

**Peter's Sermon (Part 2)****Acts 2:23—38**

The beginning of Peter's first sermon points out to Israel that the things happening, on this particular Pentecost, are actually fulfillments of prophecy. He then points an accusing finger, condemning them of killing their Messiah. This would be very troubling information since it was common knowledge that the promised Messiah would defeat their enemies and lead them into the Millennial Kingdom. If they put their Messiah to death, how would these things be fulfilled?

**Accusation** (verses 22—24)

As Peter preaches to the crowd, he points his finger at them accusing them of killing their Messiah. There is a running argument as to whom to blame for Jesus' death. Some say it was Israel, others say it was Rome and some say it was you and me. There are those who say it was God the Father. Ultimately, Peter puts the blame on Israel (Matthew 27:22—25).

Jesus came to them with undisputed credentials that He was sent from God. The Father's voice came out of heaven declaring Jesus to be His son, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him at His baptism. He did hundreds of miracles, including raising people from the dead. The miracles, wonders and signs all attested that Jesus was sent from God. In spite of all the evidence, they put Jesus to death. He was killed by the hands of evil men, but it was all foreknown by God that it would happen this way. God used these evil men to accomplish His purpose, but these men did not need to carry out their wicked plan. They will be judged accordingly at the Great White Throne judgment.

It is interesting to contrast Peter's view of the cross with Paul's. Peter says that the cross as a shame and a condemnation to Israel (Acts 2:23; 5:30) while Paul saw it as something to glory in (1 Corinthians 1:18; Galatians 6:14). Peter condemns Israel with their own words in that they demanded Him crucified. They accepted the responsibility for the death of Jesus (Matthew 27:25), and when Peter pointed out their guilt, many repented (of demanding that Jesus Christ be put to death) and were baptized, as instructed by Peter (Acts 2:38).

In contrast, Paul rejoices in the work of the cross. In contrast to Peter, it is not an event that condemns, but one that gives life. Paul understood the ramifications of the cross from a different perspective. Peter was looking at it as something that condemned Israel, an act that they needed to repent of. Paul saw the life-giving attributes that came out of the cross. His message does not include repentance, only belief. Israel needed to repent or turn from what they did to their Savior, while our repentance is tied up in our salvation. We don't repent to be saved, instead, repentance is a by-product of salvation (Romans 2:4). Having sorrow for what we have done may cause us to turn away from our sins (repentance), but being sorrowful and repentant does not save us. Only believing in the Person and work of Jesus Christ will save us. Don't be deceived into thinking salvation comes from any work other than believing that Jesus Christ is all-sufficient to save. There is nothing we can add to what Jesus Christ has done.

**Jesus is the Messiah** (verses 25—36)

After accusing Israel of killing their Messiah, he proves to them that Jesus was the Son of God and their Messiah. He first points out the many miracles, signs and wonders that Jesus had done during His public ministry. This is important because Israel had been trained to look for signs since the exodus from Egypt (Exodus 4:1—4; 30—31). Jesus came with many signs to point the religious leaders and the people of Israel to Him as their Messiah. Jesus understood their need to see these signs performed (John 4:48), as did Paul (1 Corinthians 1:22). The writer of Hebrews also acknowledges Israel's need to see signs and

wonders (Hebrews 2:4). Of course, Jesus gave them an abundance of signs, testifying that He was indeed sent from God. However, in spite of all the signs given, most of Israel rejected Him. This same thing also happened during Israel's wandering in the desert when they rejected God's authority by rejecting Moses (Numbers 14:11).

Not only did Israel witness many miracles, signs and wonders at the hands of Jesus and His disciples, but they also witnessed Him being raised from the dead after His crucifixion. This should have been the ultimate sign that Jesus was the Man He said He was, their Messiah. Seeing the man you put to death come back to life should have caused most those in Israel to fall on their knees in repentance. Obviously, their hearts were as stone (Zechariah 7:12) which is why God will need to give believing Israel a heart of flesh at the end of the Tribulation (Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26).

Peter then connects King David with Jesus to prove He was qualified to be their Messiah. Peter goes to two passages in Psalms to show that King David could not have been writing about himself:

**Psalm 16:10** For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

**Psalm 110:1** The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Note that "Hell" is actually "Sheol," the place of the dead. This is equivalent to "Hades" in the New Testament. Peter makes the point that David could not have been speaking of himself because his grave was right there in their midst. He was writing prophetic words that pointed to their Messiah. David is still in the grave, but Jesus Christ was resurrected and ascended into heaven. His resurrection and ascension were well known events by the people Peter was preaching to. Connecting Jesus with Old Testament prophecy was important to prove that Jesus was the Messiah.

Peter ties up his proof by stating that these things show that the Man Jesus was both Lord (Deity) and Christ (Messiah).

### **A call for action** (verses 37—38)

Now that Israel has been accused to have killed their Messiah, the big question in the minds of those listening is, "What shall we do?" Most Bible-believing, fundamental Christians today would answer that a person needs to repent and invite Jesus into his heart, or to turn from sin and turn to Him, or make God Lord and Savior of his life. Peter's answer is very clear. A person needed to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, then they will receive the Holy Spirit.

Most true Christians understand that we are not saved through baptism, however, many will twist Peter's declaration of salvation by saying we need to repent of our sins to be saved and then get baptized. There are at least a couple of problems with this. The first is that we are not saved by repenting, we actually have repented by getting saved. Repentance is wrapped up in the very act of believing, but repentance does not save.

The second problem is in the twisting of Scripture to conform with their belief system. Although they understand salvation from Paul's writings, they try to apply Paul's doctrine to Peter's doctrine to make it all fit into their own theology. Instead of letting Scripture say what it naturally says, they find the need to unify Israel's Prophetic program with the Church's Mystery program. The blending of these two programs causes much confusion. They will ultimately change what Peter says (repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Spirit) into something that is more friendly toward what Paul preaches (repent, receive the Holy Spirit, be baptized). What they don't realize is that this still deviates from what Paul teaches who says we only need to believe in the complete sufficiency of Jesus Christ alone for our salvation.

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