



Preaching Jesus

Acts 2:22-36

1. Life (verse 22)
2. Death (verse 23)
3. Resurrection (verses 24-32)
4. Exaltation (verses 33-35)
5. Application (verse 36)

The central theme and application of the book of Acts is the call of Jesus upon our lives to be a witness for him. As we have said, "Be My Witnesses." That is to live as a witness of Jesus, telling others of who he was and what he did and what impact he has made in your life. Over and over again in the book of Acts is that the apostles are doing this very thing. They are going out into the world as a witness for Jesus.

Now, one of the themes that we will see come up over and over in the book of Acts is that the apostles were very sensitive to what their hearers knew and understood. In other words, you see their preaching in Jerusalem to Jews is vastly different than their preaching in Athens to the pagans. To the Jews, they refer often to the Scripture, because the Jews hold the Scripture in high regard as an authority in their lives. To the Gentiles, who know nothing of the Scripture, they refer to creation and the created order, because they can see this for themselves.

This difference is also seen in the different locations where the local knowledge is different. In other words, Peter preached differently in Jerusalem to the Jews who had seen and witnessed the life and death of Jesus, than Paul who preached hundreds of miles away from Jerusalem to the Jews who had only heard a little bit about Jesus. Peter speaks with common ground of the life and ministry of Jesus for those who saw him and heard him teach. Paul speaks more about the life and death of Jesus for those who never saw him or even heard of him. All of this is something to keep in mind as we work our way through the book of Acts.

The implication for us is quite simple: there is no one right way to witness to people about the gospel. Now, there are all sorts of useful methods that people have produced in an effort to equip people in sharing the gospel with others. I am thankful to God for all of them. However, none of them are applicable to everyone, because everyone is in a different spot. Some people you mix with grew up in a very godly home, filled with the Scripture and believing parents. Others grew up far from God, never entering a church in their entire lives. And increasingly in our culture, you will mix with people from other cultures, who don't really have a category for "church" or "Jesus."

All of these different people need to hear different things. The one who grew up in a legalistic, religious home, where everything was about keeping the religious rules needs to hear something different than the one who grew up in a home where God was never mentioned and dad was always drunk. The one with a legalistic background needs to hear about how approval before God is not based on our own righteousness and external morality. The one in a godless home needs to hear about the hope that there is in the grace God for all who have fallen.

Jesus modeled these very things. He spoke differently with Nicodemus, the Jewish expert in the law, who needed his world to be shaken than he did with the woman at the well, a sinful Samaritan woman, who needed to hear about grace.

So, as you mix with people, seeking to be a witness for Jesus, be a student of those you speak with. Understand their background. Hear their stories and tell them what they need to hear about Jesus. One pastor friend of mine says that his practice in talking to people about Jesus is often to ask two questions: "What's your story?" and "How's that working out for you?" The first question gets a bit of background information about people. The second question gets at their attitudes toward their life. My pastor friend says that these questions will often provide some opportunities to turn the conversation to talk about spiritual matters, eventually hoping to speak about Jesus.

If you think about it a bit, you can see Peter doing this very thing in our text. My message entitled, "Preaching Jesus," because this is exactly what Peter understood to be the need of his listeners on the day of Pentecost, when God poured out the Holy Spirit on his church. Peter had an understanding of what those in Jerusalem had seen and heard. He also understood their deficiency.

If you remember from last week, we saw the crowds of people gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. We saw the disciples in the room together. We saw the Holy Spirit descend in power, giving the disciples the power to speak in tongues, that is, other languages that they did not know. Those who witnessed these things were "bewildered" (verse 6). They were "amazed and astonished" (verse 7). They were "amazed and perplexed" (verse 12). Some were in awe, rejoicing in the "mighty works of God" (verse 11). Others were doubting, mocking the people and claiming those speaking in tongues were drunk (verse 13).

If you remember, Peter stood up and explained the situation. He says in verses 15 and 16, ...

Acts 2:15-16

For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

He then proceeds to quote from Joel, chapter 2, to show how the manifestation of tongues was a fulfillment of this Old Testament prophesy, ending with the great promise of verse 21, "And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

This is the great promise of the gospel, that you simply need to call upon the Lord to be saved from your sins. You don't need to work. You don't need to be good enough. You don't have to follow some sort of religious code. You don't have to prove your zeal. You simply need to call upon the Lord, confessing your sin, acknowledging your need for mercy, pleading his forgiveness, asking for strength. And, as Joel says, "You shall be saved."

We looked at those things last week. But this week, we begin at verse 22, when Peter turns his attention in his message, from the Holy Spirit to Jesus. Indeed, that's why my message this morning is entitled, "Preaching Jesus." Because, that's all that Peter does. He talks about his life and his death. He talks about his burial and resurrection. He talks about his ascension and exaltation. This is exactly what the people in Jerusalem needed to hear.

If you will, Peter was being a witness for Jesus. Peter and the crowds had experienced the power of Jesus. And now, Peter is using the events of the day as a transition to be a witness for Jesus, exactly as Jesus had told them in Acts 1:8, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses." Peter and the apostles had received power of the Holy Spirit. Now, Peter was being a witness. The book of Acts is also calling us to be witnesses as well. So, let's look at Peter's preaching of Jesus. We begin in verse 22, ...

Acts 2:22-36

"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—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. 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;
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
my flesh also will dwell in hope.
For 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.'

"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. 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, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are 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. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

"The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool."

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

These verses are all about Jesus. Peter begins with his ...

1. Life (verse 22)

Acts 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—

Peter begins by identifying Jesus, as being "of Nazareth." This was his hometown. This is where he grew up, about 15 miles southwest of the sea of Galilee. It wasn't such a nice place. In fact, if anything it was a despised place. When Nathanael, an early disciple, first heard about Jesus, he heard about his coming from Nazareth. And Nathanael said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:47).

Well, something good did come out of Nazareth, Jesus the Messiah. Jesus was a perfect man, who lived and love perfectly. We sing this in "The Gospel Song."

Holy God in love became
Perfect man to bear my blame
On the cross he took my sin
By his death I live again [\[1\]](#)

This song focuses upon Jesus, being the perfect man, which is true and important. Yet, Peter, here in verse 22 doesn't focus upon the moral excellencies of Jesus. Rather, he focuses upon his mighty power! Peter told the crowds that Jesus was "a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs."

Peter focused upon the miracles of Jesus, his “works and wonders and signs.” Do you remember the miracles of Jesus? He turned the water into wine (John 2:1-11). Do you remember that? He healed the invalid who was lame for 38 years (John 5:1-16). Do you remember that? He fed the 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two fish (John 6:1-14). He walked on water (John 6:15-21). He raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-44). Do you remember those miracles? He cleansed the leper (Matthew 8:1-4). He cast out the fever (Matthew 8:14-17). He gave sight to the blind (Matthew 9:24-31). He opened the mouth of the dumb (Mark 7:31-37). He raised children from the dead (Matthew 9:18-26). Do you remember these things? He calmed the storm (Matthew 8:23-27). He cast out demons (Matthew 17:14-20). He healed “all who were sick” (Matthew 8:16). These are but a few of the “mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through” Jesus. There are others recorded in the gospel. There were certainly many other miracles that were not recorded.

Now, you may (or may not) remember these miracles, but those to whom Peter spoke experienced them! They witnessed them. They saw them. That’s Peter’s point in verse 22, “as you yourselves know.” They know because Jesus did these miracles, “in [their] midst” (according to verse 22). Jesus did these miracles right before their very eyes! Jesus healed their friends. Jesus healed their sons and daughters. And there was no arguing this point. It’s not as if anyone who was there could stand up and say, “Not true, Peter!” It was very true, because these people knew it. And that’s why didn’t spend much more time on the life of Jesus because he didn’t have to. In our text, it was only one verse, verse 22.

From the life of Jesus, Peter transitioned to his ...

2. Death (verse 23)

We see this in verse 23, ...

Acts 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.

I love this verse, because it shows how the death of Jesus did not take God by surprise. In fact, it was God’s plan! God’s plan was that the Messiah would come and be rejected by his people. You read in Isaiah 53, (some 700 years before the death of Jesus), ...

Isaiah 53:3, 7, 8

He was despised and rejected by men.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
By oppression and judgment he was taken away.
he was cut off out of the land of the living,

And they made his grave with the wicked
and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Isaiah 53 prophesies perfectly of the death of Jesus. Isaiah tells us how he wasn’t put to death because of his sin. Rather, it was because he was despised and rejected. Isaiah also tells us why he was put to death.

Isaiah 53:5

But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.

In other words, Jesus died in our place, for our sin. He was put to death, that we might live. It is his wounds upon the cross that heals our own wounds. Because we have all messed up. We have sinned. As Isaiah said, ...

Isaiah 53:6

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.

And getting back to Peter’s sermon, he says all of this occurred just as Isaiah foretold, which is just what God had planned. It wasn’t the mere foreknowledge of God, as if God knew that it would all happen. No, it was “the definite plan” of God (verse 23). In other words, God’s hands were in it all the way, from his birth in Bethlehem according to the prophecy, to his death on a cross as a criminal according to the prophecy. In fact, listen to Isaiah 53:10, “It was the will of the LORD to crush him.” God’s will was to crush his son! Peter knew that God’s will was to “put him to grief” (Isaiah 53:10). Peter knew that this was God’s redemption plan.

The early church knew that it was God’s will that Jesus was put to death. In Acts 4, just after Peter was released from prison, they prayed together, ...

Acts 4:27-28

for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and

Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

The death of Jesus was no accident. It was not some political coup attempt that went bad. It was according to the sovereign, predestinating hand of God. And yet, doesn't mean that those who put Jesus to death weren't responsible for their sin. Oh, they were. Look again at verse 23, ...

Acts 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, remember who Peter is speaking to. He is speaking to the crowd in Jerusalem. The same crowd that seven weeks earlier had gathered for the Passover. The same ones who had gathered in front of Pilate and shouted out, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" (Matthew 27:22). When Pilate put forth the innocence of Jesus, saying, "What evil has he done?" These very ones shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" (Matthew 27:23).

This very fact would come later to haunt them. When Peter concludes his message, he says, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). Those words sunk deep into their hearts. We read, "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?'" (Acts 2:37). They knew that they were guilty and stood condemned. They knew that they must respond in some way. Peter tells them to repent and be baptized (verse 38). Three thousand did that very thing on that day (verse 41).

Now, lest you think that they put Jesus to death, and that you are not guilty, know this: Anyone who has sinned is guilty of crucifying Jesus. Stuart Townend's song says it well, ...

Behold the Man upon a cross
My sin upon His shoulders
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life
I know that it is finished [\[2\]](#)

It is our sin that placed Jesus upon the cross. His love for us kept him there! And we must feel the weight of our sin! This is what the death of Jesus teaches us. It teaches us of our sin. So, "when we look at Calvary and behold the savior dying for us, we should see in his death not first our salvation but our damnation being borne and carried away by him!" [\[3\]](#)

But again, Peter didn't spend much time speaking about the death of Jesus (one verse in our text this morning) because they all knew of the death of Jesus. They saw him expire on the cross during the feast of Passover. But what they didn't know fully was the resurrection.

Think about it. Jesus was on the cross during the Passover. He's in the tomb as the feast is dying down. Jesus rose from the dead as people are headed out of town on their way home. When Jesus was making his post-resurrection appearances, it wasn't to everyone in Jerusalem. It was to the disciples. Peter even says this in chapter 10 when speaking to Cornelius, "God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 10:40-41). In other words, when Jesus was making his appearances after rising from the dead, he wasn't appearing to the unbelieving masses. Jesus was appearing to his believing disciples. Now, we know that this number is at least 500 people, because that's the number that Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 15:6. But beyond that, we don't know how many people saw Jesus alive after his resurrection. I would suspect that most in the crowd listening to Peter had only heard rumors about Jesus being alive from the dead, but hadn't much thought about it. But Peter had thought about it. And he speaks about it for nine verses in our text. Let's look at our third point, his ...

3. Resurrection (verses 24-32)

In verse 24, Peter states it plainly, "God raised him up." He says the same thing in verse 32, "This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses." Everything in between verses 24 and 32 are getting at the same thing. God raised up Jesus from the dead!

I love the way that Peter describes the resurrection. He said that God "loosed the pangs of death." In other words, Peter envisions death as having a strangle-hold on Jesus, as if he is wrapped up in a straight-jacket. But God came in and unlatched the buckles and straps, so that Jesus could go free. Indeed, this is the reality of the resurrection. Death no longer has dominion over him.

In fact, the straight-jacket that kept Jesus in the tomb, could never keep him long. Peter said, "It was not possible for him to be held by it." There is no way for the bonds of death to keep him contained. Why was Peter so confident? Because the Scriptures said so. Do you notice the first word in verse 25? It is "for." That is, "because." Because David spoke in the Scripture about the death of the Messiah, God would not let the Messiah rot in the grave. He would raise him up. Just note the confidence of Peter in the Scriptures. The Scriptures spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, so it must come to pass. This is the same reason that they replaced Judas with Matthias. The Scripture had to be fulfilled" (Acts 1:16).

In the case of Jesus and his burial. There was no way that he was staying in the grave. Because David spoke about him in Psalm 16, which Peter quotes in verses 25-28. Peter quotes David, saying, ...

Acts 2:25-28

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;
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
my flesh also will dwell in hope.
For 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.’

Psalm 16 is a Psalm of trust. David is trusting and rejoicing in the Lord. He sees God as near him (verse 25). He rejoices in all that means for him (verse 26). He knows that God will never leave him, nor forsake him (verse 27). He is glad in God.

Now, there is a way that David speaks in this Psalm that transcends himself, particularly in verse 27, when he speaks of God not letting his Holy One see corruption. This is what Peter picks up on in verse 29, ...

Acts 2:29-31

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. 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, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

Basically, Peter says this. “You know David, the king? Have you visited his tomb? I have. On many occasions, I have. Whenever I have gone there, I have reflected back upon his life. I have given thanks to God for all that he meant for Israel. He taught us how to live, as a man after God’s own heart. He gave us many worship songs. He gave us insight into the soul of a godly man. But as I have been at his tomb, I have realized, that David is still in the tomb. His bones are decayed. His flesh has experienced corruption. Yet, Psalm 16 promises that this would not take place for God’s Holy One. David must have been speaking about another: the Messiah. In fact, that’s what David was doing. He was prophesying of the Messiah. His soul was not abandoned to Hades. His flesh did not see corruption. Why? Because he was raised from the dead!”

Peter makes his point clear in verse 32, “This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.” In other words, Peter says, “Not only did the Scripture foretell of the resurrection of Christ, we saw Jesus, raised from the dead! Just like Joel, chapter 2 and the tongues. Joel prophesied of the coming of the tongues. And we experienced it! Psalm 16 prophesied that the Messiah would not be kept in the tomb. And we experienced it! We witnessed it! We saw Jesus raised from the dead!”

The exhortation here is to believe it! That’s what Peter is trying to do with his audience. He is telling them about how he saw Jesus alive from the dead. His point was the Jews on that day to believe his words. This exhortation comes to us as well. Believe in the resurrection!

But Peter doesn’t stop here with preaching about Jesus. He continues on with his ...

4. Exaltation (verses 33-35)

We see the exaltation in verses 33-35. Also in these verses, we see the ascension, for that’s the path Jesus took to his exaltation. Consider the verses, ...

Acts 2:33-35

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. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

“‘The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool.”’

Peter puts forth Jesus as exalted at the right hand of God. Peter saw him ascend from the earth. This event was recorded in chapter 1. The ascension concludes with his exaltation at God’s right hand. The quotation here is from Psalm 110, in which the Messiah is seen, seated at the right hand of God, waiting until the time when his enemies would be subdued. When this took place, the Messiah would come back to rule and reign on the earth.

As Jesus was waiting, just like he promised in John 14, 16, he gave the Holy Spirit upon the church. Peter says that this is what they are witnessing right now! They saw the fulfillment of Joel 2, in the speaking of tongues.

Peter argues from Psalm 110 much like he did in Joel 2. In Joel 2, we see David speaking of something greater than himself. So also in Psalm 110, David speaks of someone greater than himself. Peter points out that David wasn’t the one ascended to the heavens. It was Jesus who ascended.

Peter says that Jesus, seated upon the throne in his place of authority, sent the Holy Spirit to come upon the disciples in power. This is what everyone in Jerusalem witnessed that day. They saw the Holy Spirit poured out. But the Spirit didn’t come from nowhere. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit upon his church from his place of authority.

This leads us to the ...

5. Application (verse 36)

Acts 2:36

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

The primary application here is one of knowledge. "Know for certain." Just as the Jews knew the life of Jesus, the death of Jesus, the burial of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, and the exaltation of Jesus, Peter calls them to know that Jesus is "Lord and Christ."

Are you sure of this? Can you think through the life of Jesus in these terms? Are you certain that Jesus lived? Are you certain that Jesus died on the cross and was buried in a tomb? Are you certain that Jesus rose from the dead? Are you certain that Jesus now sits at the right hand of God as the Messiah?

For those in Peter's day, the conviction came. Peter said that "you crucified him. You did it. You are to blame. You are guilty." At that point, we read in verse 37 that they were "cut to the heart." They realized that they crucified their Messiah! They cried out in desperation to Peter, "What shall we do?" (verse 37).

Peter tells them to repent and be baptized (verse 38). We see in verse 41 that 3,000 of them did so that day. They believed what Peter said. They repented of their sins. They submitted themselves to baptism. We will look more deeply at these things next week.

But what is your response to the life/death/burial/resurrection/ascension/exaltation of Jesus? Does it break you in your heart every time you hear it? Do you realize that it was your sin that brought it all about? When you look at the cross, do you see your sin on it? Now, this is no doom and gloom. This is the path to our salvation. And in that we rejoice.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 25, 2020 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org.

[1] Words and music by Bob Kauflin and Drew Jones.

[2] Words and music by Stuart Townend.

[3] Quote by Robert Reymond.