



G R A C E

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

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THE BOOK OF ACTS

Sermon Notes

The Day of Pentecost, Part 3

The Sermon of Peter, Part II

Acts 2:22-36

February 25, 2007

I. The Obedient Life of Christ

II. The Fulfillment of Christ

III. The Exaltation of Christ

- As Peter begins this second part of his sermon, it is clear that his application of Joel 2:28-32 prepares the hearers for the remainder of the sermon.

- This sermon by Peter represents what many scholars consider to be the early form of apostolic preaching, known as the *kerygma* [a Greek word meaning ‘to proclaim or herald’]. Typically, the *kerygma* included four primary parts:
 - 1.) The announcement that the age of fulfillment had arrived;
 - 2.) An account of the ministry, death, and triumph of Jesus Christ
 - 3.) Citation[s] of Old Testament Scriptures whose fulfillment in these events proves Jesus to be the One to whom they pointed forward;
 - 4.) A call to Repentance.

F.F. Bruce

I. The Obedient Life of Christ

- In this first portion of Peter’s address, he gives a summary of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, establishing His righteousness and the world’s guilt [both Jews and Gentiles (Romans)] for putting Him to death.

- ❑ Peter begins this section of his sermon by referring to Jesus as ‘the Nazarene’
- ❑ This is simply a way of referring to Jesus with respect to his hometown, a common form of address in the first century. In fact, it is quite common in the Book of Acts to refer to Christ as ‘the Nazarene’ (Acts 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 22:8; 26:9; Luke 18:37).
- ❑ Yet, Jesus’ title as ‘the Nazarene’ also has great significance with respect to the Old Testament prophecies.

Isaiah 11:1 states, ‘Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a **branch** from his roots will bear fruit.’

- ❑ The Hebrew word for ‘branch’, here in Isaiah 11:1 [as well as in 14:19 and 60:21] is **Netser**, meaning ‘sprout, shoot, or branch.’
- ❑ In other words, Jesus **is** the branch, the Netser, which arises out of the desolation of the earth caused by man’s sin.
- ❑ This is why, in Matthew 2:23, it states, ‘and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: ‘He shall be called a Nazarene.’
- ❑ Not only is Jesus the ‘branch’ He is the ‘**branch of Jesse**’ [Isaiah 11:1]. In other words, He is **Davidic**.
- ❑ *Matthew Henry* writes:

‘That the Messiah should, in due time, arise out of the house of David, as that *branch* of the Lord which he had said (chapter 4:2) should be excellent and glorious; the word is *Netzer*, which some think is referred to in Matthew 2:23, where it is said to be spoken by the prophets of the Messiah that he *should be called a Nazarene*.

Observe: Whence this branch should arise-from *Jesse*. He should be the son of David, with whom the covenant of royalty was made, and to whom it was promised with an oath that *of the fruit of his loins God would raise of Christ*, Acts 2:30. David is often called *the son of Jesse*, and Christ is called so, because he was to be not only the Son of David, but David himself, Hos. 3:5. 2.

The meanness of his appearance. (1.) He is called a *rod*, and a *branch*; both the words here used signify a weak, small, tender product, a *twig* and a *sprig* (so some render them), such as is easily broken off. The enemies of God’s church were just before compared to strong and stately boughs (ch. 10:33), which will not, without great labour, be hewn down, but Christ to a tender branch (ch. 53:2); yet he shall be victorious over them. (2.) He is said to come out of Jesse rather than David, because Jesse lived and died in meanness and obscurity; his family was of small account (1 Sa. 18:18), and it was in a way of contempt and reproach that David was sometimes called the *son of Jesse*, 1 Sa. 22:7. (3.) **He comes forth out of the stem, or stump, of Jesse. When the royal family, that had been as a cedar, was cut down, and only the stump of it left, almost leveled with the ground and lost in the grass of the field (Dan. 4:15), yet it shall sprout again (Job 14:7); nay,**

it *shall grow out of his roots*, which are quite buried in the earth, and, like the roots of flowers in the winter, have no stem appearing above ground. The house of David was reduced and brought very low at the time of Christ's birth, witness the obscurity and poverty of Joseph and Mary. The Messiah was thus to begin his estate of humiliation, for submitting to which he should be highly exalted, and would thus give early notice that his kingdom was not of this world.

Isaiah 11:2 states, with regard to the 'branch', that is Christ:

'The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and strength,
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.'

- In other words, it is the Holy Spirit that enables Christ to fulfill His mission as the Messiah sent by the Father.

Matthew Henry continues: 'That he should be every way qualified for that great work to which he was designed, that this tender branch should be so watered with the dews of heaven as to become a strong rod for a sceptre to rule, v. 2. 1. In general, *the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him*. The Holy Spirit, in all his gifts and graces, shall not only come, but rest and abide upon him; he shall have the Spirit not by measure, but without measure, the fullness of the Godhead dwelling in him, Col. 1:19; 2:9.'

- Therefore, it is significant, that Peter, in the first sermon after Pentecost, refers to Jesus as the **Nazarene** as he establishes the truth of Jesus' Messiahship before his Jewish audience.

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- Peter, then, states that the miracles and wonders and signs' which 'God performed through' Christ *in your midst* attested to the truth that Jesus was sent by God [the Father]
- The miracles and signs were not simply to cause the people to marvel, for they had no inherent value apart from the truth that they signs – pointing to something much deeper, much greater – a personal power behind the signs.
- For, it is the signs in the Gospel of John, that reveal something about the character and nature of Christ [that was previously hidden] – that He is indeed fully God – the eternal Son of God – one in essence with the Father – sent by the Father for the salvation of His people.
- Peter also says, with respect to the miracles, that Jesus performed these 'in your midst, just as you yourselves know...'
 - The Jews have no excuse for what they did, as Peter establishes, they are **guilty**.

- In the same manner, Paul establishes the universal guilt of the world in the first chapters of Romans. He further states that men are ‘without excuse’ because God’s ‘eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made.’
- Although the general revelation of God [creation] is **not** sufficient for salvation, it is sufficient to establish the guilt of mankind.
- Once Peter establishes that Christ was sent by God, as attested to by his miracles, he speaks of the deliverance of Christ over to the Jewish and Roman authorities.
 - However, Peter explicitly states that the plan to deliver Christ over to the lawless men was ‘predetermined’ by God, as well as within His ‘foreknowledge.’

‘Foreknowledge here is the Greek word *prognosis*, the noun corresponding to *proginosko*. Peter is saying that God delivered Jesus over to judicial execution. It was something God *determined* in His own *counsel* and *foreknowledge*. In such case foreknowledge is not mere previous information of what would happen but actual direction (if not implementation) of the future event. The certainty of the future event was decreed by God, and in this case not by any entirely *secret* counsel, for Psalm 22 and Isaiah 52:13-53:12 predicted the event and attending circumstances in detail. Further, knowledge in Scripture frequently has reference to the establishment of a relationship rather than information possessed, as in ‘Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived’ (Genesis 4:1 NKJV). Here ‘to know’ is to establish the most intimate of all human relationships. So when Peter used the word again (1 Peter 1:1, 2) he was thinking not that some certain people in time to come would be saved, but that they had always been ‘elect...according to the foreknowledge’, i.e. according to an eternally established relationship.’

Robert D. Culver

‘God not only foreknew that it would be, but determined that it should be, who does all things after the counsel of his own will; and this for the salvation of his people, and for the glorifying of his divine perfections: though this fixed resolution, settled purpose, and wise determination of God, did not in the least excuse the sin of Judas in betraying him, or of Pilate in condemning him, or of the Jews in crucifying him; nor did it at all infringe the liberty of their wills in acting, who did what they did, not by force, but voluntarily.’

John Gill [18th Century Theologian]

- Commenting on Acts 2:23, Wayne Grudem writes, ‘In one sentence he [Peter] links God’s plan and foreknowledge with the moral blame that attaches to the actions of ‘lawless men.’ They were not forced by God to act against their wills; rather, God brought about his plan through their willing choices, for which they were nevertheless responsible.’
- In other words, the Jews and ‘lawless men’ who put Christ to death **acted freely in accordance with their [sinful] nature**.
- In Peter’s condemnation of those who crucified Jesus, he states, ‘this Man, **you nailed** to a cross by the hands of **godless men...**’

- In this context, ‘godless men’ [or, in other translations ‘lawless men’] are those men outside the boundaries of the Mosaic law, in other words, Gentiles.
- Hence, what Peter is establishing is that not only were the **Jews** guilty, but also the **Gentiles**. In other words, the **whole world stands guilty**.
- Although the world is guilty for crucifying the Christ, as the Apostle Paul states, ‘[God Himself has] given Him [Christ] up for us all’ (Romans 8:32).
- It was God’s will, revealed through the Scriptures and the prophets, that the Christ would suffer and die and that God [all three Persons of the Godhead, in fact] would raise Him from the dead.

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- Then Peter uses two words, so often used throughout Scripture that underscore the sovereign power of God’s grace in the midst of man’s sinfulness: ‘**But God** raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held by its power.’
- As F.F. Bruce writes, ‘The sentence passed on Jesus by an earthly court and executed by Roman soldiers has been reversed, Peter asserts, by a higher court.’
- ‘The abyss can no more hold the Redeemer than a pregnant woman can hold the child in her body.’ G. Bertram
- In Ephesians 2, the Apostle Paul makes a similar statement with respect to our salvation by grace: ‘And you were dead in your trespasses and sins...**But God...even when we were dead in our transgressions made us alive together with Christ.**’ Ephesians 2:1, 4, 5
- Luke’s use of words in this passage is rather interesting. The phrase, ‘God *raised Him up again*, literally means, ‘[But God] **loosing him from the birth pangs of death.**’
- This is powerful, as it is through the power that raised Christ from the dead that we receive our new birth.
- ‘One could perhaps see some appropriateness in the metaphor [‘loosing him from the birth pangs of death’] since resurrection in a real sense is a new birth from [spiritual] death.’ John Polhill

II. The Fulfillment of Christ

- ❑ Now that Peter has established, based upon the life, ministry, and resurrection of Jesus, that He was in fact the Messiah, the Christ, he turns to the fulfillment of the Davidic passages of the Old Testament.
- ❑ Peter begins by quoting from **Psalm 16:8-11**.
- ❑ It is significant that Peter opens the passage with ‘For **David** says of Him...’
- ❑ In other words, Peter is ensuring that his audience understands that Jesus is the **Davidic Messiah**, the true King of Israel.
- ❑ Peter uses Psalm 16:8-11 to argue that David, ‘the patriarch’ [as the founder of the Davidic dynasty] could **not** have been referring to himself, for, **Verse 29**, Peter makes the obvious point that ‘David...both died and was buried...’
- ❑ In fact, as Peter points out, ‘his tomb is with us to this day...’
 - The tomb of David was in a well-known location south of the city of Jerusalem, near Siloam. The tomb is mentioned as well in Nehemiah 3:16.
 - Unlike David’s tomb, Christ’s, even as Peter spoke, was empty.
- ❑ David’s body was not rescued from the grave, his body did undergo decay. However, Jesus’ body was raised by God from the dead. Therefore, Christ, is the fulfillment of this passage and is, thus, the long-awaited Davidic Messiah.
- ❑ It is interesting that in the body of Jewish rabbinical literature, the *midrash*, the commentary on Psalm 16:9 states, ‘my glory rejoices over the Lord Messiah, who will rise from me [David].’
- ❑ Jesus, as the Nazarene, that is, the ‘branch of Jesse’ has come and is exalted, fulfilling the Davidic promises of the Old Testament.
- ❑ What is also powerful, is that the Psalm states, ‘You have made known to me the ways of life.’ This, too, [although not explicitly mentioned by Peter] is fulfilled in Christ, as He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life’ (John 14:6).

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- ❑ Peter, then, looks to **Psalm 132:11** and **2 Samuel 7:12-13**. It was in these passages that the Prophet Nathan prophesied that God would establish an everlasting Davidic kingdom with one of David’s descendants. By the first century, this passage was understood as a reference to the Messiah.

- ❑ Notice in **Verse 31**, how Peter is stating that David **‘looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of Christ’**. [NOTE: David, like all believers today, was saved by grace through faith in the Christ, or the Messiah].
- ❑ Peter then says, in Verse 32, **‘This Jesus** God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.’
- ❑ **This Jesus** is the One to whom David looked several thousand years ago; He is the One to whom we look today; He is the One to whom the disciples looked as He was ascended into Heaven; He is the One in whom is our salvation.
- ❑ **Yet, Peter does not use the Psalms to prove the resurrection. It is the eyewitnesses that establish the truth of the Resurrection (Verse 32). The Psalms are used to establish that Jesus is, in fact, the Christ, the Messiah.**

III. The Exaltation of Christ

- ❖ The question then becomes, ‘If Christ was raised from the dead, where is He now?’
- ❑ Peter explicitly states, in Verse 33, ‘Therefore having *been exalted to the right hand of God*, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.’
- ❑ It is Verse 33 that illuminates the true significance of the events of Pentecost.
- ❑ In other words, Verse 33 creates the link between the events of Pentecost and the works of Christ.

In John 14:16-20 Jesus states, ‘I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. ‘I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ‘After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. ‘In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.’

- ❑ Pentecost marks the fulfillment of this passage.

The events of Pentecost fulfill the promise of union with Christ through the Spirit. However, union with Christ is also, in a very real sense, union with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as all believers share in the Trinitarian union through the finished work of Christ [which includes the sending of the Holy Spirit].

Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*

- ❑ **The events of Pentecost follow the ‘request’ of the Son to the Father [John 14:16], and the granting of that request by the Father because of the obedience, righteousness and exaltation of the Son.**

- Again, it was the righteousness of the Son that resulted in His exaltation of the Father, and it was the Holy Spirit that enabled the Incarnate Christ to fulfill all the Father asked.

1 Corinthians 15:45 states, ‘So also it is written, ‘The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.’

‘Paul [teaches] that through his life and ministry Jesus came into such complete possession of the Spirit, receiving and experiencing him ‘without limit’ (John 3:34), that he is now ‘Lord’ of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18). With respect to his...ministry to us, the Spirit has been ‘imprinted’ with the character of Jesus. This is precisely what it means for Jesus to send him as *allos parakletos*.’

Sinclair Ferguson, p. 55

2 Corinthians 3:17 states, ‘Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.’

John 3:34 states, ‘For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.’

- In His life, death, resurrection and ascension, the Holy Spirit was the constant companion of Christ, and as a result, in His exaltation [resurrection and ascension], Christ came into full possession of the Spirit, allowing Him to baptize believers at Pentecost [as a direct result of His exaltation at the right hand of the Father].

‘This taking possession of the Holy Spirit is so absolute an appropriation that the Apostle Paul can say of it in 2 Corinthians 3:17 that the Lord (that is, Christ as the exalted Lord) is the Spirit. Naturally Paul does not by that statement mean to obliterate the distinction between the two [for they are eternally distinct Persons of the One true God], for in the following verse he immediately speaks again of the Spirit of the Lord (or, as another translation has it, of the Lord of the Spirit). But the Holy Spirit has become entirely the property of Christ, and was, so to speak, absorbed into Christ or assimilated by him. By the resurrection and ascension Christ has become the quickening Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45). He is now in possession of the seven Spirits (that is, the Spirit in His fullness), even as He is in possession of the seven stars (Revelation 3:1).’

Dutch theologian, Herman Bavinck

Such is the fullness of the Spirit into which Jesus entered at the resurrection that Paul is able to say that ‘the last Adam [became] a life-giving spirit’ (1 Corinthians 15:45)...This statement, ‘the last Adam [became] a life-giving spirit’ (1 Corinthians 15:45), is as significant as it is extraordinary...‘spirit’ in this context probably refers to the Holy Spirit, and should be capitalized. Christ on his ascension came into such complete possession of the Spirit who had sustained him throughout his ministry that *economically* the resurrected Christ and the Spirit are one to us. He is *alter Christus*, another Christ, to us; ministerially he is indeed *allos parakletos*...Through the resurrection and ascension, Christ ‘became life-giving Spirit.’

Sinclair Ferguson (pp. 53-54, *Holy Spirit*)

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- Notice, again, in Verse 33, Luke states, ‘He [Christ] has poured forth this which you both see and hear [the Holy Spirit].’

‘The connection between what Peter emphasizes in 2:17 by his insertion of the words ‘God says’ into the Joel prophecy [‘In the last days,’ **God** says, ‘**I** will pour out my Spirit’] and his later statement in 2:33 [**He** [the ascended Jesus Christ] has poured out this which you now see and hear’ cannot have been unintentional.’

Robert Reymond

- In other words, it is God, in Joel, who says He will pour out His Spirit, and it is Christ in Acts who in fact does. Therefore, Jesus is God.

‘The fact that the authority to apply the benefits of his redemption by his Spirit to whomsoever he pleases in his role as Baptizer of men by his Spirit (salvation) and by fire (judgment) means that he prerogatives and functions of deity are his to exercise, and therefore that he himself is God.’

Robert Reymond

- The sending of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son, and the subsequent evidence of that at Pentecost, is supreme proof that Christ is enthroned in heaven, at the right hand of the Father.
 - To further demonstrate this [that Christ is exalted], Peter once again, in **Verse 34**, refers to the Psalms.
 - In Verse 34, Peter quotes from **Psalm 110:1**.
 - Psalm 110:1 is the most quoted Verse of the Old Testament in the New. It is quoted from or indirectly referenced somewhere between twenty-five and thirty times. The Book of Hebrews, alone refers to it three times.
 - Jesus, Himself, uses the Verse, in Matthew 22.
 - Psalm 110:1 appears in places such as Mark 12:35-37, 1 Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 1:12; 10:13; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20,22; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22.
 - In applying Psalm 110:1 to Christ, Peter is demonstrating that ‘invitation’ to ‘sit at my right hand’ was not given to David, but from the Father to the Son.
 - As the exalted King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Christ was exalted by the right hand of the Father in order to sit at His right hand – the place of supreme power and authority.
 - This truth echoes the words of Jesus Himself during His trial before the Sanhedrin: ‘But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.’ And they all said, ‘Are You the Son of God, then?’ And He said to them, ‘Yes, I am.’
- Luke 22:69-70

- ❑ As the exalted Christ, the Son, at Pentecost baptizes all believers in Him in the Holy Spirit. This is the true miracle of Pentecost.

‘For Peter the meaning of the event [of Pentecost] was not primarily in the fact that the Holy Spirit had been manifested in a unique and striking fashion, but rather in the fact that Jesus, the exalted Lord and Messiah, by this further display of his authority, had attested once again to his divine lordship and messiahship by ‘breathing upon’ (‘baptizing’) his disciples.

Because men’s minds have tended to focus on the empirical phenomenon of Pentecost rather than on the Baptizer himself, the church’s understanding of the significance of Pentecost had become warped and distorted. The point of emphasis has shifted away from viewing the miracle as a self-attestation to Israel of Christ’s divine lordship and has come to rest upon the person and work of the Holy Spirit.’

Here then is the real significance of Pentecost in the history of redemption: It was Jesus’ self-attestation to the truth that he was Israel’s Lord and Messiah.’ Robert Reymond

‘The baptism with the Holy Spirit [by Jesus Christ] at Pentecost is a unique even of epochal significance in the history of redemption. Therefore it is no more capable of being repeated or serving as a model for individual Christian experience than are the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, with which it is so integrally conjoined as part of a single complex of events.’

Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.

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- ❑ The climax of Peter’s sermon appears in Verse 36: ‘Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified.’
- ❑ This statement is powerful, as Peter refers to Jesus as not only Christ or Messiah, but **Lord**.
- ❑ In the Old Testament, the most sacred name for God was YHWH. So sacred was this name that no one was allowed to pronounce it [without being condemned as a blasphemer] except for the High Priest during *Yom Kippur*, or the Day of Atonement, as long as the Temple stood. Therefore, since the name was not to be pronounced, the Jewish leaders typically substituted *Adonai*, or Lord, in for YHWH for the purpose of public Scripture readings.

Furthermore, in the Christian text of the Septuagint, that is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, YHWH is often represented by *kurios*, ‘Lord.’

Therefore, to refer to Christ as ‘Lord’ is equivalent to referring to Him as LORD, or YHWH. He is, indeed, fully God.

- F.F. Bruce states, ‘The first apostolic sermon concludes with the first apostolic creed: ‘Jesus is Lord’ (Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Philippians 2:11) – ‘Lord’ not only as bearer of a courtesy title but as bearer of ‘the name which is above every name’ (Philippians 2:9). To a Jew there was only one name ‘above every name’ – the ineffable name of the God of Israel [YHWH], frequently represented in synagogue reading in the Greek Bible by the designation ‘Lord.’ That the early Christians meant to give Jesus the title ‘Lord’ in this highest sense of all ins indicated by their not hesitating on occasion to apply to him passages of Old Testament referring to Yahweh. Indeed, in this very context it may well b that the promise of Joel 3:32...is viewed as being fulfilled in those members of Peter’s audience who repentantly invoked Jesus as Lord.’

- Not only this, Verse 36 points back to Joel 2:32 (quoted in Verse 21), ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.’
 - In other words, what Peter has done is say that Christ is the LORD mentioned in Joel 2:32. Therefore, ‘Everyone who calls upon **the name of Jesus Christ shall** be saved.’