

4. Peter Preaches the Gospel: Acts 2:22-36

Peter's sermon had begun with the quotation from the prophet Joel in Acts 2:17-21. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on this day of Pentecost was what Joel had spoken of in his prophecy. In the preceding verses, Peter used this prophecy to establish the time and place from which the kingdom of God would begin—from Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, after Christ's death. The time was when the Holy Spirit came with power in Acts 2:1-13. The place was from Mount Zion in Jerusalem in Joel 2:32. Isaiah used the same words as Joel in Isa 2:3—*last days*—to identify the time. The place, from which the kingdom would go, according to Isaiah, was also Zion and Jerusalem.

Peter Preaches the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Christ

In this sermon, Peter will lay out the facts of the gospel; will establish that Jesus is now sitting on the throne of his father David; and will convict the Jews guilty of the murder of Jesus.

Jesus Accredited by God

Acts 2:22

22 "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know."

Peter addresses the audience as men of Israel, identifying them as people whose entire heritage and teaching have led them to this great and glorious day of the Lord. They had full knowledge of the prophecies of Joel and Isaiah. Peter told them that God accredited Jesus, that is, gave him official authorization and approval. This approval and authorization came in the form of miracles, wonders, and signs which the Lord actually performed among them. They were, then, eyewitnesses to this accreditation by God. Those who were described as amazed and perplexed men, and who asked one another, "What does this mean?" in Acts 2:12, would know the certainty of this accreditation. 12

The power of the miracles, wonders, and signs, which Jesus had done and which those on this day remembered, established the authenticity of Peter's claims. John had stated the purpose in John 20:30-31:

30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

By the miraculous signs, men of all ages may be certain that Jesus is the Christ.

The Facts of the Gospel

Acts 2:23-24

23 This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

What has happened to the Lord, Jesus, and what is happening on this day of Pentecost, is according to the set purpose and foreknowledge of God. Many contend that Jesus failed to establish his (earthly) kingdom, and will return at some future date to do so. To these people, the church is a substitute for God's failed attempt to establish his kingdom on earth. The very idea that God, almighty, and the Lord, Jesus Christ, would fail at what they purposed is beyond comprehension. Peter clearly taught that what happened to Jesus was "by God's set purpose and foreknowledge." Paul described God's eternal purpose in Eph 1:9-10:

9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

This fulfillment of God's eternal purpose was forecast and described by Jesus in Luke 18:31-33:

31 Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. 32 He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. 33 On the third day he will rise again."

Jesus' words, used to describe the gospel, foreshadow what Peter taught in his sermon. Also, prior to his ascension, the Lord reiterated this principle, emphasizing that "everything must be fulfilled in Luke 24:44: "44 He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.'"

Paul spoke of the wisdom of God, set, but hidden, before time began, in 1 Cor 2:7-8:

7 No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that **God destined for our glory before time began**. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. [Emphasis added]

As one might say today, this is the real deal—no cheap substitutes; no failed plans. This is *the great and glorious day of the Lord* purposed before time began!

Fulfilling that eternal purpose, those present put him to death, and God raised him from the dead. Thus, Peter preached the facts of the gospel. Paul taught these same facts of the gospel in 1 Cor 15:1-5:

1 Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the **gospel** I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this **gospel** you are saved, if you hold firmly to the **word I preached to you**. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ **died** for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he **was buried**, that he **was raised** on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he **appeared** [Emphasis added]

Jesus, as the approved one of God, was a proven fact, since those present were eyewitness to his miracles. Jesus, as the one God raised from the dead, was also a proven fact, established by the fulfilled prophecies and the eyewitness encounters. Peter quotes one of these prophecies from David beginning in Acts 2:25.

The Resurrection, the Fulfillment of Prophecy

Acts 2:25-28

25 *David said about him:*

'I saw the Lord always before me.

Because he is at my right hand,

I will not be shaken.

26 *Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;*

my body also will live in hope,

27 *because you will not abandon me to the grave,*

nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

28 *You have made known to me the paths of life;*

you will fill me with joy in your presence.'

The key points of David's prophecy were that God would not abandon the Christ—the Holy One—to the grave, nor would he see corruption. David prophetically voiced the consolation of the faithful, "Because you will not abandon me to the grave." Job was the first recorded voice to issue this plaintive plea in Job 19:25-27:

I know that my Redeemer lives,
and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.
26 And after my skin has been destroyed,
yet in my flesh I will see God;
27 I myself will see him
with my own eyes – I, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!

Because Christ was raised from the dead, both Job and David will see the resurrection from the dead spoken of in their prophecies. Since Christ was raised, the faithful in Christ will be raised according to Paul in 1 Cor 15:20-26:

20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep . . . 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Jesus, Sitting on David's Throne and Exalted at the Right Hand of God

Acts 2:29-33

29 "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. 33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

Peter's argument to the Jews who were listening was that they knew that David was yet in his tomb. David, as a prophet, knew that God had promised with an oath to place a descendent on his throne. David and these Jews knew that God's oath was certain. Heb 6:17-19 states this principle of certainty:

17 Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. 18 God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.

This principle—Christ will sit on the throne of David and his kingdom would go forth on this day—forever destroys the idea of some future, earthly kingdom. All the prophecies concerning the Christ and his kingdom point to this very day and hour in Acts 2. Peter has clearly asserted that Jesus is sitting on David's throne, exalted at the right hand of God, having received the promised Holy Spirit, having poured it out in what they were seeing and hearing.

The issues of Christ on the throne of David and of Christ come in his kingdom would not have to be discussed if it were not for the concocted theories of the many millennialists. Yet, from

the prophets to the Revelation, Christ reigns in his kingdom from this day of Pentecost forward.

Christ on a Priestly Throne and Christ on a Kingly Throne

The prophecies of Zachariah make this truth of Christ as king in his kingdom more certain. Zech 3:8, sets the meaning of the symbol to follow, "8 Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch."

In Zech 6:12-13, Zachariah quoted the Lord Almighty:

"Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the Lord. 13 It is he who will build the temple of the Lord, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two."

The man named Branch was to build the temple of the Lord and clothed in majesty, he would sit and rule on his throne. The throne is clearly a priestly throne. However, that "there will be harmony between the two" speaks of a second throne, a kingly throne. Consider the priestly throne first.

On this day of Pentecost, Christ sat on his priestly throne in the temple of God. Heb 4:15-16 teaches that he is now high priest on his throne:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the **throne of grace** with confidence.

It was also on that day that the temple of the Lord was laid up from spiritual stones. Peter explains this in 1 Peter 2:4-5:

4 As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him – 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

The man called Branch was to also sit on a kingly throne. Isaiah tells who the branch is in Isa 11:1-3:

1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him –
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord –
3 and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

Jeremiah confirmed that the branch was to be king in Jer 23:5-6:

5 "The days are coming," declares the Lord,
"when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch,
a King who will reign wisely
and do what is just and right in the land.
6 In his days Judah will be saved
and Israel will live in safety.

This is the name by which he will be called:
The Lord Our Righteousness.

The angel that spoke to Mary confirmed that Jesus would sit on the throne of David in fulfillment of these prophecies in Luke 1:29-33:

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. 31 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

The Christ, the King, on the Throne of David, at the Right Hand of God

Acts 2:34-35

34 *For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,*

"The Lord said to my Lord:

'Sit at my right hand

35 until I make your enemies

a footstool for your feet.' "

Peter concludes his gospel sermon by reiterating that Jesus, the Christ, sits on David's throne at the right hand of God. Fittingly, he quotes David once more to prove his point. His proof for this point was an accumulation of eyewitness testimony made the more sure by the fulfillment of these prophecies. Based on the evidence so eloquently presented, Peter makes his appeal for the audience to act.

Peter's Appeal to Israel

Acts 2:36

36 *"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*

Peter ends his sermon with a conclusion signaled by the word *therefore*. All Israel can be assured that God has made Jesus whom they crucified both Lord and Christ. As in Heb 11:1, Peter's listeners can be "sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." This final appeal echoes Peter's confession when the Lord asked in Matt 16:15-19:

"15 But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. Matt 16:19

19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. . . ."

Thus, the doors of the kingdom of heaven are opened and Peter's listeners are poised to enter into the kingdom of which Christ is King and to be added to the church of which Jesus is head.

Acts 2:37

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Thus, the first gospel sermon ended. "What shall we do" rings out as a question for the ages, asked here and reiterated by Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:10) and the Philippian jailor (Acts 16:30).