

Sermon outline and notes © Dr. Stephen Felker, Pastor  
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Acts 2:14-36 (read vv.14-24) “Are the Rumors True about Jesus?”

Intro. About 7 weeks after Jesus died on the cross, suddenly the apostles of Jesus and others were publicly proclaiming that Jesus had risen from the dead. Yet, until the day of Pentecost, they remained out of the public eye. No doubt rumors were spreading that Jesus had risen. Others were denying that report, saying that the disciples came and stole the body of Jesus. And no doubt many of the people of Jerusalem, Judea and Galilee were wondering, “Are the rumors true about Jesus?”

Have you ever thought about why there a seven week delay before the disciples publicly preached that Jesus had risen from the dead? You would think that they would begin preaching such good news almost immediately. I think there are several reasons for the delay: 1) It took a couple of weeks for all of the disciples to be fully convinced that Jesus had really risen from the dead. 2) Jesus needed to give them several weeks of further instruction before they should begin preaching. 3) They were instructed to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. They needed the power of the Holy Spirit to effectively and convincingly preach the truth of the resurrection. So they had to wait on God. 4) The first preaching of the risen Christ should be at a time when it would have the most impact and success. Following Passover, the next great festival was Pentecost. On the day people from all over the world would be present in Jerusalem to hear the preaching of the gospel (vv.8-11). So Pentecost was the best time following the death of Christ to begin preaching the good news.

So let’s look together today at the first sermon the apostle Peter preached, as leader of the new-born Christian church. It was a great sermon. 3,000 were saved when he preached that message. I hope to preach the same truths that Peter preached in his first sermon. We will follow him as he answers the question in v.12, “Whatever could this mean?” They were talking about the manifestations of the Spirit. He also answered the question that many people were asking, “Are the rumors true about Jesus?”

Let’s see first of all:

## I. THE INTRODUCTION OF PETER’S SERMON

Like any good preacher or public speaker, Peter has an introduction. One feature of a good introduction is that it grabs people’s attention. Peter did that. Notice in v.14 he “raised his voice” and then called upon the crowd to “heed my words.” Recently Chris Lee pointed out how Joshua addressed Israel as he was about to speak to them. He said, “Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God” (Joshua 3:9, KJV). That’s a good way to begin the sermon. He says, “Draw near” or “Come closer” and hear God’s Word! Then Peter addresses the pressing issue in the minds of his audience. The manifestations of the Spirit’s coming had grabbed everyone’s attention. They wanted to know what it all meant. So as Peter began his message:

A. He Refutes the Charge of Drunkenness - When some had asked, “Whatever could this mean?” there were others standing around who were quick to give *their* explanation for the disciples’ strange speaking. In a jesting spirit, they said in v.13, “They are full of new wine [*gleukos*].” But he did not let the ridicule of the skeptics disturb him. He said in v.15, “For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.” That was 9:00 in the morning,

for the Jews counted time from sunrise and sunset. No decent Jew would drink wine before that time, especially on a holy day such as Pentecost.

There will always be critics and skeptic when God is at work in the lives of people. Peter warned in 2 Peter 3:3 “that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts.” Don’t pay attention to them. You should be able to refute them as easily as Peter did here.

Next Peter gave:

B. The True Explanation for Their Behavior - These men were full of something, but not of wine. They had been filled with the Holy Spirit, just as Scripture had predicted! Like any good preacher, he began with a text, which in this case demonstrated that the filling of the Spirit was a fulfillment of prophecy. He said in v.16, “But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.” Then he goes on to quote that Scripture from the Old Testament book of Joel. They should have recognized this fulfillment themselves. In that prophecy Joel predicted 3 things that would happen in the days of the Messiah:

1. The Holy Spirit Will be Given to *All* Believers – In vv.17-18 we read, “And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.” The Holy Spirit had been given only to certain individuals in Old Testament times, especially prophets, but also on certain kings and priests. But what is distinctive about this prophecy is that all, without regard to age, sex, or economic status, will receive the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit filled 120 Jews on the day of Pentecost, it was the beginning of the fulfillment, for that filling was not limited to the 12 apostles. Instead, both men and women, young and old, were filled with the Spirit. From that day forward all true believers in Jesus the Messiah will be indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9).

Are you indwelt by the Holy Spirit? Does your life bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) as evidence of His presence and filling? The gift of the Spirit is one of the great blessings of becoming a Christian.

2. There Will Be Signs in Heaven and Earth – We read of this in vv. 19-20, “I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood....” The prophecy also indicates that God would work in some amazing ways. Just as certainly as part 1 of the prophecy was only partially fulfilled, so part 2 about the heavenly signs were only partially fulfilled when the sky became dark for 3 hours during the final hours of the crucifixion of Jesus. That was not your typical eclipse, which only lasts a few minutes. The final and complete fulfillment of vv.19-20 will take place on “that great and notable day”, i.e. the end time when Jesus comes again to rule and reign on earth.

3. Salvation Will Be Offered to All – In v.21 we read, “And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” Seeing the signs and fulfillment of prophecy should cause people to turn to the Lord and be saved (cf. 1 Cor. 14:22). And the good news is that salvation is offered simply for the asking. It is the gift of God (Rom. 6:23). Furthermore, isn’t it great that the prophecy states, “Whosoever....” It doesn’t matter who you are or what you have done, you can be saved in this age of God’s grace.

Have you called on the name of the Lord, asking Him to save you from your sins? If not, believe this promise, and be saved today!

So Peter has introduced his message. He has people’s attention. Next we see:

## II. THE FOCUS OF PETER'S SERMON

In light of what just happened and the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, we might expect Peter to preach a sermon about the Holy Spirit. Yet notice in v.22 that Peter began immediately to preach about Jesus! He said, "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth..." As marvelous as the coming of the Holy Spirit was, Peter did not focus attention upon the Spirit, but upon Jesus! That ought to tell us something about ministry today. Jesus should be the primary focus of our preaching, teaching, and witnessing.

Peter set out to show who Jesus of Nazareth really is. He presents 3 truths about Jesus. First:

A. The Earthly Life of Jesus Affirmed Him as Savior – In v.22 we read that Jesus was, "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." The Gk. word translated "attested" (*apodeiknumi*) means "to prove by arguments or by evidence" (see use in 25:7). One of the Jewish leaders, Nicodemus, acknowledged to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him" (John 3:2). How could they deny that Jesus was "approved of God"? No other man raised the dead like Jesus did. No other man healed as Jesus did. No other man had power over nature like Jesus did. How can you explain the miracles that Jesus did except that God empowered Him? And there was no denying the miracles of Jesus. There were many eyewitnesses, even among His enemies (John 11:47). That's why Peter says in the last of v.22, "as you yourselves also know." In fact, there were tens of thousands of people who witnessed the miracles of Jesus, including most in Peter's audience.

What about you today? Do you deny that Jesus performed many miracles, or do you believe?<sup>1</sup>

B. The Death of Jesus Proved Him to be the Savior – In v.23 Peter said, "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death." Notice how carefully he speaks of the death of Jesus. To many in his audience, the crucifixion of Jesus was a major barrier hindering belief in Him as the Messiah. That is true to some degree today, especially among Muslims, liberals, and others. Yet Peter says that the crucifixion of Jesus was actually part of God's plan. It was not a failure of the plan of God but it was an essential aspect of God's eternal plan for human redemption. Thus we see that Jesus did not die because God had rejected Him, as the enemies of Jesus claimed. Furthermore, Jesus was not delivered over because of personal weakness. Jesus Himself said that He could have called 12 legions of angels to fight on His behalf. But Jesus died on the cross because it was the eternal plan of God. The Bible describes Jesus as "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). The fact that Jesus was called a "lamb" implies the sacrificial nature of His death. The Old Testament predicted His sacrificial death a number of times, through various means. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 are especially noteworthy. The sacrificial system pointed to the sacrificial death of Christ.

Now Peter does not at this point explain why God planned the death of Jesus. But elsewhere he explains why Jesus died. His death was necessary for our salvation, for the Bible

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<sup>1</sup> By the way, notice Peter's method here. He does not begin with the Deity of Christ. He will get to that soon; but, like a wise speaker, he commences with points upon which they were all agreed, or which they could not deny. They knew that God had attested His mission with miracles, wonders, and signs; so Peter appealed to them for confirmation, "As ye yourselves also know." The enemies of Christ had often admitted the fact of the miracles Jesus performed. They just did not want to attribute the miracles to God.

says, “The soul that sins shall die.” 1 Pet. 3:18 says, “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God....”

There is a story about two young brothers and their dad. The family had a traffic accident in which the younger brother Mike needed a blood transfusion. Mike’s big brother, who was only eight years old, had the same blood type as his younger brother. The dad sat down and carefully tried to explain to the brother how this blood transfusion was needed and how wonderful it would be for his little brother. After some silence he responded by saying, “Yes, Daddy, I’ll give my blood to Mike so he will get well.”

The boy watched as they stuck the needle and began drawing blood. After giving a pint of blood and much to the shock of his father, the boy said with tears in his eyes, “When did I die Daddy?” In amazement, the father realized that in his feeble attempt to explain the giving of blood his son had misunderstood. The older brother thought he would die as soon as the transfusion was over. He thought he had given all of his blood! What brotherly love. This young man was willing to lay down his life for his younger brother. Even so Jesus was willing to literally die in our place, giving His life’s blood. [Woodrow Gleeson].

C. The Resurrection Proves He Is the Savior – This is really Peter’s main argument. He says in v.24, “whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death....” Now Peter spends the rest of his message preaching about the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection was the greatest miracle of all, so he supports the fact of the resurrection of Jesus with 5 very convincing arguments:

1. His Life Demanded It – Peter says in v.24 that God “loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.” It was impossible that death would be able to maintain its grip upon Jesus. Why is that? He could not remain dead because of the kind of life He had lived. He was sinless. Jesus never had an evil thought. He never spoke an evil word. He never committed a deed of sin. As Peter later said, He was “without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:19). So it was only right that the sentence which Jesus’ human judges passed upon Him was reversed by a higher court. The court of man said, “He shall die.” But a higher court reversed the sentence of saying, “He shall live!” There is an interesting contrast here. The word “crucified” in v.23 is found only here in the Greek New Testament. It literally means “fastened.” They fastened Him to a cross, but God loosed Him from the grip of death! How could “the Prince of life” (Acts 3:15) remain dead?

2. Prophecy Predicted It – In v.27 we read the following prophecy from Psalm 16, “For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” Furthermore, the context of this prophecy asserts that the Messiah, whoever He is, would rise from the dead, and sit on the throne of David forever. This prophecy was not true of David, as Peter points out in v.29. David’s soul was left in Hades, and his body did see corruption. Yet as we see in v.30, according to prophecy God would raise up the Messiah to sit on the throne of David. Then in v.31 Peter clearly explains the prophecy. He says, “he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ [Messiah], that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.” The Jews did not want to believe that their Messiah would ever die. But these prophecies clearly imply that the Messiah would die, *but* that He would rise again, never to die again. That is how the promise of God would be fulfilled, that a son of David would sit on the throne forever.

3. The Apostles Were Witnesses – Peter says in v.32, “This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.” When Peter said, “of which we all are witnesses,” he probably pointed especially to the eleven apostles around him. There they stood, assenting to the bold declaration of their leader. The Old Testament said that the testimony of 2 or 3 was sufficient to confirm the truth of something; here, at total of 120 Spirit-filled witnesses were confirming the

truth of the resurrection of Jesus. Paul adds that actually 500 saw Him alive and were willing to testify to that fact (I Cor. 15:6). So we know that He was raised from the dead because so many eye witnesses affirmed that it was so! Furthermore, there is a noble ring of certitude in Peter's affirmation. Considering his new-found boldness; would anything but the Resurrection and Holy Spirit account for the psychological transformation effected in him and the other apostles?

4. The Coming of the Spirit Is Proof that He Is Alive – In v.33 he said, “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.” Jesus promised before He died that He would ascend to heaven and then give the Holy Spirit to His followers (John 16:7). Now, the evidence of the Spirit's coming was clear to all. They heard them speaking in tongues, and perhaps could they still see the tongues of fire upon each head? They witnessed the transformation of the apostles from cowards to bold witnesses!

5. The Promise of the Ascension Required It – In vv.34-35 we read, “For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: ‘The LORD said to my Lord,<sup>2</sup> ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” That prophecy from Psalm 110 implies an ascension to the right hand of God. But David did not ascend. He died and remained death. But the apostles saw Jesus ascend to the heavens. They affirmed that He was seated at the right hand of God. Jesus was not merely resuscitated, like Lazarus who was doomed simply to die again. No, when Christ was raised from the dead, He was exalted to the right hand of God, never to taste death again. He is alive forevermore!

So with five convincing arguments Peter demonstrates that Jesus is alive from the grave. I can say without reservation that the resurrection of Jesus is one of the most irrefutable facts of history! Thus, our faith is not founded on subjective experiences; it is founded on the rock-solid facts of what Jesus has done on our behalf. So based on these arguments, we come now to ask:

### III. WHAT MUST WE CONCLUDE?

The facts, supported by the witness of the apostles, the testimony of prophecy, and the manifestations of the Spirit, point to one conclusion. In v.36 we read, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Peter began by calling Jesus a “man” in v.22 and concluded by calling Him Lord and Christ in v.36.

So what must we conclude about Jesus?

A. Jesus Is the Promised Messiah - His Messiahship was acclaimed at His baptism, and confirmed by His resurrection (Rom. 1:4). But what does it mean to us today that Jesus is the Messiah? One aspect of the work of the promised Messiah was to be a Savior. At His birth the angel said, “you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.” So as Messiah, He is Savior. And soon the apostles would be preaching that He is the Savior of the world, not just of the Jews.

Is He your Savior? He died to save you from the penalty of sin. He rose again to save you from the power of sin. And He's coming again to save you from the very presence of sin. What a Savior!

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<sup>2</sup> In v.34 the two words for “Lord” are different in the Hebrew, the first pointing to the Lord God, the second to God's anointed, the One who is called His Son in Psalm 2:7.

B. Jesus Is Lord – It was especially after the resurrection that Jesus was called “Lord”. In fact, the first apostolic creed was, “Jesus is Lord” (Rom. 10:9; I Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11). He is our King. We must obey Him and follow Him. What is also significant is that God is often addressed in the New Testament by the same term. When Thomas was convinced that Jesus was truly risen from the dead, he fell on his knees before Him and proclaimed, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28).

I wrote a little poem years ago that goes like this:

Jesus came from heaven long ago,  
To fight death, our mighty foe.  
He lived, and died on a cross,  
But arose victorious, so now He’s boss!

I believe that you need to acknowledge Jesus as Lord of your life when you accept Him as Savior. Rom. 10:9 says, “if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Furthermore, as we shall see next week, there is no salvation apart from repentance. Repentance and acknowledging the Lordship of Jesus go hand in hand. So who is ruling your life? Is self on the throne? Or does Jesus rule your life? Are you living in obedience to Him? Are you following Him? I do not believe that things will be right as long as anyone but Jesus is on the throne of your life.

Appeal: I want you to notice the words which precede the conclusion of Peter’s sermon, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know.” The house of Israel had rejected Christ and crucified Him. What a crime! How could God forgive them? Yet the love of God is so great that He sent Israel this special message of forgiveness. If God was willing to forgive the house of Israel for their great sin, then surely He is willing to forgive any sin you have committed.

Now let me ask you the question, “What have you done with Jesus?” Have you opened your heart to receive Him? Though you may have rejected Christ in the past, God still calls you to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Sources: F.F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954); H. Leo Eddleman, *An Exegetical and Practical Commentary on Acts* (Dallas: Books of Life Publishers, 1974); Ajith Fernando, *The NIV Application Commentary: Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998); Oliver B. Greene, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Vol. 1 (Greenville, SC: The Gospel Hour, Inc., 1968); Everett F. Harrison, *Acts: The Expanding Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975); H.A. Ironside, *Acts* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers 1943); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); Paul L. Maier, *First Christians: Pentecost and the Spread of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 5:30] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2017); Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon’s Expository Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), 220-221; Curtis Vaughan, *Acts: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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