luke 1:47) and the ‘good news of great joy for all the people’ (Luke 2:10) at his birth – a joy meant for ‘all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem’ (Luke 2:38).

Acts 2:29-31

“Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, ‘He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption’ [Psalm 16:10].

Acts 2:32

This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

‘You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’ (Acts 1:8).

Acts 2:33-36

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 both **see and hear**. 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.”’ [Psalm 110:1]. Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both **Lord and Messiah**, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Paul will attempt to persuade his Jewish brothers and sisters that ‘Jesus is the **Messiah**’ (Acts 9:22). He has the same message in Antioch in Pisidia (see Acts 13:32-34), in Thessalonica (see Acts 17:3) and in Corinth (see Acts 18:5). Luke ends Acts in Rome with Paul ‘proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus, the **Messiah**’ (Acts 28:31).

The title ‘**Lord**’ has a range of meanings. When applied to the Messiah, the focus is on the power of the king rather than on his being anointed (the ‘Christ’). It is in the context of witnessing to the kingdom that the apostles address the risen Jesus as ‘**Lord**’ (see Acts 1:6). Now that he has been raised to life by God and enthroned at God’s right hand, he is ‘**Lord of all**’ (Acts 10:36).

The title ‘**Lord**’ is used of God as Saviour. The Lord is God who appeared to Moses in the burning bush and who sent Moses to liberate the people from slavery in Egypt. It is this mysterious and divine aspect that is highlighted by Luke in his Prologue. Elizabeth greets Mary as ‘**the mother of my Lord**’ (Luke 1:43). At his birth, he is proclaimed as ‘**a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord**’ (Luke 2:11).

Peter has just quoted from the prophet Joel: ‘Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved’ (2:21). He is here identifying this ‘Lord’ as Jesus, the risen and exalted Messiah. Jesus is being identified with God as Saviour. To have God’s name is to exercise God’s power (see Exodus 23:20-21). Peter is claiming that in exercising kingly power, Jesus is the one through whom God has chosen to save. He will go on to say: ‘There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved’ (Acts 4:32).

Peter is telling the Jews that the powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit which they are witnessing is a statement by God that he has chosen to carry out his saving action through the man Jesus (Acts 2:22). Paul expresses the same truth when he writes: 'in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself' (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Let us recall the words of a Christian hymn, quoted by Paul in his letter to the Philippians (2:6-11):

“Christ Jesus, being in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus the Messiah is **Lord**, to the glory of God the Father.

Romans 1:1-5

‘Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus the Messiah, our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name.’

Acts 2:37-41

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what should we do?’ Peter said to them, ‘**Repent**, and be baptised every one of you in the **name** of Jesus the Messiah so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [see Luke 3:16] For the **promise** is for you, for your children, and for **all** who are far away [Isaiah 57:19], **everyone** whom the Lord our God calls to him.’

And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’

So those who welcomed his message were baptised, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

120 (Acts 1:15) ; 3,000 (Acts 2:41) ; 5,000 adult males (Acts 4:4)

‘myriads’ (Acts 21:20).