

We are working our way through the second chapter of the book of Acts, which describes the day of Pentecost, the day that the ascended Lord Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit upon the church. This was an important development in God's plan of salvation by which he is renewing all things. Beginning at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was active among the people of God in a way that he had not been active in the period described in the OT. According to the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit was given to equip the followers of Jesus to be witnesses for Jesus with the task of bringing the message of Jesus to the whole world. So when the Holy Spirit was poured out, the followers of Jesus began preaching the message of Jesus and because the Holy Spirit worked not only in them, but in their hearers as well, many people believed the message and turned to the Lord. The book of Acts tells the story of how the church grew through the preaching of the gospel empowered by the Holy Spirit.

A large part of chapter 2 of Acts, describes Peter, one of the apostles, preaching a sermon on the day of Pentecost, a sermon which the Holy Spirit used to save a large number of people. Luke gives a summary of Peter's sermon. We looked at the first part of it last week where Peter uses a prophecy of Joel to explain that the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit was the fulfillment of God's promise that in the last days all of God's people would be prophets – all of God's people would be equipped and called to bring God's word to others. This is an important part of our self-understanding as Jesus' followers. We are all individually and collectively equipped and called by God to speak for God from the Bible to one another and to the world.

This evening we will look at the rest of Peter's Pentecost sermon. Having explained the significance of the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, he brings the message that the Holy Spirit was empowering him to proclaim. And that message centers on Jesus. The focus of Peter's message is Jesus. He speaks about Jesus' life on earth, his death, his resurrection, and his exaltation to the right hand of God. And he sums up the significance of Jesus in verse 36, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him [Jesus] both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

One important observation to be made is that the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit results in a Christ-centered message. The day of Pentecost is about the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit's ministry is an essential one in salvation and in the general mission of the church, but the Holy Spirit himself is seldom the focus. When the Holy Spirit is active, he shines the light on Jesus. Jesus had predicted this when he taught his disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit. In John 16:14 Jesus says concerning the Holy Spirit, "He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." We see an example of this in Peter's Pentecost sermon. The Holy Spirit is poured-out on Peter and Peter preaches a sermon that focuses on Jesus Christ. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit is never mentioned and that we should never ponder his glory and ministry. But it does mean that when he is at work in the lives of his people, they will make much of Jesus Christ.

So let's consider Peter's sermon as he tells us about Jesus. First he says a little about his life. Verse 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....” While he was on earth, during his three years of ministry, Jesus did a lot of miracles. He healed sick people. He fed 5000 people with a few loaves and fish. He calmed a stormy sea with a brief command. He restored sight to blind people. He cast out demons. He even raised a few people from the dead. Jesus was well known for his miracles.

Peter says that these miracles were an attestation from God. Through the miracles God was testifying that Jesus was who he said he was. Much of Jesus’ message was about himself. He taught that he was the fulfillment Isaiah’s prophecy about the coming servant of the Lord. He claimed to be the Son of Man who had the authority to forgive sins. He called people to follow him. He claimed to be lord of the Sabbath. He told people that by doing what he told them to do they were building their lives on a rock and if they did not do what he told them to do they were building their lives on the sand. He claimed to be the one who was to come and bring God’s salvation. He claimed to speak for God with great authority. He accepted it when Peter confessed that he was “The Christ of God.” He claimed that his ministry of casting out demons meant that the kingdom of God had come in him. And interspersed with his teaching, Jesus performed many mighty works and wonders and signs which, Peter says, showed that Jesus was “a man attested to you by God.”

These miracles supported Jesus’ claims - which the disciples gradually came to see were claims to be the Messiah – the Son of David who would bring to fulfillment the great OT promises of salvation and judgment. And Peter is saying here that the miracles were an important part of the way that God was attesting to the fact that Jesus was the Messiah. This is one of the great purposes of miracles in the Bible – to support the claims of various people who were called to bring bringing truth from God. This is also why the apostles were enabled to perform miracles as well. Acts 2:43 says, “And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.”

Signs and wonders validated both Jesus and his apostles and their message. They had that purpose for the people who first observed them, but they have the same purpose for us. We do not see the miracles directly, but we have the account of them in Scripture. Just as we have eye-witness accounts from people who saw Jesus after he had been raised from the dead, so we have eye-witness accounts of the miracles that Jesus and the apostles performed. The miracles of Jesus were observed by many people. Some of them wrote down what they saw and we have 4 accounts in the gospels. The miracles are intended to help us with our faith. They are not the only thing, but they are something. Many people who actually witnessed the miracles were not convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. So too today many people do not believe in Jesus and they do not believe that he performed miracles. But many people through the ages who have heard of the miracles through the eye-witness accounts believe that through them God was attesting that Jesus was the Messiah sent from God for the salvation of the world. Certainly the Bible views miracles as a significant confirmation of the teaching of Jesus and his apostles. And they are meant to function that way for us as well.

Peter here is telling his audience that Jesus' miracles were signs that attested to the fact that God had sent him and that his message was true. And those miracles serve the same purpose for us.

Next Peter speaks about Jesus' death. Verse 23, "[T]his Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men." It seems that Peter here is answering the question that his hearers might be asking and that is ... if Jesus was attested by God, why did he end up dead on a cross? For most of the Jewish people a crucified Messiah made no sense at all. For most of the Jewish people the fact that Jesus was crucified was proof that Jesus was a fraud – that he was not the promised Messiah. Peter counters that argument by teaching that Jesus's death was part of God's plan. Jesus was "delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God."

Jesus had used similar language. Matthew quotes Jesus as saying, "The Son of Man goes as it is written of him...." (Matthew 26:24). Luke quotes Jesus as saying, "For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined" (Luke 22:22)

Peter makes that point here to make it clear that Jesus' death was not proof that he was a fraud – it was not proof that he was a failure – it was in fact part of God's plan for him. Peter here does not say why. He does not hear expand on the further significance of Jesus' death,. His concern here is to make it clear that Jesus' death belonged to God's plan. The idea of God's plan is very pervasive in Scripture. All of the language that this or that happened in fulfillment of the Scriptures makes the point that they happened according to God's plan. If God foretold something long before it actually happened, it clearly happened according to his plan.

This is an important part of our understanding of Jesus' death. It was part of God's plan for our salvation. It was not something that just happened. It was not a sign that Jesus had failed in his mission. It was a central part of the reason that the Son of God became a man. His mission was not to punish every person who had sinned against God. God did not have to become a man in order to do that. He had to become a man so that he could pay the penalty for sin so that he could save his people from their sins. His death was a central part of God's plan for the salvation of his people.

But at the same time, the people who were involved in Jesus' death were sinning. Peter goes on to say to his audience, "[T]his Jesus ... (who was a man attested to you by God) you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men" (Acts 2:23). He is speaking to the Jewish people. He had addressed them as "Men of Israel" in verse 22. They had killed Jesus by the hands of lawless men – that is by the Romans. The Jews had delivered Jesus up to the Romans to be crucified.

Now its striking that Peter accuses them all of killing Jesus. It is unlikely that every single one of his hearers were directly involved. It is unlikely that every single one of them had called out for Jesus' crucifixion. Why does Peter accuse them all? I think that Peter here is speaking in general terms in the sense that Israel as a

whole rejected her Messiah. Israel as a whole, represented by their leaders, killed the one God had sent to be her Saviour. And even if they had not been directly involved, they had rejected Jesus by not believing in him.

Now this verse is a very important verse for showing that the biblical authors show no discomfort about the mystery of the relationship between God's plan and man's responsibility for his actions. Jesus' death happened by the "definite plan and foreknowledge of God." But at the same time he was "crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men." Jesus' death was part of the plan of God. And yet those who were involved in his crucifixion were acting wickedly. We cannot understand how those two facts relate to each other. But they are both clearly taught in the Bible and we need both of them to make sense of our lives and of the biblical message.

We know that we are responsible for our actions. We know that the choices that we make are real. But at the same time one of the great comforts of the biblical message is that God has a plan for the world and that no opposition can keep that plan from happening. If that were not so we could have no certainty that God is directing our lives and all of history to the goal of the defeat of evil and the renewal of all things.

The fact that nothing happens apart from the plan of God is a huge comfort for us. But at the same time we know that we are responsible for our actions.

So Peter has briefly mentioned Jesus' life and his death. Next he mentions his resurrection. Verse 24, "God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it." The reason that it was not possible for Jesus to be held by death is that his resurrection had also be foretold in Scripture, meaning that it was also part of God's plan for our salvation. That is Peter's point with the quotation recorded in verses 25-28. It is a quotation from Psalm 16 which was written by David. The key part of that quotation was recorded in verse 27 "For you will not abandon my soul to hades or let your Holy One see corruption."

Peter claims here that when David wrote that he was speaking about the resurrection of Christ. Verses 30-31, "Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption."

We do not know how clearly David understood the significance of what he wrote in Psalm 16. He did know that God had promised that one of his descendants would rule over Israel forever because God had promised him that. Somehow by God's leading he understood that that meant that that Son would not be abandoned in the grave – that his flesh would not see corruption. However dimly David may have understood the full implications of what he had written, Peter, in the light of the resurrection and by the illumination of the Holy Spirit understood those words as referring to the resurrection of Jesus.

The resurrection of Jesus was a central part of the message of the apostles. These verses show us how the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit caused the apostles to make much of Jesus' resurrection. It is central to the good

news. It is at the heart of the meaning of Jesus. Jesus' resurrection showed that Jesus' death accomplished what God intended it to accomplish and that death could not hold Jesus in its power. Jesus' resurrection means that Jesus has defeated sin and death. Peter does not spell that out here, but the rest of the NT makes it clear that the resurrection of Jesus is his victory over death and that he shares that victory with his people. Because of the resurrection of Jesus those who believe in him receive eternal life – physical death is not the end and we can face physical death with the expectation of the resurrection of our bodies.

But Peter's concern at this point is not to speak about the defeat of death, but focus on what it means for our understanding of who Jesus is. Peter's great concern in this part of his sermon is to declare who Jesus is and Jesus' resurrection from the dead is a key for our understanding of who Jesus is.

Now one of the things that the scholars tell us is that Jesus' resurrection and ascension are often merged together in the idea of Jesus' exaltation. You can refer to the resurrection as Jesus' exaltation and you can refer to the ascension as Jesus' exaltation. And that is what Peter does here. Verses 32-33, "This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing."

This is where Peter has been heading in his sermon. His goal in the sermon is to make the declaration that Jesus is both Lord and Christ. He speaks of Jesus as being exalted at the right hand of God. He supports this with a quote from Psalm 110 where David says, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." These words from Psalm 110 are among the most quoted words in the NT. At the heart of the message of Jesus is the fact that he is now exalted at the right hand of God and from there he has poured out his Spirit upon the church. Every part of the story of Jesus is important as Peter's sermon shows. But it all leads to the fact that now Jesus is seated at the right hand of God – that Jesus right now is both Lord and Christ. This is where Peter has been heading in speaking about Jesus. Verse 36 "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

This is the climax of Peter's teaching about Jesus. God has attested to him by his miracles. He was crucified "according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God." God raised him up and exalted him at the right hand of God. "Let all the house of Israel **therefore** know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ...." Peter proclaims Jesus as both Lord and Christ – Lord and the Messiah – Lord and the Son of David – Lord and the King of Israel.

And that you see has great implications for us. Who Jesus is, is relevant for everyone. If he is Lord we are under his lordship. If he is King, we are subjects. There is nothing more relevant for our lives than this great truth that Peter proclaimed – "God has made him both Lord and Christ...."

Verse 37 shows us that many of Peter's listeners understood that if Jesus is both Lord and Christ, they were in trouble. "Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'" They understood that the one whom they had crucified was Lord of all and that they were in great danger. Psalm 110 says that Jesus is sitting at God's right hand until he makes his enemies his footstool. Jesus' lordship means that he is going to defeat his enemies. That is why Peter's hearers were cut to the heart and asked what to do. Jesus' lordship means that you do not want to be one of his enemies. And so the right question to ask is "what shall we do?" Is there a way of escape?

And Peter gives the good news. If we are Jesus' enemies because we are not submitting to him as Lord we are in grave danger because Jesus' is going to make his enemies his footstool. But God offers us a way out. Jesus is not only Lord – he is the Messiah who God sent to bring salvation as well as judgement upon his enemies. The truth of Jesus' lordship is bad news for Jesus' enemies, but there is also good news in that God has provided a way for enemies to become loyal subjects – He has provided a way in Jesus for enemies to be brought into a right relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 38, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." There is a way to be forgiven. There is a way to be brought into in a right relationship with the one who is Lord of all. There is a way to be in a right relationship with the one who sits at God's right hand until he makes his enemies his footstool.

First of all repent. Submit to his lordship. Acknowledge his authority and turn from your rebellion. Repentance is turning from sin. It is turning away from rebellion and turning to obedience. It is submitting to his law and acknowledging him as Lord. It is confessing that he has the right to tell you how to live your life and that you are not free to live as you please. It is turning from sin and turning to obedience. Repentance begins with a decisive change from insisting that you can live as you please to acknowledging that Jesus is your Lord and master. And then it is a life of daily struggle to sin less and obey more. There is a way to be safe. There is a way to no longer be an enemy of the one who is exalted at the right hand of God. And that way involves repentance.

Peter also tell his hearers to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Baptism is a sign God's promise of the washing away of sins. Baptism is a sign of being a follower of Jesus. I'm not get into the theology of infant baptism at this point. For an adult being baptized it is both a sign of God's promises and a sign of accepting those promises. That is why those baptized in infancy must come to the point where they publicly confess their faith. They are accepting the truths that are signified in baptism. So here the command to be baptized is a call to receive the sign of the washing away of sins and the sign of belonging to Jesus Christ.

And Peter promises that those who repent and are baptized will receive the forgiveness of their sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is the good news. Jesus is Lord. We have rebelled against his lordship. But we can be forgiven. And we can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit here must be understood in

the light of the OT promise of the Holy Spirit by which God would enable his people to live lives of obedience and thus receive the blessings of obedience.

The promise is for all. Verse 39 “For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” This message that Peter is preaching is for the covenant people of God and their children and for the whole world. It is the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Many people believed on that day. Verse 41, “So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.” The Holy Spirit blessed the preaching of the word. Many people understood it as the greatest possible news. And they repented and were baptized and added to the church.

This is the good news of Jesus Christ. Most of us here have received that word and been baptized. Let us rejoice in the good news. It is always good news that we have been forgiven all our sins and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. And if there are any here today who have not repented and been baptized or who have not repented and owned your baptism as an infant – think carefully of the message of Peter’s sermon. Think carefully about who Jesus is and what that means for you. You do not want to be an enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you don’t have to be. Peter answers the question, “What shall we do?” “Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”