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Acts 2:22–36

Introduction

In the “evangelical” world, we tend to put our focus on Jesus’ crucifixion. We often think of “the gospel” along the lines of “Jesus *died* for your sins.” One reason for this is because the atonement was a matter of controversy in the last century. Liberal scholars would argue that the idea of Jesus being punished in our place was a “barbaric” doctrine. Good pastors and theologians responded and the doctrine of the atonement was defended quite well.

However, one of the results of this able defense is the fact that in conservative circles, the doctrine of the Death of Christ, began to carry all the weight of the “good news” of the “gospel”. Again, the gospel is paired down to “Jesus died on the cross for your sins.”

Throughout the Book of Acts and in the letters of the New Testament, the apostle’s proclamation of the gospel is much broader than, “Jesus died for your sins.” Of course it included this message but their message said much more as well.

The “good news” of the gospel is essentially the whole story of Jesus and how, as the last verse in our passage states, God has made Him both Lord and Christ. This story includes His incarnation, His earthly ministry, His death, His Resurrection, His Ascension, His pouring out of the Spirit on Pentecost, His session at the right hand of the Father, and His future second coming.

In Acts chapter 2, Peter is explaining the miraculous events of Pentecost. Jesus has poured out the Holy Spirit on the church and people are hearing the “mighty deeds of God in their own tongues.”

As Peter preaches, he proclaims the gospel, and he does so by focusing *both* on Jesus’ death *and* His resurrection.

It's been put before that there is nothing exceptional about a man being crucified by Roman authorities. What is exceptional about Jesus is that He rose from the grave.

In our passage, we see Peter say three things about Jesus:

1. Jesus was attested by God (vv. 22-23)
2. Jesus was raised by God (vv. 24-31)
3. Jesus was exalted by God (vv. 32-36)

Attested by God (vv. 22-23)

Peter continues his speech by explaining that ***Jesus was attested to them by God through all the miracles, wonders, and signs which Jesus did in their midst.***

One of the curious things about this is that there is never any pushback about whether Jesus performed the miracles and wonders that he performed. Peter concludes his opening statement with the words, "***just as you yourselves know***". In other words, the fact that Jesus was a worker of miracles was not really up for debate. His miracles had been widely attested to and many could bear witness to them

Whether you are aware of it or not, the fact that we live in the 21st century tends to have a pretty large impact on how we read the Bible. For example, we often read through the gospels and point to Jesus' miracles as "proofs" for His divinity. But this is actually not what those miracles are all about.

The presence of miracles during the ministry of these men testified to the fact that they were legitimate prophets of God and that their words should be obeyed. Jesus is put forth as God-incarnate in the gospels, but it is not His miracles that make this argument.

Here, Peter doing is laying the groundwork for what he is going to say next in his speech. He is reminding his audience that God has attested to the ministry of Jesus through His signs and wonders and therefore you should have listened to Him.

But Peter explains that they did not listen to Him, but rather they **nailed him to a cross by the hands of lawless men and put Him to death**. And it is at this point that Peter begins to transition to his argument that Jesus is more than just a prophet.

Peter states that Jesus was put to death because He was **delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God**.

The crucifixion of Jesus was not a sign that the plan of God had gone wrong, but rather than God's plan had been carried out just as it was meant to. This is the crux of the argument. Peter is calling these men of Israel to reinterpret their scriptures with this new information. Once they do this, they will see that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are not anomalous events with Israel's story, but rather, it's fitting climax!

Peter is setting the scene. The speaking in tongues from the previous verses is a sign that the last days have arrived. And Peter is now beginning to explain that the "last days" have arrived because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Having set the scene, Peter is now going to make his argument for why all who hear him should bow the knee to Jesus Christ.

Raised by God (vv. 24-31)

The focus shifts in verse 24. This Jesus who was attested to by God with great signs and wonders, **God raised Him up again**. And the result of this act is that Jesus has **put an end to the agony of death because it was impossible for Him to be held in death's power**.

Peter is trying to make it clear that the events that have happened in Jesus' death and Resurrection and now in the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost are epoch-changing events. The "agony of death" was introduced as a result of Adam's Fall. But now, as the second Adam both fell and rose again, He has put an end to death's agony!

And the way that Peter is going to drive this point home to the "**men of Israel**" is by showing them that David himself foretold of all these events.

In verses 25-28 Peter quotes from [Psalm 16:8-11](#)

Acts 2:25–28 LSB

“For David says of Him, ‘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.’

The Psalms are ultimately written by Jesus and are all about Jesus. Augustine writes of [Psalm 16](#),

Our King in this Psalm speaks in the character of the human nature He assumed, of whom the royal title at the time of His passion was eminently set forth.

When David penned [Psalm 16](#) he wrote about things beyond the scope of his own life. When we read [Psalm 16](#) we must hear Jesus’ own words as He approaches the cross.

Perhaps in Gethsemane Jesus prayed [Psalm 16](#), “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.” and was able to say, “not My will but Yours be done.”

In verse 29, Peter explains that these words cannot ultimately be about David. “***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.***”

So how was David able to say these words? Peter explains that, ***David was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him that David would not lack an offspring to sit on his throne.***

David knew that even though he would die and his body would be laid in a tomb, God had made him a promise that he would have an offspring that would sit on his throne and that the throne of His kingdom God would establish forever.

This is all alluding to the covenant that God entered into with David in [2 Sam 7:12](#). But Peter is telling us more. He is telling us what David ultimately believed when he trusted God's promises.

When David considered his own mortality, the only way God could keep His promise to David would be through Resurrection. Hear verse 31, "**David looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither forsaken to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.**" David is like Abraham who was able to obey God when he was told to sacrifice Isaac. [Hebrews 11](#) tells us that Abraham believed that God could raise Isaac from the dead.

Peter explains that the Resurrection of Jesus is indeed part of God's plan. David spoke of it and believed it when he wrote [Psalm 16](#) and when God made covenantal promises to him in [2 Samuel 7](#).

Exalted by God (vv. 32-36)

As we come to vv. 32-36 we come to the "so what" section of our passage.

In verse 32 Peter again makes the claim that **all** [these men of Israel] **are witnesses** to the event surrounding Jesus' life, death, and *especially* His Resurrection.

In verse 33, Peter declares the consequences of all this. Because of His resurrection, **Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of God and has poured out the Holy Spirit resulting in the miraculous events of the day of Pentecost.**

Peter makes a final appeal to David by quoting from [Psalm 110:1](#),

Acts 2:34-35 LSB

"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 PUT YOUR ENEMIES AS A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.'"

Just as David's body saw corruption and entered into death. So too David *not* ascend into heaven. Again, Peter states that these Psalms are really about Jesus *and* David knew that they were about the future messiah.

So what is the consequence of these truths? In verse 36 Peter says, “**Therefore let all the Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.**”

By declaring that Jesus is both “Lord and Christ” Peter makes a claim that Jesus is both God and the promised messiah. The word for “Lord” is the Greek word used in the septuagint version of [Psalm 110](#) that Peter just quoted: “The Lord said to my Lord.”

Because of His Resurrection, all that Jesus did and said of Himself in His earthly ministry is verified. And now he is exalted above all rule and authority.

Conclusion

I want to conclude by considering Peter’s final words in our passage, “**whom you crucified**”.

It can be easy to skip over this detail due to our familiarity with the story of the Jesus’ death and Resurrection. However, the concept that a crucified man would be exalted by God as both Lord and Christ is unheard of.

In [1 Corinthians 1:22-24](#) Paul states,

1 Corinthians 1:22–24 LSB

For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

In [Gal 3](#) Paul references [Dt 21:23](#) which states that anyone who hangs upon a tree as a punishment is cursed.

The reason that a crucified Lord is a stumbling block to the Jews is because they would have seen a person as cursed by God. But what the gospels teach us is that Jesus came to be a curse for His people.

Galatians 3:13 LSB

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE”—

Thanks be to God that the Crucified One is both Lord and Christ!

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.