

*A Man Attested by God: Acts 2:22*  
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Today is Palm Sunday, and this coming week we will observe Good Friday and then next Sunday, Easter. And it's our joy to come to this time each year and use this as an opportunity to celebrate what has been accomplished for us through the life and death and resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ. These are things that we celebrate throughout the year, and we view every Lord's Day as a celebration of our risen Lord. And this is yet another occasion for us to do that in a focused way. And therefore I want to turn our attention to a passage of Scripture that exults in these truths about our Savior. Peter's sermon in Acts 2 is a glorious proclamation of Jesus' life and death and resurrection and exaltation. And in these three messages (this morning, in our Good Friday service, and next week on Resurrection Sunday), I want to look at these things together.

We won't look at the entirety of Peter's message as it's recorded in Acts 2, but we'll start in verse 22 and go through 41. And this morning we'll focus only on verse 22, seeing that Jesus is a man attested by God. In our Good Friday service we'll meditate on verse 23, which speaks of Jesus' death. And we'll ask the question, "Who killed Jesus?" And then next Sunday morning we'll celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, which Peter says much about in verses 24-36, and we'll also look at the response to this message which is recorded in verses 37-41.

The book of Acts was written by Luke, the author of the Gospel of Luke. The Acts of the Apostles is his sequel. This is the continuing story of what happened immediately following Jesus' ascension. Acts 1 tells of Jesus' ascension to heaven, and then chapter 2 records the amazing event that happened on Pentecost, which was the coming of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost is a Jewish festival that comes 50 days after Passover. Pentecost simply means fiftieth. And in Acts 1:3-5 Luke records that Jesus "presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, 'you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'" And, indeed, it was not many days from then, if Jesus ascended after 40 days, and now it's the 50<sup>th</sup> day when the Holy Spirit comes upon them. And following this amazing event of the coming of the Holy Spirit, Peter preaches a sermon. It's a profound sermon. It's a sermon saturated with Scripture. It's a

Christ-centered sermon. It's a sermon prompted by questions, because the diverse multitude was hearing these Galileans speaking in all their different languages, and verses 12-13 say, "And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine." So Peter has to respond to this to explain what is going on and to show that these amazing events are not the result of alcohol but the result of what God is doing through His Son and through His Spirit.

Peter's sermon was also filled with urgency and conviction. He wants the people to realize the tremendous guilt they bear because they have rejected the Messiah. And God used this sermon powerfully to do just that. Through Peter's preaching God convicted people of their sin and brought them to a place of true repentance and faith. The sermon begins in verse 14, but we're going to pick it up in verse 22.

Life, death, resurrection and exaltation. That's what Peter covers in these verses, and this morning I want to simply focus on verse 22 and notice some things about the significance of Jesus' life. The thing that Peter wants to highlight about Jesus' life is that He is a man attested by God. Peter's sermon is designed to convict his listeners of the guilt they bear because they have rejected Jesus. Peter wants them to realize that Jesus is the Messiah, attested by God in His life, delivered up to death according to God's plan, raised from the dead by God, and exalted at the right hand of God, having received from the Father the gift of the Holy Spirit (verse 33). Peter emphasizes again and again the role of God the Father in all of this. He wants everyone to see that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. And to believe in the One true God, Yahweh, must mean also believing in His Son.

Jesus of Nazareth is a man attested by God. Let me pose three questions about this truth. First of all, what does it mean to be attested by God? Secondly, in what way was Jesus attested by God? And thirdly, what is the significance of this truth? Why does it matter, for the original audience and for us?

### **What Does It Mean To Be Attested by God?**

Peter begins verse 22 by addressing his audience directly. In verse 14 he said, "men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem . . ." And now he says again, "Men of Israel, hear these words." He is direct, urgent, emphatic. He is passionate for his fellow Jews to understand who Jesus is. Then he says Jesus' name, "Jesus of Nazareth." Nazareth was where Jesus was from.

And then we come to this important statement that he is "a man attested to you by God." Other translations say, "a man accredited by God to you" (NIV), "a man approved of God"

(KJV), “a man pointed out to you by God” (HCSB). The Greek word is *apodeiknymi*, and it’s only used three other times in the New Testament. Later in Acts, in 25:7, it’s used in the sense of trying to prove something, trying to demonstrate that something is true. It says that Jews were standing around Paul, “bringing many and serious charges against him that they could not *prove*.” Then in 1 Corinthians 4:9 Paul uses this word in the sense of showing forth. The ESV reads, “God has *exhibited* us apostles.” And, lastly, in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 the word is used of the man of lawlessness who *proclaims* himself to be God, *declares* himself to be God.

So when we bring together these uses of the word, we get a better picture of what it means that Jesus is a man accredited by God. He has proven that Jesus is the Messiah. God has exhibited and shown forth the truth that Jesus is the Messiah. God has declared Jesus to be the Messiah. This is what it means for Jesus to have the Father’s approval and endorsement. At Jesus’ baptism the Father said, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11). God the Father attested to Jesus’ identity. He declared Jesus to be His own Son.

And Peter wants everyone to understand this. Jesus was not a liar when He claimed to be sent by the Father. Neither was He a lunatic. He actually is who He says He is, and God the Father says so. God the Father has made this declaration. He has clearly and openly endorsed Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, the Anointed One.

Peter personalizes this statement with the words, “to you.” He is already addressing his fellow Jews very directly, beginning verse 22 with the words, “Men of Israel, hear these words.” And now he says that Jesus of Nazareth is “a man attested *to you* by God.” In other words, God has made this declaration to you. God has endorsed His Son, Jesus of Nazareth, in your midst. Believe it!

And I say to all of us here today, believe God’s endorsement of Jesus of Nazareth. There is abundant evidence that Jesus is who He says He is, and Peter highlights this in his sermon. God was so gracious to send His Son into the world, and He is so gracious to show forth the truth of who Jesus is. Don’t doubt the claims of Jesus. Don’t look for excuses not to believe Him. The evidence is here in God’s Word. God’s endorsement of Jesus is being proclaimed today in your hearing. He is a man attested *to you* by God. He is not just a moral teacher. He is not just a famous man. He is not just a loving person or a positive role model. He is the Son of God, the Messiah, the God-Man, the second Person of the Trinity, the One attested by God.

### **In What Way Was Jesus Attested by God?**

Peter says, “with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him.” He points to the miracles of Jesus as proof that He is the Son of God. The supernatural power that God produced through the life and ministry of Jesus is clear evidence of God’s endorsement of Jesus. Peter uses three words to refer to the miracles. The first word is *dynamis*, which is power, supernatural power, miraculous deed. The things Jesus did demonstrated divine power. As we’ve been seeing in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus healed people in miraculous ways. In Mark 1:30-31 Jesus healed Simon’s mother-in-law. It says, “And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.” That is instantaneous and complete healing. This is not, take two pills and call me in the morning. This is completely different. In an instant she goes from lying on her back to energetically preparing food for a bunch of hungry men. No recovery time needed. The healing is immediate and complete. Then that very night Jesus healed many more with various diseases, and He also cast out many demons (Mark 1:34). This is a man with supernatural power and authority. He cleansed a leper. He made the paralytic walk. He healed the man with the withered hand. These are just a few of the instances of Jesus demonstrating His miraculous power. These are the mighty deeds that give credence to the truth that He is the Son of God. These miracles show that He is attested by God.

Peter also uses the word “wonders” to refer to the mighty works of Jesus. They were, indeed, wonders. They inspired wonder and awe in the hearts of those who observed them. Remember in Mark 1 how the people were “astonished” at Jesus’ teaching (v. 22), and they were “amazed” when He cast out the unclean spirit (v. 27). These were *wonderful* things! As Jesus exercised His authority and demonstrated His power, people were in awe of Him.

And then the third word Peter uses is “signs.” And the word “wonders” always goes together with the word “signs” in the New Testament. The wonders are not an end in themselves. They are intended as signs which point to a spiritual truth. We talked a couple weeks ago about the Sabbath being a sign which points to Christ. And if you pursue the sign in and of itself, then you will entirely miss the purpose for which it was given. The same is true of Jesus’ miracles. These mighty works were not an end in themselves. Jesus was not just putting on a show for people to enjoy. The miracles were signs that pointed to the truth of who Jesus is. Signs always point to something else. That’s why we don’t typically see people congregating around the sign in front of this building. The sign is not the destination. The sign is to direct

people into the building. And the mighty deeds which Jesus performed were signs pointing to the reality of who He is.

Think of the Gospel of John, where in the first half of the Gospel John focuses on 7 “signs.” John’s Gospel also contains 7 “I am” statements of Jesus. And in 3 cases, there is a sign that corresponds to an “I am” statement. “I am the bread of life” is connected to the feeding of the five thousand (John 6). “I am the light of the world” is connected to the healing of the man born blind (John 9). And Jesus statement that “I am the resurrection and the life” is connected with Lazarus being raised from the dead. Do you see the point? Jesus did not feed the five thousand merely to impress the people. He did not do it merely to provide them with a meal. He did not give the man sight merely so he could have a higher quality of life. And He did not raise Lazarus from the dead merely because He cared deeply for that family. He did all of these things as signs which pointed to His identity. He did these things in order that people might believe that He was sent by God.

That is exactly what people should conclude, as Peter is telling us in his sermon. Jesus of Nazareth is attested by God, and the reason we know this is because of the mighty works and wonders and signs *that God did through him*. It was the power of God that was manifest in Jesus’ life in these supernatural miracles. This is similar to what we see of the relationship between the Father and the Son in the creation of the universe. God the Father created, and He created through the Son. Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” And then John 1, hearkening back to Genesis, speaks of the Word, Jesus Christ, and in verse 3 says, “All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” So we see the equality and the unity of the Father and Son, and also their distinct roles. The Father initiates and leads, and the Son humbly submits to His Father’s will. Jesus said, “I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me” (John 6:38). And thus Jesus’ miracles show that it is God’s power that is present in His life. At least some people recognized what this meant. Nicodemus said 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). That’s exactly the conclusion to be drawn.

And that is Peter’s point to his Jewish brothers. God worked these miracles in the life of Jesus and thus openly endorsed His ministry. Don’t reject the One God has endorsed. Later in the book of Acts, in another sermon that Peter preached, he makes the same argument. In Acts 10:37-39 Peter is preaching to Cornelius and his household, and he says, “you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the

baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem.” And then he goes on to speak of Jesus’ death and resurrection, just as he does here in Acts 2. But he starts with the events of Jesus’ life, showing that the supernatural power of His life is a clear indication that God was with Him.

### **Why Does It Matter That Jesus Was Attested by God?**

Look at how Peter presses the issue home for his listeners. He says, “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.*” I would have loved to be there to hear this sermon and hear the passion in Peter’s voice as he proclaimed these things. He was a pretty animated guy. He was a loose canon. Think about Peter’s presumption in rebuking Jesus after Jesus shared that the Son of Man must be killed and after three days rise again (Mark 8:32). Peter was also the one who told Jesus, “You shall never wash my feet.” And Jesus answered, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” And then Peter said, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” (John 13:8-9). Peter was the one who pulled out his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus when Jesus was being betrayed (John 18:10). After Jesus’ resurrection, when Jesus appeared on the shore while His disciples were in the boat, Peter was the one who put on his outer garment and threw himself into the sea, hoping to get to Jesus as quickly as possible. He was a crazy guy. He was hot-tempered, emotional, and yet radically changed by Jesus and passionate to spread the Good News.

And so you can imagine Peter speaking to this multitude of Jews, and he’s not backing down one bit. He’s not intimidated. He’s not going to let anyone off the hook. He wants to impress upon his listeners as forcefully as he can that they are guilty of rejecting God’s Messiah. And so he tells them that God’s endorsement of Jesus was something that God communicated clearly *in their midst*. It was something they themselves knew about. They had no excuse. They couldn’t say, Well there’s just not enough evidence. Peter already has them backed into a corner, and he has only focused on Jesus’ life so far. In the next verses he will speak of Jesus’ death and resurrection and exaltation, all of which give further reinforcement to the truth that Jesus is the Messiah.

And because of the tremendous evidence that God has given for this reality, there is a tremendous guilt that attaches to

those who reject Jesus. Notice in verse 23 that Peter points the finger right at his fellow Jews and says, You crucified this Jesus. You killed Him by the hands of lawless men. And then in verse 36 he says again, this Jesus whom you crucified.

You see, at the beginning of this sermon the whole crowd rejects the idea that Jesus is the Messiah. They do not believe in Him. They are hardened to the possibility that Jesus is the Messiah, and they are blind to the abundant evidence that Jesus is a man attested by God. In fact, they are so hardened and so spiritually blind that they have gone so far as to kill this Jesus. They didn't just ignore Him, they crucified Him.

The miraculous thing that happens at the end of this sermon is that 3,000 of these hardened sinners are cut to the heart, and they repent and are baptized. And it's my earnest desire that as the Word of God is proclaimed from this pulpit week after week that people will be cut to the heart and repent of their rejection of Jesus. You might be here this morning and you say, "I don't reject Jesus. I think He was a great man and a great teacher and gave us a great model for how we ought to love others. I just think it's dangerous to say that He's the only Savior. It's too narrow to say that Jesus is the only way. It's dangerous to say that He is the only Truth." That is certainly the sentiment of many in our culture, and the things I'm saying this morning are surely seen by many as very exclusive and narrow and even dangerous. But what did Jesus say? John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Maybe you think you don't reject Jesus. Maybe you think you warmly embrace Jesus. But could it be that you embrace a Jesus of your own making? Could it be that you've accepted certain attributes of Jesus that you admire, and you've ignored many other things about Him that don't fit with popular American spirituality? And so you have fashioned a Jesus whom you honor and cherish, but you have rejected the Jesus of the Bible. Let me encourage you, friend, to encounter the Jesus of the Bible. Consider this Jesus who is attested by God, who went to cross according to God's plan, who was raised from the dead, exalted at the right hand of God and received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit. Consider this Jesus whom you have rejected. Consider the guilt you bear because you have rejected the Son of God. Consider the eternity of intense agony you will experience apart from the presence of God if you do not repent. And consider the grace and mercy of this Jesus who died to save the very people who have rejected Him.

For those of you who do receive this Jesus revealed to us in Scripture, I encourage you today to meditate on the marvelous reality that Jesus is a man attested by God. The one true God, the

God of the Bible, is a Trinity: one God existing forever in three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And this Triune God has been infinitely happy forever within the fellowship of the Trinity. God has no lack, no need, no loneliness. And yet as an overflow of His happiness within the Trinity, God chose to create this universe. And He chose to reveal His glory by redeeming a people for Himself from fallen humanity. God the Father did this by sending God the Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. And through these mighty works and wonders and signs God made it clear that Jesus was sent by Him. Jesus is God's Son. Jesus is the One who receives the divine endorsement from the Father. What an awesome thing that God chose to create and that God chose to make Himself known to His creation. He is not the god of the deists, who winds up the clock and then lets it go, never to interrupt or intervene in space and time. God does intervene, at every moment and with every molecule. He is intimately involved with His creation, ordaining everything that happens, guiding every event. And in such a glorious way this is true in the life and death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This Friday we will meditate on the mind-boggling way that this is true in the *death* of Jesus. His death was ordained by God, planned by God. And it was carried out by lawless men.

What we've seen this morning is God's revelation of Himself in the *life* of Jesus. We have a God who has made Himself known to us. We have a God who has revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ, and in the written Word of God, which is the Bible. And therefore we have much to be thankful for. We have much to praise God for.