

6. The Book of Acts 2:22-37

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(5-27-26)

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We have entered into Acts 2 which is divided into 3 main sections—

- 1) **The outpouring of the Holy Spirit**—verses 1-13
- 2) **Peter's first sermon as a Spirit-filled believer**—verses 14-41
- 3) **The practice of the early Church**—verses 42-47

We have already looked at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which was accompanied by tongues of fire and the disciples speaking in tongues.

This led to the question asked by the multitude—*“Whatever could this mean?” (verse 12)*

That led Peter to respond by saying—*“...this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel...” (verse 15)* as Peter goes on to give the Scriptural foundation for this spiritual phenomenon.

Now as we have already seen, Peter quotes from the prophet Joel in verses 19-21—ending with the words, *“That whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

Now, many Christians upon reading that final statement would probably think to themselves that that was a good place for Peter to stop.

I mean, he gives the quotation from Joel which talks about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; miraculous dreams, visions, and prophecy; signs and wonders regarding the day of the Lord; and an invitation to call on the name of the Lord for salvation—what more needs to be said!?

What more needs to be said?? How about Jesus Himself and His saving work on our behalf?!

Everything up to this point in Peter's message has been the introduction (Peter's just warming up, a man after my own heart!).

Now he gets into his sermon—a sermon that contains 6 main points:

- I. **Jesus' Life—v.22**
- II. **Jesus' Death—v.23**
- III. **Jesus' Resurrection—v.24-32**
- IV. **Jesus' Ascension and Exaltation—v.33-35**
- V. **The Application—v.36**
- VI. **The Invitation and Response—v.37-41**

Peter's first main point:

I. Jesus' Life—verse 22

Acts 2:22 (NKJV)

²² **“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—**

Peter starts off with **“hear these words”**—which is to repeat what he said earlier in verse 14: **“let this be known to you, and heed my words”**

Peter wanted people to pay attention because what he had to say was very important—a Christ-centered sermon on the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ!

The Greek word translated **“attested”** means *“to point out, to show forth”*—How? Through miracles, wonders and signs. The miracles, wonders and signs performed by Jesus were God's way of proving that He (Jesus Christ) was His Son and their Messiah.

- **Miracles**—mighty, powerful, supernatural deeds.
- **Wonders**—what is generated by the miracle in the mind of the person or persons who witnessed it—the effect the miracle has on the person, the wonder it creates in their mind.
- **Signs**—the purpose of a sign is to tell you something or to point you to something.

Jesus did supernatural deeds to get people's attention by creating wonder in their minds to act as a sign to point them to His divinity and Messiahship.

John 10:37–38 (NKJV)

³⁷ If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; ³⁸ but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father *is* in Me, and I in Him.”

John 14:10–11 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. ¹¹ Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. [The works Messiah was prophesied to do in the OT]

II. Jesus' Death—verse 23

Acts 2:23 (NKJV)

²³ **Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;**

Peter points out that the crucifixion of Jesus was not an accident, it wasn't the result of a mob scene that thwarted the plan of God—*it was the plan of God all along!*

This is something that is easily proved from the Scriptures → Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Daniel 9:26—and not the least of which: Jesus was a Lamb slain *“from the foundation of the earth.”* (Revelation 13:8)

In verse 23, we see the tension between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man when Peter said, **“You crucified Him—but it was by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God.”**

- *“Wait a minute,”* you might be thinking, **“If it was by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God”—then it was God’s will that it happened. How then could the Jews be held accountable for the death of Jesus?”**

Let me say again that the free will of man and the sovereignty of God are both truths that are taught in the Bible.

This has been a running debate, not just since the beginning of the Church Age but all the way back to the Garden of Eden!—How do we reconcile the two? You don’t reconcile them—the Bible teaches both and so must we as pastors and teachers of the Word of God.

In the mind of God, it make perfect sense and someday it will to us also but until then—let’s leave it at that—

J. B. Phillips: *‘If God was small enough for us to figure out, He wouldn’t be big enough for us to worship.’”*

Peter did not mince his words, nor did he apologize for the apparent and seeming contradiction of his statement—

“You crucified your Messiah even though it was in the sovereign plan of God all along—you are still guilty before God!”

Peter’s first concern was not to please or placate his audience—it was to declare the truth of God—regardless of how they took it.

III. Jesus’ Resurrection—verses 24-32

Acts 2:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ **whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.**

The resurrection is the central message of Peter’s sermon (and the central message of all apostolic preaching in the Book of Acts) taking up nine verses.

The word translated **“pains”** means *“birth pangs”*—suggesting that the tomb was a *“womb”* out of which Jesus was “born” in Resurrection glory—

Acts 13:33 (NKJV)

³³ God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: *‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’*

“...because it was not possible that He should be held by it.”

One author—

“It was not possible that the chosen one of God should remain in the grip of death; ‘the abyss can no more hold the Redeemer than a pregnant woman can hold the child in her body.’”

Acts 2:25–28 (NKJV)

²⁵ For David says concerning Him: *'I foresaw the Lord always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.* ²⁶ *Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope.* ²⁷ *For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.* ²⁸ *You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.'*

Peter here is quoting Psalm 16:8-11 which is a Messianic prophecy of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and glorification.

Jesus probably taught Peter and the other disciples this Himself when He instructed the disciples in the Scriptures—as He did the two disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:44-45:

Luke 24:44–45 (NKJV)

⁴⁴ Then He said to them, "These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me." ⁴⁵ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

Peter starts, not with the resurrection or even the incarnation—but with the *pre-incarnation* of Jesus in eternity past to demonstrate the eternality of Christ and His divinity—

Acts 2:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ For David says concerning Him: *'I foresaw the Lord always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.*

John 1:1 (NKJV)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God ['eye to eye', 'face to face'], and the Word was God.

In Psalm 16:8, David spoke of Christ as being at God's right hand—which Peter said affirms Jesus' presence in heaven before He was ever born on earth!

Acts 2:25–26 (NKJV)

²⁵ For David says concerning Him: *'I foresaw the Lord always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.* ²⁶ *Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope.*

In other words, Jesus (speaking through David) is saying that the Father sent His Son to the earth to die and be laid in the tomb for three days before the Father promised to raise Him from the dead.

Therefore, Jesus said, "**My flesh will rest in hope**"—the hope that the Father would not leave His soul in the grave—

Acts 2:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ *For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.*

In other words, before Jesus' earthly body would begin to experience decay, the Father promised to raise Him from the dead.

Acts 2:28 (NKJV)

²⁸ *You have made known to me the ways of life* [resurrection from the dead]; *You will make me full of joy in Your presence.* [Jesus' future glorification when He ascended back to His Father in heaven]'

Acts 2:29–32 (NKJV)

²⁹ "Men *and* brethren, let *me* speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, ³¹ he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.

Peter is proving the resurrection of Jesus from the dead using 4 different 'witnesses':

Witness #1—Jesus Himself**John 2:18–22 (NKJV)**

¹⁸ So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But He was speaking of the temple of His body. ²² Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

Matthew 12:39–40 (NKJV)

³⁹ But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Witness #2—the Scriptures (Psalm 16:8-11; Psalm 110:1 and other places)

Jesus' resurrection was prophesied about in the OT.

Witness #3—the eyewitness testimony of His disciples (verse 32)**Witness #4—the presence of the Holy Spirit (verse 33)**

Wiersbe—

"If the Holy Spirit is in the world, then God must have sent Him. Joel promised that one day the Spirit would come, and Jesus Himself had promised to send the gift of the Holy Spirit to His people (Luke 24:49; John 14:26; 15:26; Acts 1:4). But if Jesus is dead, He cannot send the Spirit; therefore, He must be alive. Furthermore, He could not send the Spirit unless He had returned to heaven to the Father (John 16:7); so, Jesus has ascended to heaven!"

IV. Jesus' Ascension and Exaltation—verse 33-35**Acts 2:33–35 (NKJV)**

³³ Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. ³⁴ "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: *'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, ³⁵ Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'*" [Quoting Psalm 110:1—another Messianic psalm]

(Note carefully that verses 33–35 predict a waiting period between the glorification of Christ and His return to punish His enemies and set up His kingdom—Revelation 19)—we call it the Church Age.

Before we move on to Peter’s application in verse 36—let’s revisit verse 27 quickly:

Acts 2:27 (NKJV)

27 For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

After Jesus died on the cross, before He rose and ascended into heaven, He first descended to the lower parts of the earth, into Hades, or *“the place of the dead.”* In other words, during the three days His physical body lay in the tomb, before He resurrected and ascended to heaven, Jesus descended into Hades (not to be confused with Hell)

Sometimes people will ask me, *“What happened to the believers who died in the Old Testament before Jesus came?”*

Well, according to what Jesus said in Luke 16 they went to Hades (Sheol in the Old Testament) a temporary place of incarceration in the center of the earth.

The Lord tells us that it is divided into 2 compartments separated by a giant gulf (great canyon). One part is called, *“Abraham’s bosom”*, a paradise where the Old Testament believers went after they died (Moses, Abraham, Daniel etc.).

Unable to go directly to heaven because Jesus had not yet died for their sins, they went to the “good” side of Hades where they were comforted but were still ‘prisoners’ of death since Jesus had not yet been raised thus conquering death.

So, after Jesus died, He went to Abraham’s bosom and led the Old Testament believers out of their captivity and into heaven, where they are today.

Ephesians 4:8-10 (NKJV)

8 Therefore He says: *“When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.”*⁹ (Now this, *“He ascended”*--what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

“And so, He led the captives from their captivity,” and emptied that section of Hades of the souls of the Old Testament saints (their bodies won’t be resurrected till Jesus returns at His Second Coming—Daniel 12)

Now according to 2 Corinthians 5:8 when believers die today—absent from the body, we go immediately into the presence of the Lord. But the torment side of Hades is where the unrighteous dead still go until the final judgment.

Now before He led the Old Testament saints to heaven when He ascended—Peter tells us He did something else:

1 Peter 3:18–20 (NKJV)

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, ¹⁹ by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

These words by Peter have generated a good deal of controversy as to exactly what he is saying here. Some contend that what Peter is saying is that Jesus, after He died on the cross, went into hell and preached the gospel to those people who died in the Flood giving them a second chance to be saved.

There are numerous and glaring problems with that interpretation—not the least of which is that when Peter wrote this (as it is to this day)—no one is in hell (lake of fire) yet.

At this present time all unbelievers when they die are sent to Hades—a temporary place of incarceration in the center of the earth where they are held until they stand before Christ at His Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15).

So, for those who believe that this verse is teaching that Jesus, after He died on the cross, went into Hades and preached the gospel to those people who died in the Flood giving them a second chance to be saved—that interpretation has no merit in Scripture.

Nowhere in Scripture do we read anywhere that God has ever given someone a second chance to be saved after they have died— *“Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment”* (Hebrews 9:27) Besides, the word translated **“preached”** in verse 19 is *kērussō* in the Greek and means to *“declare”* or *“herald”* an important announcement.

One author—

“In the ancient world, heralds would come to town as representatives of the rulers to make public announcements or precede generals and kings in the processions celebrating military triumphs, announcing victories won in battle.”

If Peter was talking about Jesus preaching the gospel he would have used the Greek verb *euangelizō* (“to evangelize”).

Besides that, the word **“spirits”**—*“He went and preached to the spirits in prison...”* is a word in the New Testament that is never used of people (“except when qualified by a genitive (e.g., Hebrews 12:23; ‘the spirits of the righteous’”).

If Peter was talking about people who had died that Jesus preached to—he would have used the word *psuchai* (“souls”) instead of *pneumasin* (“spirits”)

So, what exactly is Peter talking about here? I believe Peter is referring to spirits (fallen angels) who did something so horrendous during the time of Noah—that God chained them in Hades (“prison”-verse 19) until the day of judgment.

That when Jesus died, He went into Hades (heart of the earth) and declared His victory to these wicked creatures—implying a battle He had won over some nefarious plan they tried to implement, under the leadership of Satan—but a plan that God thwarted.

To understand what I’m talking about turn to Genesis 6—

Genesis 6:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, ² that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they *were* beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.

That phrase ‘sons of God’ only appears in three other places in the Old Testament— in Job 1:6; 2:1; and 38:7.

In each of these passages the phrase ‘sons of God’ is a clear reference to angels—so much so that the NIV simply drops the ‘sons of God’ phrase in favor of the word ‘angels’—*“One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them”* (Job 1:6- NIV)

I believe what’s in view here in Genesis 6 is that fallen angels came down to earth and cohabitated with human woman (“daughters of men”) in an effort to contaminate the human race with demon seed so Messiah couldn’t be born.

(For further explanation see our study in Genesis 6; 1 Peter 3; or Jude)

V. The Application—verse 36

Acts 2:36 (NKJV)

³⁶ “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Here Peter sums up his message with a painful application—*“Israel you are guilty of killing your own Messiah, the One God prophesied He would send to you!”*

Apparently, Peter hadn’t read the book, *“How to Win Friends and Influence People.”* His message wasn’t positive and uplifting, it wasn’t designed to build up their self-esteem or make them feel warm and fuzzy.

His message was honest, biblical and confrontational—it was the *‘Sword of the Spirit’* and it cut deep into their hearts—

Acts 2:37 (NKJV)

³⁷ Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

This response is every preacher’s dream—it is the result of Spirit-filled preaching! However, this is not *always* the response to Spirit-Filled preaching—Acts 7:54, 59.

I’d like to leave the invitation of Peter’s sermon for next time since there is much we can learn from it.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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