

# The Rest of the Story

Studies in the Book of Acts

***“We will move the world not by criticism of it, nor conformity to it – but by combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God”***

*Vance Havner*

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Text

Acts 2:22-41

Topic

Peter proves to the crowd that they crucified Jesus, but God raised Him from the dead to sit at His right hand

Title

*Caught Red-Handed  
Crucifying God's Right Hand Man*

**Acts 2:22** "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—

**Acts 2:23** Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;

**Acts 2:24** whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

**Acts 2:25** For David says concerning Him: 'I FORESAW THE LORD ALWAYS BEFORE MY FACE, FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, THAT I MAY NOT BE SHAKEN.

**Acts 2:26** THEREFORE MY HEART REJOICED, AND MY TONGUE WAS GLAD; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL REST IN HOPE.

**Acts 2:27** FOR YOU WILL NOT LEAVE MY SOUL IN HADES, NOR WILL YOU ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO SEE CORRUPTION.

**Acts 2:28** YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF JOY IN YOUR PRESENCE.'

**Acts 2:29** "Men *and* brethren, let *me* speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

**Acts 2:30** Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne,

**Acts 2:31** he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.

**Acts 2:32** This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.

**Acts 2:33** Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

**Acts 2:34** "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,

**Acts 2:35** TILL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES YOUR FOOTSTOOL.'" "

**Acts 2:36** "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

**Acts 2:37** Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?"

**Acts 2:38** Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 2:39** For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Acts 2:40** And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."

**Acts 2:41** Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*.

## Introduction

You might have an image of Jesus etched into your mind. If you are North American, you probably see Him as being taller than His disciples, lean, with long, flowing light brown hair, fair skin and light colored (even blue) eyes. Trouble is, you probably got that image from a Sunday School picture; or from watching Robert Powell portray Him in *Jesus of Nazareth*.

If you were raised in other parts of the world, you might have seen Jesus represented as black, Arab, or Hispanic.

To try to resolve the question of just what Jesus might have actually looked like, forensic anthropologists in Great Britain worked with Israeli archaeologists to reconstruct the face of Jesus. They used cultural and archeological data as well as the physical and biological sciences as their references. If you're interested, you can see what they came up with in a 2002 addition of *Popular Mechanics*.

The Jews Peter addressed in our text knew what Jesus of Nazareth looked like. **But they didn't recognize Him for who He was!** He was their promised Messiah; He was the Christ, the Anointed One, Who was prophesied to come in the pages of their Scriptures. Peter proved to them that the One they had crucified was their Lord. What must they do?

As we go through the heart of Peter's Pentecost message, I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Proof Positive Jesus Is Your Lord, and #2 Prove Publicly Jesus Is Your Savior.

### #1 Proof Positive Jesus Is Your Lord (v22-36)

Peter had already been addressing the crowd. After the disciples started praising the wonderful works of God in foreign languages they had never learned, the amazed bystanders asked, **Whatever could this mean?** Peter explained it was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy of Joel that, in the last days, God would pour out His Holy Spirit.

It was what Jesus called the baptism with the Holy Spirit. As exciting as it was, Peter wanted to focus the attention on the *Baptizer* with the Holy Spirit. He wanted to tell them that Jesus of Nazareth was their Lord.

- being changed to bring change -

Peter offered three proofs that Jesus of Nazareth is the prophesied Messiah: He had the rightful credentials, He was raised from the dead, and He was reigning in Heaven at the right hand of God.

In verses twenty-two and twenty-three, Peter declared Jesus had the rightful credentials:

**Acts 2:22** "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know -

The crowd knew **Jesus** in His humanity as the itinerant preacher from **Nazareth**. They also knew and accepted His **miracles, wonders, and signs**. Don't think for a minute that the Jews denied the many

miracles of Jesus! They were an established fact. But, since Jesus had been **put to death**, they did not see any possibility of Him being their promised Messiah.

Peter told them that those things Jesus did made Him **attested by God**. It means they *proved* something; it means they were His *credentials* as Someone. They proved He was the promised Messiah because only that Someone could do the mighty works they had seen Jesus do.

What about His death by crucifixion? Didn't that cancel-out any claim to be their Lord? On the contrary:

**Acts 2:23** Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;

The death of their Messiah was foreseen and foreknown by God. It was not an accident. Before the creation of the world, God planned for its redemption, knowing Adam and Eve would fail and sin. That is why Jesus is called, in Revelation 13:8, **the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world**.

I want to point out an important subtlety in the wording. Peter said, **you have taken by lawless hands**. The **you** is a reference to the Jews; **by lawless hands** is a reference to the Romans – to Gentiles. It doesn't simply mean the Jews were breaking the law. **Lawless people** were non-Jews; they were all the Gentiles who were not under God's Law.

Regardless God's foreknowledge, Peter declared that they were personally responsible for putting Jesus to death. It was their choice.

We think of God's foreknowledge and man's free-will as an impossible philosophical dilemma. Some men go so far as to conclude mankind cannot have free-will if God is Sovereign. What we see as a dilemma is never presented as one in the Bible! God is absolutely Sovereign; and, **at the same time**, man has free-will. Try to understand it beyond that and you will end up with a system of doctrine and belief that is not biblical. In fact, it will be horrific.

Peter's first proof that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed Lord are the credentials He flashed: **miracles, wonders, and signs**. The fact He was crucified did not cancel out His credentials. It is further proof, because it was always God's plan that the Messiah, the Christ, must suffer and die.

In verses twenty-four through thirty-six, Peter offers the second proof that Jesus of Nazareth is Lord: He was raised from the dead!

**Acts 2:24** whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

I like that! I like Peter saying **it was not possible** that Jesus could remain dead. Men argue it is impossible He could be raised from the dead; but the historic, prophetic, spiritual truth is that **it was not possible** for Him to remain dead!

**Acts 2:25** For David says concerning Him: 'I FORESAW THE LORD ALWAYS BEFORE MY FACE, FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, THAT I MAY NOT BE SHAKEN.

**Acts 2:26** THEREFORE MY HEART REJOICED, AND MY TONGUE WAS GLAD; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL REST IN HOPE.

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**Acts 2:30** Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne,

**Acts 2:31** he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.

Peter quoted Psalm 16:8-11. David wrote the words, but the verses obviously could not apply to David who was already dead and buried and whose body was in its **tomb**. Acting as a prophet of God, David wrote about the Messiah, that His **soul** would not remain in **Hades** or His body in the grave where it would decay.

By the way: Your Bible might say **Hell** and not **Hades**. The word used here is for the temporary realm of the dead, **Hades**. **Hell** is the future, final Lake of Fire. No one is there yet! **Hades** was described by Luke

in the sixteenth chapter of his Gospel. It consists of two compartments – one a place called Paradise, the other a place of torment. Prior to the death of Jesus, when a believer died, his or her soul went to Paradise. The souls of unbelievers went to the place of torment. When Jesus died, He first descended into [Hades](#), to Paradise. When He rose from the dead, He freed the souls in Paradise to go to Heaven. Now the Bible says that when a believer dies, he or she is absent from their physical body, and immediately present in Heaven with Him. Unbelievers who die in their sins still go to [Hades](#), to torment, to await their final destination – Hell, the Lake of Fire.

Peter gave them prophetic proof positive that their Messiah would die and be raised from the dead. He proved it from Psalm 16. Then he applied the proof to Jesus of Nazareth, saying in verse thirty-two,

[Acts 2:32](#) This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.

One-hundred twenty men and women were ready to testify they had seen the risen Jesus. They were ready to add their *personal* testimony to the *prophetic* testimony of Scripture. It was a powerful argument.

But there was one more argument to make. Not only did Jesus of Nazareth have the rightful credentials; not only was He raised from the dead. He was also reigning in Heaven at God's right hand!

[Acts 2:33](#) Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

[Acts 2:34](#) "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,

[Acts 2:35](#) TILL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES YOUR FOOTSTOOL.'" '

Quoting this time from Psalm 110:1, Peter showed that David understood a son of his would be [Lord](#) over him. Jesus of Nazareth was in the line of David; He had ascended into Heaven; He was and is that prophesied Son of David.

How could Peter be so certain? Let's follow his logic. Since the Holy Spirit was being poured out, then God must have sent Him. Joel



promised that one day the Spirit would come, and Jesus Himself had promised to send the gift of the Holy Spirit to His people. But if Jesus is dead, He cannot send the Spirit; therefore, He must be alive. Furthermore, He could not send the Spirit unless He had returned to Heaven to the Father; so, Jesus **has** ascended to heaven, to sit at the right hand of God – **just as David had prophesied!**

It's all proof positive Jesus is Lord:

**Acts 2:36** "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

**Christ** is not a name; it is a title. It is the translation of the Hebrew word for *Messiah*. Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah; and He was now reigning in Heaven as Lord over all.

**Whom you crucified.** If you had recently crucified the Messiah; and if He was now at God's right hand, **making His enemies His footstool...** Was there any hope for you? **Yes!**

## #2 Prove Publicly Jesus Is Your Savior (v37-41)

There must have been some hint in Peter's presentation that they still had hope, because, (v37) **Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"**

They experienced what we call conviction. In the biblical sense, conviction is seeing yourself exactly the way God sees you. They saw themselves as doomed sinners who had put to death their Lord. How wonderful for them, and us, that Jesus was and is the Savior from sin in His death and resurrection!

**Acts 2:38** Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We need a little context to understand Peter's statement. Baptism meant something different to this Jewish crowd than it does to us.

Baptism was an existing public ritual required of non-Jews who wished to convert to Judaism.

In fact, non-Jews who wished to convert to Judaism had to do three things: They had to be circumcised; they had to offer a sacrifice; and they had to be baptized.

I believe the Jews on the Day of Pentecost who were saved *became Jews for real*. Ethnically they were already Hebrew. But they were not completed as Jews in *spiritually*. So they 'converted,' in a sense, to becoming real, spiritual Jews. They were circumcised; they offered a sacrifice; they were baptized.

1. All of the men had been physically circumcised according to Jewish Law. But physical circumcision was only an outward symbol of an inward work elsewhere understood to be the circumcision of the heart (Colossians 2:9-12). That's why it is so insightful that verse thirty-seven says they were **cut to the heart**. On the Day of Pentecost, **they had a spiritual cutting or circumcision of their hearts by the Holy Spirit using the knife of God's Word**.
2. All of them had offered many animal sacrifices throughout their lives **for the** [temporary] **remission of sins**. Now they were learning that Jesus was God's final, full sacrifice. The only 'sacrifice' they need offer was to put their faith in Jesus.
3. Water baptism was the third thing a true convert would do. It would give a public testimony of the conversion. Although already physically Jews, the Jews in this Pentecost crowd who believed had become real, completed Jews – circumcised in the heart by the Spirit of God thanks to the once-for-all sacrifice on their behalf of the Son of God.

Peter was led by the Spirit to tell them to **repent**. It means *to change your mind*. It correlates with their new circumcised hearts.

When he said to be **baptized for the remission of sins**, it can be translated, *be baptized on account of* the remission of your sins. In other words, since your hearts have been circumcised and your sins have been remitted by Jesus' sacrifice, go ahead and give the public testimony of your conversion through water baptism.



Think of it like this: When they were baptized, other unbelieving Jews would ask, “Why are you, circumcised Jews who have the sacrificial system, acting like Gentiles who must convert to become true Jews?” To which they could then testify that true circumcision is a matter of the heart; and that Jesus was the final sacrificial offering.

Might Peter have also meant that the physical rite of water baptism is necessary in order for you to be truly saved? Some think that is exactly what Peter meant. Since he started the controversy... **Let's ask him!** We can ask Peter... Because he clarifies exactly what he meant about baptism in his first letter. While writing about the flood of Noah, he mentions **baptism**; he says it **saves us**; but then immediately defines what he means by **baptism**:

**1Peter 3:21** There is also an antitype which now saves us - baptism (**not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God**), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

He mentions **baptism**, then immediately tells you he is talking about what **baptism** symbolizes. It was an outward show of an inward work. **Water baptism saves no one!** It only gives public testimony to the inward change that occurs when you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin.

Back to our text... Peter mentioned they would **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**; then he said,

**Acts 2:39** For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**All who are afar off** is *not* a geographical reference! It is a technical phrase which, to a Jew, meant *Gentiles*. They were the ones **afar off** from the promises of God. As the Book of Acts progresses, we'll see that salvation was for Jews and Gentiles alike – **as many as the Lord our God will call**.

Does that mean the number He **will call** is predetermined or limited? Nope! Peter had earlier stated, in verse twenty-one, **whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved**.

Which is it? Does God call you? Or do you call on the Lord? **It's both, at the same time.** You are chosen in Him from before the foundation of the earth... **AND** every man, woman, and child is free to call upon the Lord.

**Acts 2:40** And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."

**Acts 2:41** Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*.

We don't have the whole text of Peter's sermon. We have only what we need to understand how **three-thousand souls** were saved and added to the Church.

Applying God's Word...

Jesus had the right credentials; He is raised from the dead; He is reigning in Heaven. He fulfilled all the rites and rituals of God's Law so you can be saved by grace through faith alone, apart from any works.

If you are a Christian... You learn from Peter to keep the focus on Jesus when you share with others. It is His work for them that is important – not what they must do for Him.

If you are not yet a believer... The gift is for you, if you will receive it. You need to be cut in your heart; you need the sacrifice of Jesus to remit your sins. Then you can prove He is your Savior in your public testimony, baptism being a part of it.

