

Key:

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Yellow – Sermon Notes

First Sermon and Firstfruits

Acts 2:14–41

Go ahead and take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Acts. We are going to study Acts 2:14–41 today. This is the day of Pentecost, Part 2.

We saw in the previous passage, Acts 2:1–13, that the church was launched with an event that can be described as utter pandemonium. The Holy Spirit is poured out on the disciples as visible tongues of fire. The disciples start speaking in foreign languages, and a large crowd starts to gather to figure out what’s going on. They marvel at what’s happening here. The crowd is amazed and astonished and bewildered. Some of the crowd thinks the disciples are drunk and they dismiss them, but others are asking sincerely, “What is this?” “Why is this happening?” They know that this is something supernatural and spectacular and they want to know what to make of it.

Well in that moment of confusion and astonishment, Peter steps forward with an explanation in verse 14.¹

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven,²

Notice here that the twelve are taking center stage before everyone. I believe that all 120 disciples, men and women, were present at Pentecost speaking in multiple tongues. But when it’s time to preach, the twelve apostles step to the fore.³ And Peter is the primary spokesman.⁴

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them:

I’m glad to see that Peter “lifted” his voice. That encourages me. He didn’t preach with a whisper. He didn’t preach with apprehension or with fear. **And he didn’t deliver a “smiley-faced preacher pep talk” either.** We’re going to see in a few moments that Peter, in his sermon, accuses his audience of murder and treachery. **This is not exactly a seeker-sensitive sermon!**

No, Peter stood up in front of 3,000+ people, with his eleven brothers at his side lending support and solidarity, and he lifted his voice to preach.

Like I said last week, I always envision Peter with this deep, authoritative, masculine preacher’s voice. The voice of a big, burly fisherman! So imagine that as I read his words, even if my voice isn’t quite like that. “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem,⁵ let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour⁶ of the day.

¹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 108: “This speech is one of the most important theological declarations in the NT. It highlights who Jesus is and explains how one can know what God was doing through him.”

² The eleven here includes Matthias who replaced Judas in Matthew 1:12–26. This renders impossible the notion that Paul was truly the twelfth apostle, and the selection of Matthias (before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit) was a mistake. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 71: “The fact that the other ‘eleven’ are mentioned shows that Matthias had been accepted as the twelfth member of the apostolic group.”

³ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 100–1: “But he stands up ‘with the Eleven,’ which suggests that the other apostles are backing him. Ministry is almost always done as a team in Acts.”

⁴ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 132: “This is one of the longest speeches in Acts. Its 429 words in the Greek text can be compared with Paul’s first missionary speech in Pisidian Antioch (470 words); the longest speech is Stephen’s speech in Acts 7 with 1,014 words.”

⁵ Vickers, “Acts” in *John–Acts*, ESVEC, 356: “Even though visitors are present from all over the Mediterranean world, Peter addresses the ‘men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem’ (2:14). This is best explained by the fact that he is in Jerusalem, the feast is in Jerusalem, and, most importantly, the crucifixion took place in Jerusalem and the assigned mission begins there.”

⁶ See the following display of the Jewish hours of the day by Kevin Lipp (shown in Justin Taylor’s TGC article: “What Hour Was Jesus Crucified? Resolving an Apparent Bible Contradiction,” 04-18-19):

Like all good sermons, this sermon begins with a joke. Peter says to the people, **“They’re not drunk as you suppose. It’s 9am in the morning. Who gets drunk at 9am?”**⁷

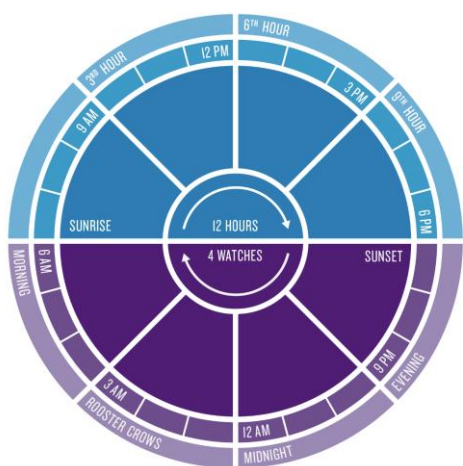
Peter’s responding, of course, to the accusations of some people in the crowd. After hearing the 120 men and women speaking in foreign tongues, some of the people in the audience dismiss what’s happening as intoxication. And Peter meets them where they are. **“They’re not drunk”** he says. That idea would be preposterous in this society.⁸ Jews didn’t even eat breakfast till four hours after sunrise.⁹ If they did get drunk sinfully (drunkenness was a sin in this culture), it would happen at night not in the morning.

“So if it’s not intoxication, Peter, what is it?” Well he tells us. Look at **verse 16**.

¹⁶ But this is what was uttered¹⁰ through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ “And in the last days¹¹ it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out¹² my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; ¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;¹³ ²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. ²¹ And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

In other words, **“This is that.”** **“That passage from Joel, that you’ve read since you were little Jewish boys in synagogue... this is that!”**¹⁴

Remember now, Peter was only addressing Jews at this point. They were multicultural Jews, to be sure. They came from all over the world to gather for Pentecost. But still they were Jews. And more than that, Luke tells us that they were “devout” Jews in **verse 5**. So they would have been familiar with this OT passage.



⁷ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 108: “Probably this is an example of the sort of humor that runs throughout Acts: ‘Folks don’t get drunk first thing in the morning ... that comes later in the day.’”

⁸ Keener, *IVPBBNT*, Ac 2:14–15: “People usually got drunk at night (cf. 1 Thess 5:7), at banquets, not at 9 a.m.; people might have a hangover in the morning, but they would hardly act drunk.”

⁹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 108: “Nine a.m. (v. 15) was a customary prayer hour (literally, ‘the third hour’), and Jews would only eat after that—at the fourth hour.” Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 72: “Nine o’clock in the morning was an hour of prayer, the time of the regular morning sacrifice. On this occasion, there were special sacrifices because it was the Feast of Weeks.”

¹⁰ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 135: “The passive participle (ἐιρημένον) is a divine passive—it is God who speaks through the words of Joel which are recorded in Scripture.”

¹¹ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 135: “This was a common early Christian conviction that was often expressed: the ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the Messiah and Savior, with the climax of the coming of the Spirit on Pentecost, constitutes the beginning of the final epoch in history when God has acted in a decisive manner to bring salvation through his Son” [see Rom 13:11; 1 Cor 10:11; Gal 4:4; Eph 1:7–10, 20–23; 1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 5:23; Heb 1:1–2; 9:26; Jas 5:1–9; 1 Pet 1:19–21; 2 Pet 3:3; 1 John 2:18; Jude 18].” Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 101–2: “What the people are witnessing is the ‘beginning’ of the last days, when people of all types and ages will prophecy (vv. 17b–18). At the ‘end’ of the last days will be cosmic disturbances (vv. 19–20; cf. Rev. 6:12–14; 8:5, 7; 20:9), which will herald ‘the great and glorious day of the Lord’ (v. 20b).”

¹² This is the same Greek verb (ἐκχέω) that was used of Judas’s bowels that “gushed out” when he was died (Acts 1:18; see also Acts 2:33).

¹³ Keener, *IVPBBNT*, Ac 2:19: “‘Blood, fire and columns of smoke’ is the language of war.”

¹⁴ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 111: “It is laid out in a this-is-that (τοῦτο ἐστίν, *touto estin*) form that is similar to what one sees in pesher style interpretation found at Qumran.”

So Peter's saying, **"That passage that you've been reading your whole life from the OT, from the prophet Joel... well, this is that. The fulfillment of that prophecy is happening now."**¹⁵

I don't know if we can really grasp just how significant this would have been for a group of devout Jews. They had been waiting for the Messiah for centuries. They had read those prophecies their entire lives and had eagerly anticipated a fulfillment of **Joel 2** and a myriad of other OT prophecies that God had revealed to his people. They longed for a "this is that" moment. And now right before their eyes, it was happening.

Here's the first point from our text today. I've entitled this message "First Sermon and Firstfruits." This is the first sermon ever preached in the church. And it results in the firstfruits of the church's ministry. And there are four things that are emphasized in Peter's sermon. Here's the first.

1) Peter preaches the **fulfillment** of OT Scripture (2:14-21)

Now this is just one of many prophecies that are fulfilled in the NT. Throughout the gospels and throughout the book of **Acts** we hear repeatedly, **"this is that."** **"This fulfills that."** **"This fulfills what the prophet Joel or Micah or Isaiah or Jeremiah said in the OT."**

In fact, there are hundreds of prophecies that appear in the OT. Many, if not most of those, are fulfilled in Christ's first coming. Some still remain to be fulfilled at Jesus's second coming. And the probabilities of one person, Jesus Christ, fulfilling all of the prophecies about the Messiah in the OT are astronomical. Some have tried to calculate those probabilities, and the numbers boggle the mind.¹⁶

Imagine if you would when George Washington was inaugurated as the first president of the United States more than two centuries ago... imagine if he had made hundreds of prophecies concerning the future of America. Imagine if he has said, "We will have fifty states with fifty governors." Imagine if he had predicted that we would go to Europe and help fight and win two world wars. Imagine if he had prophesied that we would have a black president someday. Imagine if he had prophesied that America would be the foremost economic power in the world that would dwarf all the rest of the European nations including England. If George Washington had made hundreds of prophecies like that, and most of them had already come true, we would all be truly shocked and amazed at his prescience.

Yet that's what we have in the NT. We have hundreds of specific prophecies about Jesus fulfilled in the NT. Some are fulfilled in his first coming, we can look back and see them. Some await his second coming, so we anticipate their fulfillment in the future.¹⁷

Now here's the thing about **Joel 2**, and we need to reckon with this. Not everything written in **Joel 2** is fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.¹⁸ Obviously the Spirit is poured out and the people prophesy, that's a summary

¹⁵ Keener, *IVPBBNT*, Ac 2:20-21: "In Joel the sun would be blotted out and the moon discolored especially by the locust (and/or human) invasion (Joel 2:2, 10; 3:15). Peter suggests that in some anticipatory sense, this final time of God's salvation for Israel has begun. Tongues prove that the Spirit of prophecy has come, which proves that salvation has come, which proves that the messianic era has come, and thus that the Messiah has come."

¹⁶ For an attempt at this, see Hugh Ross, "Fulfilled Prophecy: Evidence for the Reliability of the Bible," 08-22-03:

<https://reasons.org/explore/publications/articles/fulfilled-prophecy-evidence-for-the-reliability-of-the-bible>

¹⁷ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 109-10: "The signs referred to in vv. 19-20 have often perplexed interpreters. Did Peter see them as having transpired at Pentecost, or did he relegate them to the final times, to the period of the second coming? Did he perhaps include them only in order to get to the crucial v. 21 with its reference to salvation, which would become the final appeal of his sermon? A key may perhaps be found in the little words 'above' and 'below,' which have been added to the Septuagint of Joel. D. Arichea has suggested that we may have a chiasmic *a-b-b-a* pattern here with *a* comprising the signs above: the darkened sun, the blood-colored moon. The signs below are the blood, fire, and thick smoke, which could more easily be related to the events in Jesus' passion and at Pentecost. In any event the signs in v. 19 are standard apocalyptic language and almost certainly refer to the final cosmic events preceding the Parousia."

¹⁸ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 72 states that "Nothing that Joel prophesied actually happened in Acts 2, and nothing that happened in Acts 2, such as the speaking in tongues, was even mentioned by Joel. Literally, Joel was prophesying the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the whole nation of Israel in the last days resulting in Israel's national regeneration. However, in Acts, the Spirit came upon only twelve men." This is an overstatement. Surely Peter intimates that there is some fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32 in what he sees. But partial fulfillment is the clearest way to read the evidence. Joel's prophecy has an already/not-yet quality to it. It has been inaugurated in the church age with the pouring out of the Spirit. But it awaits consummation at the end of the church age. Fruchtenbaum continues: "Joel's prophecy will only be fulfilled when the Spirit falls on all Jewish flesh, resulting in cataclysms in the

statement of the speaking in tongues about the works of God and Peter's preaching afterwards.¹⁹ There are also other things that are fulfilled later in **Acts**. For example, we see later the dreaming of dreams and the seeing of visions.²⁰

But towards the end of that prophecy, there's a description of things that happen at the end of the church age, not the beginning. The prophet Joel saw the beginning and the end. **It's like a person who looks at a mountain range and sees the peaks of those mountains. But he doesn't know that there is a chasm between those mountains. That's how prophecy often works in the OT.**²¹ They see Jesus's first coming and Jesus's second coming, but they don't see the 2,000+ year period between them called "the church age."²²

And so in **Acts 2:17–21**, there are things being fulfilled in that moment, and there are things that won't be fulfilled until later in the church age, and even into the tribulation period that precedes Christ's return.²³

So, for example, **verse 17** says,

¹⁷ "And in the last days²⁴ it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; ¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

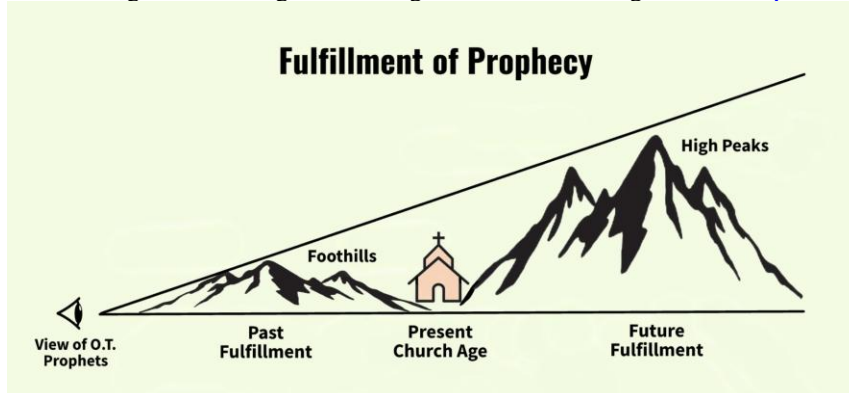
All or most of that is fulfilled in the days of the early church with a heavy emphasis on the outpouring of the Spirit. In the OT, the Holy Spirit came upon some people for some purposes.²⁵ In the NT, after Pentecost,

heavens and Israel's national salvation on earth, accompanied with supernatural dreams and visions. All this will be in preparation for Israel's final restoration as detailed in Joel 3" (72).

¹⁹ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 137: "In the context of Peter's speech in Acts 2, the term "prophesy" refers to the proclamation of the mighty acts of God by the 120 disciples in foreign, unlearned languages, spoken under the revelatory inspiration of God and perhaps under some constraint to do so, languages which people in the crowd can understand (v. 11). In Acts, the activity of prophets is attested in 11:27; 13:1; 15:32; 19:6; 21:9–10."

²⁰ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 114: "Later in Acts, Paul will be led by a vision (16:9–10), and Cornelius and Peter each have a vision that sets up their meeting (9:10; 10:3, 10, 17; 18:9; Harrison 1975: 58). Acts 2:17 is the only occurrence of the term ὁρασις (*horasis*, vision) in Acts, one of only four uses in the NT (the others are in Rev. 4:3 [2x]; 9:17)."

²¹ Here's a good rendering of this image from the following website: <https://www.growingchristians.org/hermeneutics/principle-22>



Sometimes the view of the OT prophets also includes a near (partial) fulfillment in their own day.

²² Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, chapter 4, Kindle: "Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32, which describes the whole range of the age of grace (or of the Spirit), in which we live.:"

²³ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 153: "Since Joel's prophecy of wonders in the sky and signs on the earth has not yet been completely fulfilled but will be fulfilled on the day of God's judgment, Christians live 'between the times'—between the first and second coming of Jesus; between the gift of salvation as forgiveness of sins and the future gift of the removal of all sin; between the experience of God's presence in the midst of ridicule and continued opposition and the experience of God's presence in God's new and perfect world."

²⁴ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 112: "Luke sees the start of the decisive eras of fulfillment as happening in these recent events. As with the other three OT texts that will be raised in his speech, this event is seen as fulfilled, at least initially, by what God has done and declared. The apostles read such texts as last-day, kingdom texts and saw themselves in the last days (1 Pet. 1:20; 1 Cor. 10:11; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:1–2; 9:26; 1 John 2:18). Since the day of the Lord is also alluded to in this citation, what Peter is really saying here is that the coming of the Spirit is the beginning of 'those days.' An era of righteousness will conclude them, and that era comes with the day of the Lord."

the Holy Spirit comes upon all people who put their faith in Christ: young and old, male and female, Jews and Gentiles, slave and free.²⁶ **All of us have the indwelling Spirit, if we have faith in Christ.**²⁷

But some of this passage awaits fulfillment until future events.²⁸ So, for example, in **verse 19**,

¹⁹ And I will show wonders²⁹ in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;³⁰ ²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. ²¹ And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name³¹ of the Lord shall be saved.³²

Verses 19 and 20 describe the eschatological “Day of the Lord.” This climactic day still awaits a future fulfillment at Jesus’s second coming. But there are enough correspondences between what’s happening at Pentecost, and what Joel prophesied in **Joel 2**, for Peter to say, **“This is that.” “This, at least in part, is that.”**

And **verse 21** is true of all in the church age. This is happening now. This was happening at Pentecost. This has been true since the beginning of the church age and will be true till the end.
everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

So be aware of this whenever you tackle OT prophecy in the NT. Some OT prophecy is fulfilled in the days of Jesus, or shortly thereafter. Some still awaits fulfillment at Jesus’s second coming. And sometimes (like Joel 2:28–32) those prophecies are combined in OT Scripture.

Now after Peter quotes the OT, Peter’s sermon continues. And remember, the OT was Peter’s Bible. So what we have here is an example of exposition in the Bible.³³ Peter is explaining an OT text and relating it to Christ. So his preaching is expositional, and it’s Christological, just like our preaching should be! **So we are**

²⁵ ORIGEN: “I see, however, that the special coming of the Holy Spirit to people is declared to have happened after Christ’s ascension into heaven rather than before his coming into the world. Before that time the gift of the Holy Spirit was bestowed on prophets only and on a few others among the people who happened to have proved worthy of it.” Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 29.

²⁶ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 136: “In Joel’s context, ‘all flesh’ denotes all the people of Judah whose fortunes will be restored (Joel 3:1, LXX 4:1). Peter will later clarify, that ‘all flesh’ are all the people who repent and believe in Jesus as the Messiah (v. 38).”

²⁷ BEDE: “The word effusion shows the lavishness of the gift, for the grace of the Holy Spirit was not to be granted, as formerly, only to individual prophets and priests, but to everyone in every place, regardless of sex, state of life or position.” Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 28.

²⁸ BEDE: “This is believed partly as something that had been done at the Lord’s passion and partly as something to be done in the future, before the great day of the Lord, that is, the day of judgment.” Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 29.

²⁹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 114–5: “The term’s many appearances in Acts, however, point to a highlighting of the events, not a particular person. Some refer to the work of Jesus (2:22), but most look to the work of those in the early church, since the reference is to the significance of Pentecost. This is the time of new deliverance to which God bears witness... It is better to see these allusions as primarily directed to the future, although there may be some typology in Jesus’s death, as Luke 22:20 combined with the descriptions of Jesus’s death might suggest. If the reference is future, then the beginning of the new era means that the judgment that consummates it is also drawing nearer.”

³⁰ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 116: “In combination with the mention of smoke (καπνός, kapnos), the connection to judgment is assured. Of its thirteen NT occurrences, all but this appearance of καπνός are in the book of Revelation, and most are associated with judgment (Rev. 9:2–3 [3x], 17–18 [2x]; 14:11; 18:9, 18; 19:3; two uses [8:4; 15:8] allude to God’s presence). Thus this part of the Joel citation describes the judgment to come during the day of the Lord (see Acts 2:40 and the call to avoid the judgment).”

³¹ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 140: “The term ‘name’ (ὄνομα) occurs frequently in Acts [Acts 2:21, 38; 3:6, 16; 4:7, 10, 12, 17, 18, 30; 5:28, 40, 41; 8:12, 16; 9:14, 15, 16, 21, 27, 28]. In 3:16 Peter emphasizes in a sermon in the temple courts that what saves is not the name but the faith with which Jesus’ name is invoked. The ‘name’ of Jesus, the risen Messiah and the exalted Lord, ‘represents his divine authority and his continuing power to grant the blessing of salvation.’”

³² Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 116–7: “The juxtaposition of blood, fire, and vapor of smoke, a dark sun, and a bloody moon looks at creation in upheaval and judgment. This is imagery associated with the day of the Lord (see v. 20b) and is tied to the Joel citation. The need for salvation surfaces because of the reality of coming judgment and the accountability that judgment requires... These cosmic signs precede (πρίν, *prin*, before) the arrival of the day of the Lord, which in this context means the decisive time of judgment that the OT often discusses (Amos 8:9; Joel 2:10; 2:30–31 [3:3–4 MT and LXX]; Zeph. 1:15). The preposition πρίν here looks to subsequent time (Wallace 1996: 596). Peter is saying that the eschatological clock is ticking. With the end the cosmic signs and judgment come (so also Rev. 6:12, alluding to this verse in Joel; Bruce 1990: 121; in the NT: 1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:10 [also the day of Christ]).”

³³ Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, chapter 4, Kindle: “Peter was full of Scripture! Peter was not preaching with notes. He did not even know he was going to preach. There had been no conscious preparation. The point is, he knew Joel’s messianic prophecy by heart.”

doing something now, here at church, which Peter did 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem. It's something that the church has been doing for twenty centuries: 1) Preach the Bible and 2) Preach Christ.

And here's what Peter says. Look at **verse 22**.

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—³⁴

Question: Did Jesus do mighty works during his earthly ministry? **Answer:** Absolutely, he did. People marveled at his works. Other people wanted to kill him because of those mighty works. **That always boggles my mind. Jesus does miracles that are unexplainable, and people want to kill him for it.**

Look at **verse 23**.

²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

Yikes! Peter moves from a joke to OT exposition to verbal accusation. **This is not seeker-sensitive preaching.**³⁵ **"You killed the Messiah,"** Peter says. **"He did incredible signs and wonders among you, and you killed him!"**³⁶

Now this is pretty bold of Peter. There's a good chance that some of the 3,000+ people in the crowd right now were part of the crowd that yelled **"crucify him"** in Jerusalem just a few weeks before this.³⁷ Maybe there are some priests in this crowd as well who sought Jesus's death. That's very possible.

And that just goes to show how bold Peter is in this moment.³⁸ Talk about moxie. Talk about sanctified bravado. It's possible that the crowd might just yell back at Peter, **"O yeah. We killed Jesus and you're next, buddy! Let's crucify this guy too!"**

Notice also that Peter said this was all part of God's divine plan and foreknowledge. God is sovereign! **Man is responsible!**

²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite³⁹ plan and foreknowledge⁴⁰ of God, you crucified⁴¹ and killed⁴² by the hands of lawless men.⁴³

³⁴ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 112: "Peter stressed that the Jerusalem Jews should have read the meaning of these signs and recognized Jesus as the appointed Messiah: 'You yourselves know these things; you witnessed Jesus' miracles' (author's paraphrase, v. 22b). This portion of Peter's speech established the guilt of the Jewish crowd, put them under conviction, and so led them to repentance and faith."

³⁵ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 116–7: "When John Wesley went to an area, he had a strategy of preaching 'the law' so as to bring about the conviction of sin before emphasizing the gospel. 'At our first beginning to preach at any place, after a general declaration of the love of God to sinners and his willingness that they should be saved, to preach the law in the strongest, the closest, the most searching manner possible; only intermixing the gospel here and there, and showing it, as it were, afar off' [From John Wesley, *Letters*, (London, 1931), 3:82]. Once people had been convicted of sin through the preaching of law, he went on to emphasize grace."

³⁶ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 117: "The attempt to bring conviction about sin, to warn about judgment, and to call people to repentance ought to be standard elements today, as they were in Acts [See 2:23, 36–38, 40; 3:13–15, 19, 23, 26; 10:42–43; 13:40–42; 14:15; 17:30–31]."

³⁷ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 142: "Some of those in the crowd listening to Peter's explanation of the strange phenomena that have taken place on Pentecost might have been part of the crowd who, only a few weeks earlier, had shouted, 'Crucify, crucify him!' (Luke 23:18, 21, 23)."

³⁸ CHRYSOSTOM: "'He raised his voice,' that is, he spoke with great confidence, that they might perceive the grace of the Spirit. He, who could not endure the questioning of a poor girl, now discourses with such great confidence in the middle of people all breathing murder upon him. This in itself became an indisputable proof of the resurrection." Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 27–8.

JOHANN SPANGENBERG: "But what was Peter for a man? A simple, uneducated person: a fisherman. And what became of him? A learned preacher, an exegete of Scripture, an apostle of Christ. Before he could not stand up to the high priest Caiaphas's servant girl; now he stands up to the entire world. Before a woman's shadow petrified him, so that he denied Christ; now he freely confesses Christ before all people, Jews and Gentiles. Before he struck Malchus with the physical sword; now he strikes the entire world with the spiritual sword, with God's word. Is this not the work of God and the power of the Holy Spirit? What human power, wisdom and cleverness could have been able to transform Peter's disposition so quickly?" Quoted in Chung-Kim and Hains, *Acts: New Testament*, RCS, 25.

³⁹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 120: "The term for 'predetermined' (ὁρίζω, horizō) [ESV: 'definite'] appears eight times in the NT with six uses in Luke-Acts (the others are Luke 22:22; Acts 10:42; 11:29; 17:26, 31; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 4:7). Luke's frequent usage underscores his belief that God is very much in control of events that are tied to Jesus and included a plan for suffering as a part of Jesus's calling."

God planned it. God knew about it. But that doesn't absolve people of their guilt. God is sovereign. Man is responsible.⁴⁴ **Put both of those in your theological pipe and smoke it.**⁴⁵

Now look at **verse 24**.

²⁴ God raised him [Jesus] up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.⁴⁶

So Peter's preaching here. And now his sermon is reaching fever pitch. It was not possible for Jesus to be held by death. Jesus is too powerful to be held by death. And God raised him up!

By the way, the word "pangs" here is typically used of a woman during childbirth. And Peter's use of this word here is fascinating. He's using it as an illustration. All good preachers know how to illustrate, right? And Peter is no exception to that.

Here's how Peter's illustration works. **Death can no more hold Christ in the grave than a pregnant woman can hold the child in her body during the pangs of childbirth! The baby's got to come out when the pangs start. And Jesus had to come out of the grave!**⁴⁷ Is that a good illustration? Probably that illustration is more powerful for mothers in the room than non-mothers.

²⁴ God raised [Jesus] up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for [Jesus] to be held by [death]. ²⁵ For David says concerning him⁴⁸

Here's some more fulfillment of OT prophecy. Peter quotes David in **Psalms 16**, which was a very well-known Messianic psalm in Peter's day.⁴⁹

"I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; ²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. ²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption

⁴⁰ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 120: "Reference to foreknowledge (πρόγνωσις, *prognōsis*) is rare, appearing two times in the NT (1 Pet. 1:2 is the other text)."

⁴¹ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 142: "Peter does not provide details of the horrific procedure of crucifixion, which was a widespread penalty in the Roman world, inflicted mostly on people from the lower classes (slaves, violent criminals, and political rebels in the provinces), carried out in public as a deterrent, bringing utter humiliation and shame on the executed criminal."

⁴² Keener, *IVPBBNT*, Ac 2:22–28: "Some anti-Semites have used texts like 2:23 to attack Jewish people in general, but Peter's critique of their corporate responsibility (cf. 2 Sam 12:9) is no harsher than that of Old Testament prophets (e.g., Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah), and cannot rightly be used as if it were."

⁴³ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 73–4: "These lawless men were Pharisees and Sadducees, the leaders who represented the people, and the guilt of the leaders is the guilt of the nation." Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 121: "Most interpreters think the 'lawless men' refers only to the Romans who gave out the penalty of crucifixion and executed Jesus. Seen in this light, 'lawless men' refers to those who did not have the guidance of the Mosaic law, a phrase expressing a Jewish perspective. But Israel, through its lawless leaders, those who were supposed to support the law, also contributed to the slaying of Jesus, as the end of the verse makes clear."

⁴⁴ JOHN CALVIN: "I deny that God is the author of evil because this expression carries certain implications. For a wicked deed is judged according to the end at which it is aimed. When people commit theft or murder, they sin in being thieves or murderers; in theft and murder there is a criminal intention. But God who uses their wickedness stands on a different level." Quoted in Chung-Kim and Hains, *Acts: New Testament*, RCS, 27.

⁴⁵ I realize there's a mystery to how we put these things together. There's a mystery to how we harmonize God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. For me, that's not a problem to be solved, it's a mystery to be explored. But both of those concepts are emphasized in Scripture. Peter emphasizes both in the same verse!

Vickers, "Acts" in *John–Acts*, ESVEC, 359: "Acts 2:23–24 is commonly associated with the issue of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Jesus died because it was God's plan and because those in Peter's audience crucified him with the help of the Romans ('lawless men'; v. 23). Peter's point, however, is not to iron out the complexities of sovereignty and responsibility. The Bible in general presents sovereignty and responsibility as a reality, something that is."

⁴⁶ Chrysostom: "'But God raised him up, having freed him from the pangs of death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.' Here he hinted at something great and sublime, for the expression 'it was impossible' is in itself that of one assigning something. It shows that even death itself, when it held him, experienced birth pangs and suffered terribly (by pangs of death the Old Testament means danger and disaster). It also shows that he so rose as never again to die. For the words "because it was impossible for him to be held in its power" mean that his resurrection was not common to the rest." Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 31.

⁴⁷ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 103: "G. Bertram describes beautifully what Peter is saying: 'The abyss can no more hold the Redeemer than a pregnant woman can hold the child in her body.'"

⁴⁸ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 144: "As Peter will identify the speaker with Jesus, the Messiah and Lord (vv. 29–36), he understands the words of the psalmist as words of Jesus, who expresses his confidence that God will always help him."

⁴⁹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 123: "Peter uses the psalm because the kind of defense God gave to the psalmist is like that which Jesus received, a typological-prophetic use."

This word “corruption” refers to decay or decomposition.⁵⁰ When the disciples came to the empty tomb, there was no smell of putrefying human flesh. There was probably the smell of myrrh and spices used to mask the smell of decomposing flesh. But there was no smell of decomposing flesh. And that’s because there was no decomposing flesh. Jesus rose from the dead.

Look at **verse 28**. Peter’s still quoting **Psalm 16**.

²⁸ *You have made known to me the paths of life [that’s a metaphor for eternal life]; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.*⁵¹

David in this passage was anticipating a resurrection. His soul would not be abandoned to Hades, the grave. Hades (Greek: ᾍδης) is the Greek translation of the OT *sheol* (שְׁאוֹל). And *sheol* could be a reference to hell, or it could be a reference to “the abode of the dead.”⁵² More generally it could simply refer to the grave.⁵³ I think the idea here is the grave not hell.⁵⁴

Now here’s where Peter’s going with this. This is important. David did go to the grave. And his body never rose from the dead. Not yet, anyway. So here’s the question. How could this passage be applied to King David? How could David say in **Psalm 16**, “You will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption?” David’s body did go to the grave! David’s body did experience decomposition! So what is David talking about?⁵⁵

Here’s the answer. This passage doesn’t apply to David.⁵⁶ It was intended to be messianic, and it should be interpreted messianically. It wasn’t about David. It was about “the Son of David,” the Messiah who would come from David’s line, Jesus Christ.

That’s why Jesus’s genealogy is the first thing **Matthew** records in his gospel (**1:1–17**). **Matthew** wants to make the Davidic link to Jesus clear at the very beginning of his gospel. So that we understand this is a true and better Son of David. **Luke** does the same thing in his genealogy in **Luke 3:23–38**.

By the way, all of this was common knowledge in Peter’s day. People knew David was dead. They knew where his grave was. They could go visit David’s grave if they wanted to. Almost everyone was anticipating a “Son of David Messiah” who would be greater than David. Everyone interpreted **Psalm 16** messianically just like Peter does here. So where we have to stop and explain things a bit from **Psalm 16**, Peter doesn’t have to do that. His audience already knows this.⁵⁷

Peter continues in **verse 29**,

⁵⁰ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 144: “The term ‘decay’ (διαφθορά) denotes the decomposition of the body, which was graphically real for Palestinian Jews who reburied the bones of the dead in ossuaries after the body had decomposed.”

⁵¹ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 145: “Peter quotes Ps 16:8–11 for a twofold reason. First, the psalm explains why it was impossible for Jesus to remain in the realm of the dead. Jesus had God’s promise that he, the Holy One, would not decay in the grave. Second, since what happened to Jesus fits what David prophesied in the psalm, Jesus must be the Messiah.”

⁵² See DBL #8619 שְׁאוֹל and also *HALOT*, שְׁאוֹל, 1368.

⁵³ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 114n117: “Some have wanted to see a reference to Christ’s descent into hell here, but Hades cannot bear that meaning and in this context simply means *death*.”

⁵⁴ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 114: “The NIV has wisely translated the Greek word *Hades* as ‘the grave.’ The reference is to Sheol, the realm of the dead, and thus to death; and this is the sense in which Peter applied it.”

⁵⁵ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 74: “Even some rabbis understood this passage to be Messianic. For example, the Midrash Tehillim on this verse states, ‘My glory rejoices over King Messiah, who shall rise up out of me (i.e., from David).’”

⁵⁶ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 75: “According to Jewish tradition, David died on Pentecost. Yet, some rabbis concluded from Psalm 16 that David would not see corruption: “Those words, ‘my flesh shall rest in hope,’ teach us ... *that neither worm nor insect had any power over David*.” However, that is not what the psalmist emphasized. He emphasized not seeing corruption because of resurrection.”

⁵⁷ It is of course probably that Peter’s sermon lasted longer than what Luke records here. You could read through Peter’s sermon in a few minutes. Surely Peter preached longer than that, and he may have even preached for hours explaining in great detail what Luke gives in synopsis here. Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 127: “There is general agreement among scholars that the speeches in Acts are not verbatim accounts of what was said on each occasion. The reasons are the following. First, the speeches in Acts are too short for actual speeches. A straight reading of Peter’s speech on Pentecost takes less than three minutes. Luke sometimes indicates that more was said than what he actually recorded (cf. 2:40). Second, at least Peter’s speeches in Jerusalem were presumably delivered in Aramaic, not in Greek. This means that Luke’s Greek text is at best a translation of an Aramaic original. Third, sermons in synagogues certainly took up more than a few minutes... In the Middle Ages, Jewish sermons were typically forty-five minutes long.”

²⁹ “Brothers **[Jewish brothers not Christian brothers... not yet]**, 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.⁵⁸

In other words, **“David’s dead. We all know he’s dead. His body has decomposed and you can go dig up his bones right now... what’s left of them anyway.”** So what was **Psalm 16** talking about? What was all that talk about not being abandoned to Hades and a body not seeing corruption?

Peter explains. Look at **verse 30**.

³⁰ Being therefore a prophet **[that’s David]**, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne

Psalm 132:11 says this about David. It says, “The Lord swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: ‘One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne.’” Peter is saying, **“This is That.”**

By the way, Nathan prophesied about David as well. Everybody remembers that Nathan said to David, “You are that man,” when he was confronted about his adultery with Bathsheba (**2 Sam 12:7**). But Nathan also prophesied concerning David in **2 Samuel**. **2 Samuel 7:12–13** says, “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” Peter is saying, **“This is that.” “Jesus is that offspring that will rule the kingdom forever!”**

So with that in mind, let me reread **verse 30**. Follow with me here.

³⁰ Being therefore a prophet **[David]**, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him⁵⁹ that he would set one of his descendants⁶⁰ on his throne ³¹ he **[that’s David in Psalm 16]** foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.⁶¹ ³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.⁶²

Peter is saying here, **“We saw his resurrection body. Thomas here saw the nail-scars in his hands. James his half-brother is here. He didn’t even believe in Jesus until he was raised from the dead! Mary, as well, is here. She saw Jesus die. She helped bury his body in a tomb. And three days later she had a conversation with him.”**

Part of what Peter is saying is this, **“Jesus obviously didn’t get your attention when he did miracles and wonders before you. Maybe some of you were ignorant of who exactly he was. And that’s why you helped crucify him. But God in his mercy is giving you a second chance right now to embrace the truth of the gospel, a gospel that was even foretold hundreds of years ago in the OT Scriptures. Jesus Christ was crucified, dead, and buried, but the grave couldn’t hold him. And now he’s alive. Hallelujah.”** That’s what Peter is preaching boldly here at Pentecost.

Here’s the second point from our text today.

2) Peter preaches the **resurrection** of Christ (2:22–32)

Look I can’t emphasize this enough. If Jesus didn’t rise from the dead, then we can all go home right now.⁶³ There’s no reason to stay here. Paul said, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are

⁵⁸ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 126: “Peter argues that ‘it is possible’ (ἐξόν, *exon*; BDAG 349 §2; BDF §353.5) to say with confidence (παρησίᾳ, *parrēsia*) that the psalm is ultimately not about David.”

⁵⁹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 114: “Behind the oath referred to in v. 30 stands Nathan’s prophecy (Ps 132:11; 2 Sam 7:12–13) that God would establish an eternal kingdom with one of David’s descendants, a prophecy that had come to be understood messianically.”

⁶⁰ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 146n623: “The logical object of the infinitive καθίσαι is ἐκ καρποῦ τῆς ὀσφύος αὐτοῦ; the phrase ‘the fruit of his loins’ (KJV, NKJV has ‘fruit of his body’) is best rendered as ‘one of his descendants’ (NLT has ‘one of David’s own descendants,’ with the possessive pronoun being redundant). The term ὀσφύς refers to the place where a belt is worn (‘waist, loins’), and to the place of the reproductive organs (as in Hebrew).”

⁶¹ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 146–7: “Peter repeats the content of the prophecy from the words of Ps 16:10 that he had quoted earlier (v. 27). He reminds his listeners of the key terms from David’s prophecy in the psalm—body/flesh (σάρξ), abandoned (ἐγκατελείφθη), the realm of the dead or Hades (ᾗδης), decay (διαφθορά). The verb tenses have been changed from future to aorist, underscoring Peter’s point that David’s prophecy has been fulfilled.”

⁶² Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 130: “There is a kind of syllogism here: (1) The Messiah will rise from the dead as Scripture shows. (2) But God raised Jesus. (3) Therefore Jesus is the Messiah.”

⁶³ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 137: “Jesus’s resurrection means far more than merely that there is life after death. It is a vindication of Jesus’s life and mission, a demonstration that Jesus lives and still rules, and a reflection that Jesus is a unique person, sharing the precious presence and glory of God in a unique way.”

still in your sins” (1 Cor 15:17). Paul said, “If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Cor 15:19).

If Christ wasn’t raised from the dead, then let’s call it quits. There’s no hope.⁶⁴ There’s nothing worth living for. As I’ve said before, Jesus’s resurrection assures our own resurrection. If Jesus wasn’t raised from the dead, we aren’t going to be either!⁶⁵ And if there’s no resurrection, what do we have to live for? A house? A few kids? A few cars? A picket fence? Grandkids later, then we die? That’s it! Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die! Is that all we have to look forward to? Is that our hope?

No. Peter makes it crystal clear in this sermon, the first sermon ever preached, that Christ was indeed raised from the dead. If you want to see David’s body, buried in a tomb, you can go see it.⁶⁶ If you want to see Mohammed’s body, buried in a tomb in Medina, you can go find it.⁶⁷ If you want to see Confucius’s body buried in a tomb, you can go find it in China. If you want to go see Abraham’s body, buried in a tomb, you can go see it in Hebron, in Israel’s West Bank. But there’s no body buried in a tomb for Jesus. There’s a tomb. But there’s no body!

You might say, “This is amazing. Peter’s sermon couldn’t get any better than this.” Well, it gets better. Write this down as #3. Here’s the third thing that Peter preaches in his sermon.

3) Peter preaches the deity of Christ (2:33–36)

Have you ever heard somebody introduced in a public setting and the person introducing them rattles off a catalogue of accolades? “This person is the president of such and such organization... They’ve written all these books... they’ve got these credentials... they’ve got all these degrees, etc.” And afterwards you just think to yourself, “Whose got time to do all that stuff?”

I remember hearing D.A. Carson introduced once and his list of credentials was like the list of ten men! And I guess that means I should listen to what he says, because he’s accomplished a lot, right?

But get this! Here are Jesus’s credentials. Jesus is the fulfillment of a myriad of OT prophecies. [I don’t hear that a lot when people get introduced.] Also Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life. [I don’t hear that a lot when people get introduced, “This person is sinless.”] Also Jesus died as a substitutionary atonement for our sins and then he was resurrected from the dead [I don’t hear that when people get introduced. And I don’t hear that at funerals either. “So and so’s casket is empty today, because he’s already been raised from the dead.” I’ve never heard that before!]

So Jesus is pretty awesome. But there’s more. He’s more than just Messiah. He’s more than just Savior. He’s more than just Redeemer. Jesus, as we’ll find out in the verses that follow, is the Eternal Son of God. He is the divine second person of the Trinity.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 112–3: “Craig Blomberg has said that ‘no religion stands or falls with a claim about the resurrection of its founder in the way that Christianity does’ (Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1987], 77).”

⁶⁵ GREGORY OF NYSSA: “But since it was also fitting that he should implant in our nature the power of rising again from the dead, he becomes the ‘firstfruits of them that slept’ and the ‘firstborn from the dead,’ in that he first by his own act loosed the pains of death, so that his new birth from the dead was made a way for us also, since the pains of death, wherein we were held, were loosed by the resurrection of the Lord.” Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 32.

⁶⁶ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 145: “According to 1 Kgs 2:10, King David was buried ‘in the City of David,’ i.e., on Zion, the hill south of the temple, in the eastern section of Jerusalem. King Herod attempted to raid David’s tomb because he needed money, but was stopped when flames killed two guards, prompting Herod to build a memorial of white marble at the entrance of the tomb. Later Christian tradition identified the western hill of the city with ‘Zion,’ hence the localization of ‘David’s tomb’ at the site of the Byzantine church Hagia Sion (on the premises of the traditional location of the Upper Room).”

⁶⁷ Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC, 112: “Bishop Stephen Neill has pointed out that recent Muslim biographies of the prophet Mohammed have toned down some of his less agreeable features and presented him as a more Christ-like figure. This, says Neill, is evidence of the appeal of Christ’s life to Muslims.”

⁶⁸ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 154: “This focus on Jesus is not unique for Peter or for the book of Acts, but corresponds to the focus of the entire New Testament. The name Jesus (Ἰησοῦς) occurs 917 times, Jesus’ title ‘Messiah’ (Χριστός) 529 times, while the term ‘God’ (θεός) occurs 1317 times; in comparison, the name ‘Peter’ occurs 156 times, ‘Paul’ 158 times, and ‘faith/believe’ (πίστις/πιστεύω) occurs 484 times, and ‘love’ (ἀγάπη/ἀγαπάω) occurs 259 times.”

Let me say it more succinctly—Jesus is God. God the Son came down and took on human flesh and died on the cross for our sins. **Wrap your minds around that.**

So here's Peter preaching the deity of Christ. Look at **verse 33**.

³³ *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.*

Peter's saying here, **"All this that you are seeing and hearing now... all these people speaking in miraculous tongues... God did that! That's the Holy Spirit. God the Father promised the Holy Spirit to the Son, and the Son poured out the Spirit on us here."**⁶⁹

Peter continues in **verse 34**.

³⁴ *For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, ³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool."*

Peter quotes another OT passage here. He does more exposition with his Bible, the OT. **I can't tell you how important it is to be familiar with the OT Scriptures. It's so valuable.** Peter quotes here from **Psalms 110** which is quoted more times in the NT than any other OT Scripture.⁷⁰

In fact Jesus quoted this passage (**Psalms 110**) to the Pharisees in the last week of his life. Here's what happened in **Matthew 22:41-46**. "Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, "'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet"'? If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?" And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions."

Jesus quotes **Psalms 110** just like Peter does in **Acts 2**. And if you're confused about Jesus's question and what he means by it, don't worry, you're not alone. The Pharisees were too. Like we saw with **Psalms 16** before, **Psalms 110** was broadly recognized by the Jewish community as messianic.

In **Psalms 110**, the author, King David, says, "The Lord [Yahweh] says to my Lord [Adonai], 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'" ⁷¹ So Jesus is asking how David could be calling the "Son of David," the Messiah, "my Lord." What father calls his son, or grandson, "Lord?" Does any father ever call his son "Lord" or "Master?" **Would you be disturbed if I referred to my son as my "Lord and Master"?** I hope you would. So how does this work with David and his son?⁷²

Well the way it works is supernaturally through the mystery of the incarnation. Jesus was God in eternity past, the second member of the Trinity. Jesus came to earth and took on human flesh. He was the adopted son of Joseph, and he was the flesh-and-blood son of Mary. And the lineages of both of Jesus's parents

⁶⁹ The Father promised the Holy Spirit to the Son initially. And the Spirit descended on the Son when Jesus was baptized. But then, the Son promised the Spirit to the disciples. And he poured out the Spirit on the disciples. Peter states that crystal clear in this passage. This is confirmation of something called the "Ontological order of the Trinity," or other theologians call it the "Economic Subordination of the Trinity." Although the persons of Trinity are ontologically the same (they are equal in power, substance, and essence), they voluntarily subordinate themselves one to one another. The Son subordinates himself to the Father and the Spirit subordinates himself to the Son. And subordination doesn't mean inferiority. That would be impossible for the Trinity because they are equal in essence. That's important to note, because subordination and submission doesn't imply inferiority in human relationships either. That's why God tells us that we are all equal in Christ (Gal 3:28). But that equality doesn't negate gender roles and leadership positions in family, government, church, etc. So if Jesus can submit himself to God the Father, and the Holy Spirit can submit himself to Jesus, we can submit ourselves to human authorities too.

⁷⁰ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 115: "Psalms 110:1 was a favorite text for the early church. According to Mark 12:35-37, it was first used of the Messiah by Jesus himself to attack the usual political understanding of a Davidic Messiah. It reappears throughout the New Testament, in 1 Cor 15:25; Heb 1:13; 10:13 and with strong allusions in Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20, 22; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22."

⁷¹ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 149: "The 'Lord' who is addressed (κύριε, LXX τῷ κυρίῳ μου) is not David himself, nor is it a normal successor of his dynasty, because David recognizes the superiority of this person as his own lord."

⁷² AUGUSTINE: "By the very fact that Christ took on flesh, that in the flesh he died, that in the same flesh he rose again, and in the same flesh he ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father, and in the same flesh now so honored and glorified, transformed into a heavenly condition, he is still the son of David and also the Lord of David." Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 34.

are linked biologically to King David.⁷³ So Jesus was the “son of David” but he’s also the “son of God.” Therefore he’s David’s “Lord” and “Master.”

When Jesus alluded to this mystery with the Pharisees, they wouldn’t respond. And Peter was there at that time. He was probably just as confused as they were. How does the Lord speak to the Lord? How is David’s son, David’s Lord? How does Yahweh speak to Adonai and say, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool?”

Well now, after Jesus’s resurrection, Eureka! Peter gets it. He gets it now! Maybe it’s because of the Holy Spirit empowerment... maybe it’s because Jesus explained it to him after his resurrection... Whatever the case, Peter gets it now. And not only does he get it, he preaches it. Jesus is the Lord.⁷⁴ **Psalm 110** isn’t about David. The Lord (God the Father) said to the Lord (God the Son) “Sit at my right hand.” Jesus, the Son of David, is Lord.⁷⁵

Here’s the interpretation from Peter. Watch this in **verse 36**.

³⁶ *Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God [that’s God the Father] has made him [that’s Jesus, God the Son] both Lord⁷⁶ and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”⁷⁷*

So not only is Jesus the fulfillment of OT prophecy... not only was his death a payment for sin... not only was he resurrected from the dead... but also, he’s deity. He’s God. And he has ascended to the right hand of God the Father, this Lord and Christ.

And notice how Peter ends his sermon at the end of **verse 36**. **How’s this for seeker-sensitive!** You killed him. You crucified him. You crucified the Son of God on a cross.⁷⁸ And now he’s back from the dead. Do you think that statement was a little bit disconcerting for these 3,000+ Jews gathering and listening to Peter preach? **“You crucified the Son of God. And now he’s back from the dead! How’s that going to work out for you when you meet your maker?”**

Notice the response of the crowd. Look at **verse 37**. **[May God give us more responses like this at VBVF... please, Lord, do that!]**

³⁷ *Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart,⁷⁹ and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”⁸⁰*

Notice they weren’t defensive. They believe Peter. **“We just killed the Son of God. What are we going to do about that? How on earth are we going to get out of this mess?”**

Now imagine if Peter just said at this point, **“Beats me! You guys got yourselves into this mess. You’ve got to get yourself out of it. See you later, we’re going back to the upper room.”**

Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 114: “The attribution of the psalm to David is particularly important in this instance, since its application to Jesus is based on the Davidic descent of the Messiah.”

⁷⁴ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 136: “Jesus as ‘Lord’ often appears in Acts (4:33; 8:16; 11:17, 20; 15:11, 26; 16:31; 19:5, 13, 17; 20:21, 24, 35; 21:13; 28:31.”

⁷⁵ For more on Psalm 110, see the sermon “King David’s King,” 09-28-22: <https://www.vbvf.org/king-david-s-king>

⁷⁶ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 116n125: “In the original context of Joel 2:32, κύριος refers to Yahweh. Very early it came to apply to Christ as well, which reflects a high Christology. Although it has often been argued that κύριος came into Christian usage via Hellenistic cults, the occurrence of the Aramaic phrase *marana-tha* (‘Lord, come’) in 1 Cor 16:22 and in *Did.* 10:6 (also translated in Rev 22:20) points more in the direction of an early Jewish-Christian application of the normal appellation for God to Jesus as well.”

⁷⁷ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 77: “In this context, Peter emphasized the Jewish guilt in the crucifixion. Elsewhere, he will emphasize Gentile guilt.”

⁷⁸ Vickers, “Acts” in *John–Acts*, ESVEC, 360: “The point is clear: Jesus of Nazareth was no ordinary Israelite, and yet they killed him. By highlighting their guilt at the beginning (v. 23) and end (v. 36) of his sermon, Peter underscores the reality that they have crucified the Messiah; they are the enemies of God.”

⁷⁹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 116: “Luke said they were ‘cut to the heart,’ an uncommon word Homer used to depict horses stamping the earth with their hooves (v. 37).”

⁸⁰ Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, chapter 4, Kindle: “The sermon was great because it was practical. It began by answering the question ‘What does this mean?’ (v. 12) and ended by answering the question ‘What shall we do?’ (v. 37).”

Imagine if Peter, after preaching sin and condemnation and hellfire and brimstone, just said, “O well, goodnight everybody. Have a safe journey back home to Rome or Pontus or Crete or Arabia or wherever you’re from.” What if Peter just left them hanging after they asked, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

I read once about D.L. Moody, the famous evangelist from the nineteenth century, that one of the crucial turning points in his life involved the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. He was preaching in Chicago the night of that great conflagration... you know when Mrs. O’Leary’s cow kicked over the lantern. Hundreds of people died in that blaze. The entire city was levelled.

But before the fire spread, Moody was preaching. He was actually preaching to one of the largest crowds that had ever gathered to hear him. And that night, he failed to press his congregation for a decision. In fact, he had told them to take a week and think it over before they committed to Christ. And he regretted that sermon the rest of his life. And from that point forward he never closed his service without an urgent call to repentance.⁸¹

Well Peter didn’t tell this crowd to go home and think about it and then come back next week. Peter felt the urgency of the moment here, and he capitalized on it with his audience. Look at **verse 38**.

³⁸ And Peter said to them, “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.

Notice he didn’t tell them, “It’s not your fault.” He didn’t tell them, “It’ll all work out in the end.” He didn’t tell them, “You’re so special, I’m so special, just give yourself a big hug.” He didn’t blame shift to the Romans. He didn’t absolve their guilt with some lame, sappy sentimentality. He told them flat-out, “Repent.” He said ostensibly, “You’re a sinner. Repent!”⁸²

Before he gave them the good news, they needed to hear the bad news. And that makes the good news exceedingly good.⁸³

Here’s the fourth point for the message today.

4) Peter preaches **repentance** and the **forgiveness** of sins (2:37–41)

And wouldn’t you know it, we still preach that in the church today. Notice what else Peter preaches. He preaches the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

“Repent⁸⁴ 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.”⁸⁵

Notice if you would, the paradox in **verses 39–40**.⁸⁶ Here’s the juxtaposition again of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility.⁸⁷⁸⁸

⁸¹ William R. Moody, *The Life of D.L. Moody* (New York: Fleming Revell Company, 1900), 142–143. See also Ryan Hughley, *8 Hours or Less* (Chicago: Moody, 2017), 82–83.

⁸² Vickers, “Acts” in *John–Acts*, ESVEC, 360: “Although there is no explicit mention of faith in this text, it is clearly implied, for repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ imply belief.”

⁸³ Vickers, “Acts” in *John–Acts*, ESVEC, 361: “True NT preaching must include both a word of judgment (law) and the hope of the gospel.”

⁸⁴ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 141–142: “Peter states that the proper response to his message is to repent. The exhortation is expressed as an aorist imperative (μετανοήσατε, *metanoēsate*; BDAG 640 §2). Repentance indicates a turning in direction... In this context, it means to make a conscious turn toward God and God’s actions through Jesus... The Greek word can mean ‘change one’s mind.’ The idea in Hebrew, however, is ‘turn,’ indicating a change of direction. In Luke 24:47 Jesus makes clear that he is referring to the OT sense and that this is what the disciples are to preach

⁸⁵ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 117: “The Spirit cannot be tied down to a set pattern. Clearly, however, both baptism and receipt of the Spirit are normative to the experience of becoming a Christian believer.” Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 144: “The varying way in which the Spirit is distributed, especially on occasions without baptism (Acts 10:44; also Luke 24:47; Acts 3:19; 26:18 [forgiveness mentioned without baptism]), indicates how Spirit baptism signifies primarily the Spirit’s washing and consequent presence, rather than representing an emphasis on tongues speaking as a required evidence of salvation or a ‘second’ gift of salvation. In other words, one is baptized in the Spirit so that new life can come and flow forth from cleansing.”

⁸⁶ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 142: “This is the paradox of Jesus’ death: it was engineered and carried out by human beings, while at the same time it was the climax of God’s plan of salvation. Jesus’ death on the cross was part of Jesus’ mission.” Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 112: “Peter carefully balanced the elements of God’s divine purposes and the human responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus. In the paradox of divine sovereignty and human freedom, Jesus died as the result of deliberate human decision made in the exercise of their

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.**"

⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, **"Save yourselves from this crooked⁸⁹ generation."**

"Which is it, Peter? Man's responsibility or God's sovereignty?" It's both! Peter says, "Save yourselves," in **verse 40**. Peter commands, "Repent and be baptized," in **verse 38**. But he also notes that the promise is for everyone whom the Lord God calls to himself in **verse 39**. This is God's sovereignty and man's responsibility juxtaposed and working together in perfect harmony according to Peter.

I heard a person say once that some preachers water down the gospel so much that the non-elect don't even get a chance to reject it. That's not true of Peter. There's no watering down of the gospel here! **And may that never be true of VBVF!**

And here's what happens after Peter's sermon. This is so good. Look at **verse 41**.

⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

The church goes from 120 to 3,000 in one day. Talk about explosive growth in the church. **Craig Keener** says in his commentary, **"Considering Josephus's estimate of six thousand Pharisees in all Palestine, three thousand conversions to the new Jesus movement in Jerusalem is no small start!"⁹⁰** As far as firstfruits go, that's pretty good. That's a pretty good first harvest.

If the population of Jerusalem was about 100,000 people, 3,000 people would be 3% of the city. **Craig Keener** also says this in his commentary **"Because baptism was a sign of conversion to Judaism normally reserved for pagans, Peter's demand would offend his Jewish hearers and cost them respectability. He calls for a public, radical testimony of conversion, not a private, noncommittal request for salvation with no conditions."⁹¹**

Let me just address one more issue in this passage now. The baptism here has tripped a lot of people up, who have thought erroneously that baptism is necessary for salvation. Spirit baptism is necessary for salvation, but water baptism is not.⁹²

But that doesn't mean that water baptism is unimportant. In Peter's mind it was such an essential part of the display of repentance that it was commanded in this passage. But also grammatically the idea being conveyed here is this, **"Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus 'on the basis of' the forgiveness of your sins."** This translation is confirmed as a possibility by John Polhill in his commentary on the book of Acts.⁹³

God-given freedom of choice... Nonetheless, in the mystery of the divine will, God was working in these events of willful human rebellion to bring about his eternal purposes, bringing out of the tragedy of the cross the triumph of the resurrection."

⁸⁷ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 112n111: "This double dimension of divine purpose and human responsibility runs throughout Luke-Acts. On the one hand, Jesus' death follows the divine purpose: Luke 9:22; 17:25; 22:37; 24:26; 24:44, 46; Acts 17:3. On the other, guilt of the people is strongly emphasized in the passion narrative: Luke 23:2, 4-5, 20-23, 25, 51."

⁸⁸ Vickers, "Acts" in *John-Acts*, ESVEC, 361: "When reading salvation narratives in Acts, it is well to keep 13:48 in mind: 'As many as were appointed to eternal life believed.'"

⁸⁹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 146: "The reference to a 'twisted generation' (τῆς γενεᾶς τῆς σκολιᾶς, *tēs geneas tēs skolias*) appears only here in the NT and alludes to a generation that is ethically crooked, spiritually off the path to God, and thus subject to judgment."

⁹⁰ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Ac 2:41.

⁹¹ Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, Ac 2:37-38.

⁹² Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 142-3: "Peter explains this himself in the very revealing words of 1 Pet. 3:21: 'Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, *not as the removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience*, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ' (italics added). In other words, it is not the act but the attitude behind it that has the efficacy of yielding forgiveness... The person who turns toward God calls on the name of the Lord by being baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ." This phrase reflects the language of the speech in Acts 2:21, "calling on the name of the Lord to be saved." So Peter's remarks draw upon what he has already proclaimed in Acts 2. The rite is not magical but represents and pictures what repentance is asking God to do, to give forgiveness (Acts 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18). To agree to baptism is to affirm in a public act what the heart has already done to come into relationship with God."

⁹³ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 117: "A literal rendering of the verse runs: 'Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ *for/on the basis of* the forgiveness of your sins.' The disputed word is the preposition *eis*, which could indicate purpose and thus be taken to mean that baptism is the prerequisite for the forgiveness of sins. There is ample evidence in the New Testament, however, that *eis* can also mean *on the ground of, on the basis of*, which would indicate the opposite relationship—that the forgiveness of sins is

And that's confirmed by other passages of Scripture. Water baptism is the outward sign of an inward work. Water baptism is not necessary for the forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness of sins is the basis for baptism. Don't forget that.⁹⁴

When Peter gives the gospel in **Acts 3**, he says, "Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out" without making a reference to baptism (**3:19**). Also when Paul gives the gospel later in **Acts** to the Philippian jailer, he doesn't talk about baptism. The jailer asks, "**What must I do to be saved?**" And Paul,⁹⁵ with barebones gives the response, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (**Acts 16:31**).⁹⁶

Now quickly before we close, let's talk application. I'm going to deliver these applications so fast you're going to freak. But don't freak. Just write them down.

Three applications, church. Do these three things in light of **Acts 2:14–41**.

1) **Incorporate** the entirety of God's Word into your **heart**

Peter knew the OT so well that he could immediately reference it and connect it to Christ in his sermon. How well do you know the OT? Read it. Study it. Memorize it. And incorporate it into your heart.

The Psalmist wrote, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (**119:105**). And he also wrote, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (**Psalm 119:11**).

2) **Deify** all three persons of the **Trinity**

All three persons are God, and all three are the objects of our worship.⁹⁷ Our faith is a Trinitarian faith. Don't ever forget that.

3) **Share** the good news of Jesus with **boldness**

May the Spirit of God who emboldened Peter on the Day of Pentecost to preach the gospel with clarity and courage, embolden us to share Christ with lost people in our day.

the basis, the grounds for being baptized. Perhaps more significant, however, is that the usual connection of the forgiveness of sins in Luke-Acts is with repentance and not with baptism at all (cf. Luke 24:47; Acts 3:19; 5:31). In fact, in no other passage of Acts is baptism presented as bringing about the forgiveness of sins. If not linked with repentance, forgiveness is connected with faith (cf. 10:43; 13:38f.; 26:18). The dominant idea in 2:38 thus seems to be repentance, with the other elements following. Repentance leads to baptism, the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Spirit."

⁹⁴ See the following APJ podcast entitled "Is Baptism Necessary for Salvation?" 09-23-19 for more on the baptism statement in Acts 2:38: <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/is-baptism-necessary-for-salvation>

⁹⁵ Technically this was Paul and Silas because Acts 16:31 reads, "And they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.'"

⁹⁶ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 147: "Salvation comes to the one who believes, repents, calls on the Lord's name, and receives the gospel. All four of these responses mean fundamentally the same thing: one has embraced God's grace through Jesus and the Spirit."

⁹⁷ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 157: "Worship services that focus on the subjective experiences of the worshipers serve not God but people. Worship services that deserve the name focus on Jesus, the messianic king and Lord on God's throne, on God who revealed himself in the life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus for the salvation of the world, and on the presence of God's Spirit, who manifests himself in the transformation of God's people."