**GOD MADE JESUS LORD AND MESSIAH**

April 29, 2018

Acts 2:22-47

Key Verse 2:36 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

In the last passage we learned that the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost inaugurated the Messianic age. We are living in the last days. It is the age of grace. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. The Holy Spirit changes ordinary people into servants of God and witnesses of Christ. When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, he enabled the apostles to speak in other languages and declare the wonders of God to people of many nations. His coming made world evangelization possible in their generation. His coming makes world evangelization possible in our generation. The Holy Spirit enables young men to see visions. Without the Holy Spirit, young men see only the things of the world such as girls and money. But when the Holy Spirit comes upon them, they can see the vision of God for world salvation and become great men in the sight of God. May the Holy Spirit come upon each of us and enable us to see God’s vision. In today’s passage the Apostle Peter delivers the first message in the age of the church. Full of the Holy Spirit, he focused his message on Jesus Christ. He proclaims Jesus’ suffering and death. He proclaims even more Jesus’ resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God. He explains how the coming of the Holy Spirit is related to Jesus’ exaltation. He challenges his listeners to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord and Messiah. Peter’s message cut the listeners to the heart. It may be the most effective message that was ever preached in history. 3,000 people repented, were baptized and joined the Christian church. Through Peter’s message we can have a right view of Jesus and see the sovereign rule of God in history. When we repent and accept this Jesus as our Lord, we can receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit and God’s salvation.

As we studied last time, a large crowd was drawn together by the work of the Holy Spirit through the apostles. They numbered at least three thousand. They wanted to understand what was happening. So they listened carefully. Peter quoted the prophet Joel to explain the coming of the Holy Spirit. Then he began to speak about Jesus. Look at verse 22. “Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.” Jesus of Nazareth came from God and did the work of God. The miracles, wonders and signs he performed showed that he was accredited by God. For example, Jesus once saw a man born blind. Out of his divine compassion, Jesus healed him with only mud and saliva. The blind man could see. It was a miracle that revealed Jesus’ identity as the Messiah.

Since Jesus came from God, they should have welcomed him, honored him, and treated him with respect. What did they do? Look at verse 23. “This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.” They crucified God’s chosen servant on the cross. The Jewish religious leaders hated Jesus because they thought he threatened their political and economic interests. Though they knew Jesus was innocent, they pressured Pilate to pervert justice. They stirred up ordinary people to shout, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” It was the greatest crime in human history. They acted as enemies of God. However, in all fairness, it was not only they, but all people who are guilty of crucifying Jesus on the cross. A most thought-provoking song asks, “Were you there when they crucified my Lord?” Yes, we were there. Yes, I was there. It was also my sin that crucified Jesus.

When we look carefully at verse 23, we find that Jesus was handed over by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge. Jesus was crucified on the cross according to God’s will and God’s plan for world salvation. God loves the world. God sacrificed his own Son Jesus for sinners. This is contrary to our sinful nature. One man was suffering from anemia. He needed a bone marrow transplant. A search was conducted among his family and they discovered that his first cousin was the ideal one to donate bone marrow so that he could live on. But his first cousin refused to give any bone marrow, even though there would be no harm whatsoever. So the man sued his first cousin, and took him to court. The trial dragged on and finally a verdict was reached. While the behavior of the first cousin was considered reprehensible, the court ruled that it could not force him to give any bone marrow. The man died 3 weeks after the trial. Sacrifice is not in our vocabulary. But Jesus willingly offered his holy blood for us.

Look at verse 24. “But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.” Until that time, death had reigned over men like a heavyweight champion, defeating all men one after another with no exception. Alexander the Great conquered the whole known world in his time. But when he was 32 years old, he caught a typhoid fever and he died in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. He could not conquer death. Because of the inevitability of death, men had to live with a sense of defeat, many sorrows and great fear. Like all other men in history, Jesus died. But Jesus did not remain in the grave. It was impossible for the grave to hold Jesus. God raised Jesus from the dead. The almighty power of God raised Jesus to life. Jesus utterly defeated the power of death and became the everlasting champion of life. The resurrection was the key to Peter’s great sermon. He spends one verse, verse 22, on the life of Christ. One verse, verse 23, on the death of Christ, and then he spends from verses 24 to 32 on the resurrection.

Now Peter gives a proof of Jesus’ resurrection from the Old Testament. David prophesied about Jesus’ resurrection in Psalm 16. Look at verse 27. “because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay.” David was not talking about himself. Everyone knew that David died and was not raised from the dead. David was a prophet. Look at verses 30-31. “But he was a prophet…seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay.” Peter’s argument is as follows: Psalm 16 refers to the resurrection of someone. It can’t be David. But everybody knew the Messiah would come out of the line of David. Jesus did. This Psalm refers to the Messiah. The Messiah will rise. Verse 32 says, “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.” It’s the Messianic age. That means the Messiah is here. Who is the Messiah? The Messiah is Jesus. Testified to by his life, his death, his resurrection, and we are all witnesses. In 1 Corinthians 15:6, Paul says there were 500 people who saw him after his resurrection at one time, in one place, in Galilee. The inescapable conclusion is that Jesus is the Messiah.

Peter quotes another Davidic Psalm to prove Jesus is Messiah by his ascension. Look at verse 34. “For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’” Who sat at God’s right hand? It was not David. It was the Lord God saying to the Lord Messiah. It was the Father saying to the Son, “Sit at my right hand, and I will make all your enemies your footstool.” That means to put him in the exalted place over everything and everyone. Philippians 2 says that Christ humbled himself, and God highly exalted him and gave him a name above every name, and what is that name? The name Lord, so that every knee would bow to that name.

So, Peter has made his case. We know that Jesus is the Messiah because of his life and miracles, because of his death, because of his resurrection, and because of his ascension. And we know that he ascended, we know he is exalted, we know he is at the right hand of God, we know he has been declared Lord because you have seen the result: God sent the Holy Spirit to launch the Messianic era. Therefore, verse 36 is his conclusion: “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” He doesn’t blame the Romans. You did it. Assuredly, absolutely, for certain, you need to know this: the house of Israel must know for certain. It is emphatic by its position in the Greek, and it means “with perfect certainty and without any doubt.”

Again, the contrast is stark between God’s treatment of Christ and their treatment of him. You killed Him; God raised Him. You killed Him; God exalted Him. You killed Him; God made Him Lord. He claimed to be the Messiah, the Jewish leaders rejected him as a blasphemer, condemned him to death. You joined in; you screamed for his blood. You crucified him. His Messiahship was announced at his baptism. It was confirmed through his ascension, and the subsequent sending of the Holy Spirit. So that’s the body of his message exalting Christ. Not only as Messiah, but as risen, ascended, enthroned Lord. This is the first apostolic sermon, and it leads to the apostolic creed: Jesus is Lord.

When the people heard Peter’s message, they were cut to the heart. The very Jesus whom they had crucified had been raised from the dead and exalted to the right hand of God. The testimony of Scripture and the powerful witness of the apostles was overwhelming evidence that demanded their response. They realized they were guilty of sinning against the promised Messiah and the Creator God. They said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Look at verse 38. “Peter replied, ‘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.’” Even they could receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Look at verse 39. “This promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off---for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Peter must have been overwhelmed by his own message as he was delivering it to those who had crucified Jesus. He went on and on warning them and pleading with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Look at verse 41. “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” Suddenly the early church increased in number 25 times, from about 120 members to 3,120 members.

The transformation that came upon these new believers was incredible. Look at verses 42-47. “They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Here we can find several marks of the true church. First, they devoted themselves to studying the word of God. Sound doctrine is the heart of the life of the church. Second, they devoted themselves to fellowship. The church is not a place for people to come and watch as spectators. They are not part time attenders. It is a partnership. It is where we use our spiritual gifts to build each other up. It is where we love one another, instruct one another, pray for one another, and rebuke one another. Third, they devoted themselves to prayer. Prayer is the slender nerve that moves the muscles of omnipotence and if you can get enough people praying, then you are going to activate God’s power. Jesus promised in John 14:13-14, “I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.” They were taking him at his word. It is not so much here talking about the individual prayer as it is talking about when they came together collectively they were involved in prayer. These were all possible when they accepted Jesus as Lord and Messiah. Dr. D. James Kennedy made an interesting comment about attending church or the lack thereof: “Though reared in Sunday school and church as a child, as soon as able, in my early teens, I complained loudly enough that my parents quit sending me (note well: ‘sending‘ me), and for 10 years I had nothing to do with Christ. Oh, I sought my pleasures, my fulfillment, my joy, the meaning in my life in all of the things of this world and found, I thought, some little satisfaction in it all. But I could go day after day, week after week, month after month, without ever giving Christ one single thought, and yet, if you were to ask me if I were a Christian, believe it or not, I would have said yes.” Kennedy did not go to church because he did not want to go to church. When he accepted Jesus as Lord and Messiah, his heart was changed, and now he wanted to go to church – to hear God’s Word, to praise him, to be with God’s people.

Today we learn that God made Jesus Lord and Messiah and exalted him to the right hand of God. Now God works through the Holy Spirit to put all things under Jesus’ feet, including Canada, Muslim countries and North Korea. Jesus being Lord and Messiah demands our response. Do we want to accept him as Lord and Messiah and reign with him, or do we refuse to accept him and trampled under his feet?