

12 | ACTS 2:22-32

THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION

How do we know that Jesus is the true Savior?

Outline

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Call to Worship: John 11:25-26

“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”

Introduction

Open your Bible to Acts 2. The title of our message is “The Extraordinary Person of the Risen Christ.”

Fifteen years ago, my family and I were in Madrid, Spain and it looked like there was a riot in front of the Opera House. As we came closer, we realized it wasn't a riot. It was the King of Spain, Juan Carlos I.

In Acts 2, we find Peter helping the people in Jerusalem to know who Jesus is. They've crucified him 50 days earlier, but he's risen from the dead and Peter wants the people to know the extraordinary Person of the risen Christ!

Let's look at Acts 2, and what we find is Peter's very first sermon that he ever preaches publicly. Peter's sermon is on the life of Jesus Christ and how he is the Savior of the world. This is a very powerful sermon that Peter preaches, first because 3000 people become Christians. They give their lives to Christ and are baptized on the day of Pentecost. But second, it's powerful because it's a message of hope for all of us. This is a message of hope because it's all about the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection always brings hope. Peter actually writes in his letter. He says God “has caused us to be born again to a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet 1:3).

From High to Low

Think about the term “living hope.” Think about it from Peter's perspective. There was a time when Peter was a fisherman. That's what he did for a living. It was a simple way of life. It was a sometimes-monotonous way of making a living. It was predictable. I bet there were days when Peter looked at the Sea of Galilee and thought, “Is this all there is to life? Isn't there anything more?” And then one day a man named Jesus stepped into his life and said, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” Absolutely everything changed for Peter on that day. A new hope surged through his life. For three years he follows Jesus. And it gets better and better every passing day, until one day Peter's hope is shattered, and that's the day that Jesus died on the cross. It wasn't what Peter expected. And Peter went from very high in his spirit to very, very low. His hope was over. Like the two on the road to Emmaus, Peter must have thought, I was hoping that he would have been the one, the true Messiah of Israel. Peter's hopes were dashed.

From Hopeless Living to Living Hope

But a few days later, that same Peter the Apostle saw that same Jesus who had died, alive again from the grave. When he saw the Lord come back alive, his hope soared to the heavens. It became a “living hope.” In that moment of the resurrection, Peter's life went from **hopeless living** to a **living hope!** That hope marked Peter for the rest of his days on the earth.

Now Peter has a very hopeful sermon in Acts 2. I'm not going to read it all, just a small section. His theme is the extraordinary Person of Jesus Christ. Peter wants his hearers to understand: this Jesus is not just any person. He's not an ordinary guy. He's an

extraordinary person. He's not merely man, he's the God-man. He's the predicted Messiah King that will one day rule the world.

Outline

Peter gives us three lines of evidence to prove that Jesus is the true Savior and Redeemer.

1. His Miraculous **Life** (2:22)
2. His Meaningful **Death** (2:23)
3. His Magnificent **Resurrection** (2:24-32)

Scripture Reading

Let's stand and read Acts 2.

ACTS 2:22-32 | "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—²³this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. ²⁵For David says concerning him,

"I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;
²⁶therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
my flesh also will dwell in hope.
²⁷For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One see corruption.
²⁸You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

²⁹"Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³²This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

This is God's Word.

Let's look at his miraculous life...

1. CHRIST'S MIRACULOUS **LIFE** (2:22).

2:22 | Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—

HIS BIRTH

Jesus' **birth** was miraculous. He was raised in Nazareth, but he was born in Bethlehem. His birth is unlike any other since he was born of a virgin. A godly girl named Mary was his mother. But Joseph, Mary's husband was not Jesus' father. Joseph was his step-father. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit because God was his Father. Jesus lived in relative obscurity until the age of around 30.

HIS LIFE

Jesus **life** was unusual because he never sinned. The Lord was tempted in every way like we are, yet without sin. He was born a King, the King of kings. He preached as the true Prophet that would come into the world to reveal God's plan of salvation. And he lived the perfect life so that as Priest he would live for us, die for us, and one day intercede for us.

HIS MIRACLES

Jesus' **miracles** got people's attention. Suddenly crippled people are walking around town. Those who were blind can now see. The deaf people could hear. A dead person gets raised to life when Jesus comes to town. Lepers, with gangrene in their limbs are now healed with skin as soft as a baby. That's what happens when Jesus comes to town.

When Jesus arrives in your town, thousands are fed with a little boy's lunch of five loaves and two fishes. It got people's attention. Jesus' miracles were evidence to all that Jesus was who he claimed to be.

The Miracles were Evidence

The New Testament records over thirty miracles Jesus performed, where our Savior suspended natural law and enacted supernatural force. Jesus showed that he had power over disease, over deformity, over demons, and over death itself. And when Jesus did those miracles, he pointed to them as proof that he was unlike anyone else.

Jesus said in **John 14:11**, "Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves."

Then Jesus said in **John 10:24-25**, "So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.'" ²⁵Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me."

Even Nicodemus, a prominent Jewish leader among the Pharisees said to Jesus, "...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" (**Jn 3:2**).

So, Jesus' miracles pointed to the fact that he was very unique. Even the most bitter enemies of Christ had to admit he was a miracle worker. When Jesus raised Lazarus from

the dead, some of his detractors said, “What are we to do? For this man performs many signs” (cf Jn 11:47).

No one performed miracles like Jesus. Simon Greenleaf, a professor of at Harvard University once said, “A person who rejects Christ may choose to say he does not accept it, but he may not say that there is not enough evidence.”

The Miracles were Eminent

Jesus miraculous life was evidence that God’s power was operating in him. And those miracles that he did in the physical realm pointed to an even greater miracle in the metaphysical realm: the salvation of souls.

If Jesus can turn water into wine; if he can raise people from the dead; if he can make blind eyes to see and deaf ears to hear, then he can do an even greater miracle. He can transfer a sinner from earth to heaven. He can change a person’s eternal destiny from hell to heaven. What greater miracle can there be than changing your destiny from hell to heaven.

What a miraculous life. Second, Peter talks about the Lord’s meaningful death.

2. CHRIST’S MEANINGFUL DEATH (2:23).

2:23 | ...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

Now he’s not talking about Jesus’ life, but Jesus’ death. And Jesus’ death was different than anyone else’s death. First of all, it seems unimaginable and unthinkable that such a man like Jesus could even die. The very one who raised dead people back to life? The very one who made blind eyes to see? That miracle worker died? But that’s what Peter is saying. This miracle worker, whose miracle pointed to his place as God’s divine Son and as the rightful heir to the throne of Israel, was put to death. The one who created the world died on the cross. How is this possible?

Well, just like his life was an extraordinary life, his death is an extraordinary death. He says you have taken Jesus and “crucified and killed [him] by the hands of lawless men.” But before that it says he was “delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.” The crucifixion of Jesus Christ was twofold: there was a **human plot** and a **divine plan**.

IT WAS A VICIOUS HUMAN PLOT

2:23b | ... you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

On one hand, the cross was a vicious plot. On the other hand, it was a victorious plan. There’s a blending here of human responsibility and divine sovereignty. God purposed that Jesus would die, but the people of Jerusalem performed this vicious deed.

There’s an age-old question, and it goes like this: who’s responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus? Is it the Romans? Is it the Jewish leaders? How about Judas Iscariot? Perhaps we can lay the blame on him. He clearly betrayed Jesus. No, it must be Pontius Pilate. Certainly, he brought the gavel down and pronounced the death sentence. Or what about Herod Antipas? Herod was part of the trial of Jesus. We could blame the false witnesses

that pointed their fingers falsely at Jesus. They were willing to lie about Jesus. Surely, they are guilty. Who's responsible? Answer: all of the above. But you left somebody out. Me. I'm responsible. You are responsible. Jesus died for sinners. Our sins put Jesus on the cross.

Martin Luther famously said, "We all carry about in our pockets his very nails." Romans, Jews, Pontius Pilate, Herod Antipas, Matt Black and all of you. We are responsible. Every person who has ever and will ever live is responsible for Jesus' death. But wait, there's more. We left somebody else out: God.

IT WAS A VICTORIOUS DIVINE PLAN

2:23 | ...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God...

On one hand, the cross was a vicious plot. On the other hand, Jesus' death was a victorious plan that was settled before the foundation of the world. We see a trinitarian plan, a victorious plan that is formed in eternity past.

Before the world was ever formed, the Father determined that the only way to rescue sinful, lost rebels and adopt them into his family was to send his only Son into the world. The Son willingly agreed to leave his throne of glory and do the dirty work of taking all of the sins of the human race upon himself. This is the divine plan.

So while wicked men freely did what they wanted and crucified the Son of God, God also freely acted according to his own decree to redeem humanity.

This is one of the places in the Bible where we see the free acts of wicked men and the sovereignty of God working in a compatible way. What a great God we have, that he would plan our redemption.

WHY WAS JESUS' DEATH SO MEANINGFUL?

Jesus' death was a **divine strategy** planned by God. He is called the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev 13:8). The Father **planned** it. The Son agreed to carry it out and **pay** for it. And the Spirit of God would **apply** it beginning at Pentecost, 50 days after the resurrection.

Jesus' death was **voluntary**. No one took Jesus' life from him. This wasn't an accident, or a plan gone wrong. Jesus said he's the "good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep" (Jn 10:11). He announced, "No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again" (Jn 10:18). Jesus signed up to be the "Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). His life was not taken from him. He voluntarily laid it down for you.

Jesus' death was **substitutionary**. That is, he exchanged his perfect life for your sinful life. Jesus didn't die for his own sin because he had none. He was the only perfect person who ever lived. He lived a completely sinless life. But he died as a **substitute** for you and for me.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all (cf Isa 53:6).

He left his majesty to take on our misery. "He became sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor 5:21).

Jesus' death was **necessary**. There's an obstacle between mankind and God that cannot be removed by human effort. Our sin is an eternal and everlasting offence to the holiness of our great God. He rages against our sin as any good being would, but his hatred for sin is infinite. He cannot dwell with sin or sinners. This is why the cross was necessary. Christ's death is the **propitiation** for our sins (1 Jn 2:2). Only the death of Christ could satisfy God holy wrath against sin. Our sin is the obstacle between man and God was to be removed. But praise be to God "we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (**Rom 5:10**).

And though it was God's plan all along to send Jesus, Peter makes it clear that those who crucified our Lord are guilty, and we are all guilty, because they made a **choice**. They chose to reject him. They chose to put him on a cross. So yes, there is **divine sovereignty**, but there is also **human responsibility**. God **planned** it, but sinners **performed** it. They had a choice to accept or reject the Messiah.

And let me say that **you have a choice** to make today. Jesus' death brings each of us to a **choice**. You make choices every day; we all do. But the choice you are confronted with this morning on this beautiful Easter morning is: what will you do with Jesus Christ? His death was for you. Will you accept it or reject it? What will you do with Jesus? You say, "I'm not going to do anything with him." That's a choice. To do nothing with Jesus is to pass by his offer of salvation. If you choose not to receive him, you are choosing to reject him. He said, "You are either for me or against me." Which is it? Will you give your life and your heart to Jesus today? **Everyone** today has a **choice** of what to do with Jesus Christ. If you are not for Jesus, you are against him (cf Mt 12:30; Lk 11:23).

Finally, Jesus' death was a **victory**. And that's why we're here. That's why we are celebrating. Jesus was a victory because he didn't stay dead. He got up again! Death could not hold him! He conquered death.

Transition: So Peter speaks about Jesus' life, his death, and finally his resurrection.

3. CHRIST'S MAGNIFICENT RESURRECTION (2:24-32).

I want you to notice how important the resurrection is to Peter. He spends one verse on his life, one verse on his death and nine verses on his resurrection. Do you think the resurrection was important to Peter. He says:

2:24 | God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

BECAUSE OF THE PERSON JESUS IS

God **loosed** Jesus from the pangs (the horrific powers) of death. Jesus could not be held by death. The One who caused all things to exist **cannot** be defeated by death. Death cannot hold back the Author of life.

Jesus is the King of Life!

So Christ burst out of the grave that Sunday morning. Nothing can hold Jesus back. C.S. Lewis said, "The New Testament writers speak as if Christ's achievement in rising from the dead... has forced open a door that has been locked since the death of the first man. Christ [as the King of Life] has met, fought, and beaten the king of death. Everything

is different because he has defeated death. This is the beginning of the New Creation: a new chapter in cosmic history has been opened.”¹

Peter can't stop talking about the resurrection. That is the most dominating theme for Peter's first sermon, and in fact for all the sermons in the book of Acts. It's the theme for all of Peter's writings. It's the triumphant theme for all the apostles who write in the New Testament because it is the pinnacle for all redemptive history.

Jesus is the Champion of Salvation

Salvation is now a done deal: Jesus Christ is risen from the dead! All we have to do is celebrate it! We make a big deal out of Easter. The world may have their world series or Super Bowl and Stanley Cup. All of those things will soon be forgotten. Easter is our day when death is defeated.

Our everlasting champion is victorious over death and hell is Jesus. The death of Christ demonstrated that sin is defeated. But the resurrection of Christ shows that death itself is defeated. And Jesus is our champion. He is our Lord and our God and our King.

BECAUSE OF THE PRIVILEGE HE GIVES

We hear an ancient prophecy from Peter in Psalm 16. Peter explains that because Jesus' body did not undergo corruption, and because he was resurrected, we can have fullness of joy in the presence of God.

2:25-32 | For David says concerning him,

“I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;
²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
my flesh also will dwell in hope.
²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One see corruption.
²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’

²⁹ “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² **This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.**

Listen to the end of the prophecy of Psalm 16 in Acts 2:28, “you will make me full of gladness with your presence.” Jesus told the thief on the Cross: “Today you will be with me in Paradise.” Jesus paid for our sins on the cross and went directly into the presence of God.

¹ C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1947) 236–237.

When Jesus was raised from the dead, he opened the way for all of us to enter the presence of God. Peter quoted Psalm 16: “you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption... You have made known to me the paths of life; **you will make me full of gladness with your presence.**”

There is fullness of joy in God’s presence. Christ has made the way open! We now have access to God because of the resurrection!

When we were slaves to death, we could not have joy in the **presence of God**. Peter spoke about the resurrection for nine verses. When Jesus was raised, he was saying: **death is dead**. The death of Christ is sufficient to satisfy the wrath of God. Jesus accomplished our redemption.

When Jesus rose again on the third day, it was the public announcement that God’s justice was fully satisfied with the sacrificial death of his Son. In his resurrection, Jesus was vindicated (1 Tim 3:16). But in his vindication, we are vindicated too. That’s why Paul says in Romans 4 that Jesus “was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our **justification**” (Rom 4:25).

Now we can enjoy the presence of God!

Conclusion

Harry Houdini Could Not Escape Death

Have you ever heard of Harry Houdini? Many of you have. He died in October of 1926. But, his claim to fame was that he was a magician who specialized in spectacular escapes. As a matter of fact, he was said to have laughed at locks and to have sneered at chains. They said of Harry that had the lives of a cat. They did all kinds of things to try to bind him.

- They would seal him in coffins—he would escape.
- They riveted him into a boiler—he escaped.
- They sewed him up in canvas bags—he escaped.
- They locked him in a milk can—he escaped.
- They sealed him in a beer barrel—he escaped.
- They put him in a maximum-security prison, and Harry somehow got out.

But then, in October 1926, death laid his hands upon Harry Houdini, and put him in a grave; and, he has yet to escape.

As a matter of fact, he told his wife, “If there is any way out, I will find it. If there is any way out, I’ll make contact with you—and, we’ll do it on the anniversary of my death.” For 10 years, she kept a light burning over his portrait each night on the anniversary of Houdini’s death. He was to blow it out, and show he’d escaped. After 10 years, she turned out the light. Harry Houdini could not escape from death.

Jesus Conquered Death

Houdini could not escape death, but Jesus did! And anyone who puts their trust in him will escape death!

Death laid his hands on the Lord Jesus Christ, also. And, Death put Jesus in that tomb outside of Jerusalem. And, there was a **stone** in the mouth of that tomb, and the **seal** of the Roman government was placed upon that tomb. But, on the third day, **Jesus Christ arose**. He rose from the sleep of death. And, He left those **grave clothes** that

were wrapped around him, like a butterfly leaving his cocoon. You see Jesus didn't just escape death, He **conquered** death! Death could not hold him. The grave could not bind him. He **conquered** the sin, and Satan, and the grave that day!

Hallelujah! Jesus Christ is risen from the dead!