

*"...about all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:3).*

**The Church Alive – An Awakening (Part 3)**  
**Acts 2:22-36**

**22 "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know — 23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. 24 "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. 25 "For David says of Him, 'I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. 26 'THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; 27 BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. 28 'YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.' 29 "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 "And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, 31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. 32 "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. 33 "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. 34 "For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, 35 UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.'" 36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ — this Jesus whom you crucified."**

In any given church, on any given Sunday, one is able to find at least three types of people attending the service. The first type of person is the faithful disciple, one who has a deep devotion to Jesus Christ, looking upon Him as the One and only to whom he owes his very life and allegiance; the One to whom he submits himself to as Lord and Savior. If asked the question, "If you were to die tonight and stand before God; and He were to ask you, 'why should I let you into My heaven?'" This one's response would be confidently, "I enter into heaven not because of what I have done, but because of what Jesus accomplished for me on His cross and I have believed and my heart has been transformed by surrendering my life to Jesus."

There is a second type of person who attends church services. This one has an interest, a definite curiosity in Jesus and into the things of God. This inquisitiveness into spiritual things is demonstrated by his regular attendance to meetings of the church and a general looking into the things of God. However, this one is not as faithful as the true disciple, not so committed to knowing Christ and making Him known; not so "hung up" on personal Bible study and prayer time and yet would certainly want to be seen as following Christ. Moreover, when this one is asked the question, "If you were to die tonight and stand before God; and He were to ask you, 'Why should I let you into My heaven?'" His response might not be so nearly as confident as the true disciple. This one might wonder if anyone can truly know if he is saved. This one, while

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interested in Jesus, is not so sure that he wants all of his life surrendered to Him as Master and Lord. It is not that he does not want to go to heaven, and it's not that he does not understand that Jesus is the only Savior, it is simply that because he is a double-minded man, with half his heart in the world, he will never feel confident about his eternal destiny.

Then there is the third type of person. When asked the question, "If you were to die tonight and stand before God; and He were to ask you, 'why should I let you into My heaven?'" this one would come right out and say, "I really do not know." He might include his own doubt as to whether or not there is an afterlife at all. This one comes to church only occasionally, is most likely there because someone else, a spouse, a parent or a friend, asked him to be there and rather than honestly seeking to know Jesus, is often spending more time trying to refute or come up with excuses as to why the words and principles spoken of in the service do not apply to him.

I share these three types of people because they have been found at every kind of religious event throughout history. It does not matter whether they are Jew or non-Jew, these three kinds of people show up. This was the make up of the crowd to whom the Apostle Peter was preaching on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, an event we have been referring to as the first true Jewish Great Awakening.

Let me remind you of the scene. All of this is taking place on the Temple Mount there in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Just about nine weeks earlier, Jesus had been crucified and three days later, raised from the dead. According to Acts 2, the time is around 9:00 am. On this particular day, the temple and its courts are overflowing with Jews, most of which had traveled from every corner of the world to worship God at this annual feast.

It has been estimated that the temple area would hold about 200,000 people (roughly the populations of Fayetteville, Springdale, Rogers, Bentonville, Bella Vista and all the little towns in between – or 2 ½ to 3 times the capacity of Razorback stadium). On this festive day, it would be safe to assume that by this hour, as Peter began his sermon, that there were somewhere between 50 to 100 thousand people in earshot. The audience was made up primarily of two kinds of Jews; those native to the land of Israel, who had heard and perhaps even had seen the Lord Jesus Christ; and the non-native Jews, those who had at best only heard bits and pieces about Jesus, some of which had traveled upwards of 1,000 miles to be in Jerusalem at this time. But once all these Jews were in Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost, there is no doubt that they had come to hear of the life, death and resurrection of Christ. I am sure that there was a lot of confusion about who this Jesus was. Whose story of Jesus was correct, the disciples or the Pharisees?

As the disciples spoke of the mighty deeds of God, some of the Jews hated Jesus, seeing Him as a threat; others became interested in Jesus, more out of curiosity than commitment. However, as we will see, there were those who were genuine Old Testament believers looking for their Messiah and overwhelmed that He had come. Therefore, Peter's audience was just as interesting a mix of people as one might expect to find in any church on any given Sunday.

We noted last week that what took place on this first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, could be referred to as a Great Spiritual Awakening. Peter's sermon began as a defense against the false charge that he and the other 119 disciples were drunk, overly filled with alcohol. Peter pleads "not guilty" and demonstrates from Scripture that these had been filled with the Holy Spirit of God. Peter's sermon begins with an explanation in verses 14-21 of the phenomenon, which had taken place. He argues that what they were witnessing was a sample of what Joel the prophet predicted would come in the future -- a manifestation of the power of the

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Holy Spirit. As to why this phenomenon was given, Peter explains that this "wonder" was meant to capture their attention so they would be ready to hear the word of the gospel from God. Everything was about to change for these Jews as some would surrender to this One who lived, died and was raised to life, namely the Lord Jesus Christ; while others would reject Him and have only the expectation of the judgment of God.

As we move into verses 22-36, Peter sets out to make known to this Jewish audience Who Jesus is and point out to them that they had their own Messiah crucified. We know that as Peter exposit the Scriptures, as he explains them with reference to who Jesus is, many of these Jews begin to realize what they had done. Therefore,, they ask Peter in verse 37, **"What shall we do?"** In response, Peter tells them what they should do in verses 37-41. However, I am getting ahead of myself.

This morning we pick up our study of Acts 2 where we left off, beginning in verse 22 where Peter starts his first clear exposition of the Gospel. If you have not already noted this, I would have you see that these verses follow a chronological order: in verse 22 we see the life of Christ while on the earth; in verse 23 we see the death of Christ on the cross; in verses 24-32 we see the resurrection of Christ from the death; and, finally in verses 33-36 we see the glorification of Christ in heaven.

This will be our outline for this and next week as we see Peter laying out the facts in such a way that if anyone knew them to be wrong, they would have certainly cried out in protest. Yet there was not one protest against the facts Peter presents. Peter not only stated the present facts but also used the Old Testament to back up their validity. And as we look at these two aspects of Christ, both His life and death, let me ask you to consider whether you love or hate God and whether you know what it means to hate God. For our text will give us some insight into this question.

## **I. Christ's Life (2:22)**

*Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know...*

As Peter continues in his sermon, He calls the men to listen carefully as to why the events that had taken place were so important. [read text].

I would have you take note that Peter uses three different words to explain the works of Jesus Christ. Each of these words has a subtle significance and so combined they picture the awesome wonder of the works of Christ, things like: raising the dead, healing the sick, turning water into wine, calming the stormy sea with a word, walking on water, and the like. The purpose of these was to confirm in the minds of the people that Jesus was sent from God. For every Jew knew that God would not have allowed such power to be displayed by an impostor. Jesus was the real deal; the promised Messiah.

The word **"miracles"** comes from the same word from which we get our word "dynamite." It pictures something powerful and explosive, referring to only something that God could do. Miracles then were given to prove the authority of Christ as having the power of God.

The word **"wonders"** speaks of things that capture one's attention. When a magician seemingly pulls a card out of thin air, we gasp and wonder how he did it. Of course, that is trick, but when Jesus does "wonders" it was done to arouse the astonishment and attention of others. These called people to consider who Jesus was.

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The final word given is **"signs"** which refer to works of God that either verifies that the messenger or the message or both were from God. Sometimes a particular work of Christ may qualify as all three of these, a miracle, a wonder, and a sign, as in the account of Jesus healing the man born blind in John 9.

The point that Peter is making is that Jesus, in His life, and as our text says, **"in your midst"** – revealed Himself to be God come in the flesh. There is not denying it. Jesus did not hide out in the backwoods. There were not merely claims that Jesus performed miracles, wonders and signs, but there were eyewitnesses as well as the very recipients of many of those blessings. Notice that Peter says, **"just as you yourselves know"** – There was ample evidence from the life of Christ to demonstrate that He was the one and only, undeniable Messiah of God. In verse 22 Peter is daring anyone to deny the truthfulness of what had taken place in Israel over the past three years. And not one did.

In fact, there was not one that ever really denied anything that Christ did. No one could take issue with whether or not Jesus had performed these miracles. The only thing that people could do was to try to question the source of His power. Maybe Jesus was working with and for the Devil. That was an earlier charge against Jesus. Yet Peter debunks such thoughts saying in our text that these wonders were those things which **"God performed through Him."** Jesus said the same thing in John 5:36,

***But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish — the very works that I do — testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.***

All the things Jesus did and said revealed that He was from God. The undeniable truth is that God had worked miracles through and in the life of Jesus. Many had seen these mighty works of God performed through Christ, but many still rejected Him. How could this be? For the same reason that some of you here today may yet have delayed in committing your life to Christ. It is Jesus who said in John 15:24-25,

***24 If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. 25 "But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.'***

Those who put off or reject Christ do so because they love their sin more than they love God – this love for their sin is actually called hatred against God and Jesus. And some of you may think, "This preacher needs to back off. It's not that I love sin; it's not that I hate Jesus, I just want to do things my own way, but that is not hating God." Beloved, ANYTIME we want to do things our own way, we are saying we HATE God's way – and therefore hate God. To do anything that goes against what God has revealed in His word is sin. Sin can manifest itself in one of two ways. It can be active rebellion against what you know God wants you to do. God says, **"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain."** (Exodus 20:7). In other words, you know that God does not want you to use His name as in some common or vulgar fashion; to say "Oh my God!" in reference to something that surprises you or you find overwhelming. The only time you should use "Oh my God!" is in honorable reverence and worship of God. But sin does not only manifest itself actively, for sin can also be passive indifference toward those things you may not be sure are wrong but determine to do anyway.

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Romans 14:23 reminds us that ***"whatever is not from faith is sin."*** Whatever you cannot do in good faith, because you are not certain whether God is pleased with your doing it or not, this too is sin. Examine the Scriptures and see what God would have you do. Let us not hide behind the veil of "Christian liberty" in order to justify behavior that is questionable. If you engage in a behavior or an activity that you might be embarrassed about if another Christian were with you; or if your Pastor were with you; or if Jesus Himself were beside you (oh wait, He is!), then stop being passively indifferent and search the Scriptures, seek counsel, and pray that God would instruct you in the way that you should go so that you do not sin. For again, we read in Romans 14:23, ***"whatever is not from faith is sin."*** And all sin is a form of hatred toward God.

Let me clarify this a bit more, for our American understanding of hatred is not exactly the same as the Jewish understanding. For the Jews, the concept of "hatred" does not always carry the same emotional aspect that we associate with it. For the Jews, hatred could be simply making something or someone more of a priority in your life. In keeping with what we have been saying, when someone or something is more a priority in your life than God, then in Jewish thinking, you hate God.

Jesus gives us this kind of insight in Luke 14:26-27. As you turn there, let me set the scene. A large number of people have been following Jesus around Galilee and Jesus is preparing to make His final journey south to Jerusalem. By this time, Jesus had performed many miracles, wonders and signs, just as Peter has stated in his sermon. People had been healed, there had been the feeding of thousands, all sort of astonishing events whereby Jesus has proved Himself to be the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Lord of life. When we see all the things Jesus had done in the presence of the people, don't we want to ask, "Why did so few respond to Him?" Who would not want to follow Jesus? If not on a spiritual level, how about just a physical level. I mean there is free food and great entertainment. But Jesus reminds them that He did not come to provide free food and entertainment. He came to recruit disciples – ardent followers of Him. Jesus wants to make sure that the people understand why He came and what these miracles, wonders, and signs were all about. And then He says in Luke 14:26-27,

***26 If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate [does not make me his number one priority] his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. 27 Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.***

Did Jesus really say, ***"hate his own father and mother and wife and children?"*** Yes, but we know as well that in the Word, God also calls husbands to love their wives and children to obey their parents. We understand that Jesus is not using the term "hate" in this context to speak of some rash, emotional thing. Again, we are to know that "hate" – in Jewish thinking, is making something or someone more of a priority than something else. And so, if we have things in our lives that are more important to us and have more of a priority to us than Jesus Christ, it can be Biblically said that we hate Jesus, or that we hate God. No emotional blow up; no shaking of our fists, just passive indifference to the one who to whom you own your life and breath. So while you may find it a stretch to say that you hate God, you need to know that every time you put yourself before God; or something else before your relationship with Jesus, you hate them. And by that definition, some of you here are guilty of hating God.

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How simple, yet profound – to think that the Spirit of God who convicted that first audience of Peter in Acts 2 of ignoring and disregarding the life of Jesus the Nazarene, a man revealed, unveiled, demonstrated, attested to them by God, is right now convicting some of you with the very same truths that the Jews were struggling with. And what was the struggle? It may have gone along these lines: "Sure, this Jesus did some amazing things; what's not to like about Him? But to make Him number one, to surrender to Him all authority over my life, that is asking a lot." How can I know that many must have thought this? Remember how many people were there listening to this sermon? Upwards of 100,000 people. And at the end of the day, how many are we told trusted in Jesus? In Acts 2:41 we read, **"about three thousand"** That is an impressive number and yet in relationship to the 100,000 or so present, 3,000 represents about 3%. Only three out of every 100 people responded positively to Peter's sermon. We might ask, "Why were there so few who believed?" Again, our text in Acts 2:22 tells us; that like perhaps some is this room today, the Men of Israel did not really want Jesus to be Lord of their lives. They did not like the idea of living by the standard of someone else, no matter how glorious He may be. This serves as a perfect example of what Jesus says in 15:25, **"They hated Me without a cause."** What reasons do you have to hate Jesus? What reasons do you have to not see Him as the most important person in your life? Or more piercing yet, in what ways might it be said that you hate Jesus?

## **II. Christ Death (2:23)**

*23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*

After calling attention to Christ' life on earth, Peter next moves to pointing out Christ's death on the cross. We read [read text]. Peter says, **"this Man"** in reference to Jesus, and then uses the verb "delivered". The word "delivered" was a common military term that spoke of those who have surrendered to or been captured by the enemy. It is interesting to note that in the case of Jesus, those who should have been His protectors, the Jews, handed Him over, delivered as a captive, the Lord of Life, into the hands of "godless" or "lawless" men; men who did not know God's law and God's ways. This is a reference to the Romans who put Christ to death. While the Jewish leaders had employed the Romans to put Christ to death for them, they were still seen as the root cause for His death. It was the Jewish leaders who plotted, arrested, and demanded the death of Jesus and were therefore just as guilty for having put Christ to death. Can you imagine the intensity of Peter's words when He said in piercing fashion, **"You nailed to a cross"** this Man attested to you by God Himself.

But notice that neither the Jews or the Romans were all who were involved in this horrific death. For everything that was done, was done under the watchful eye of God. We are told that everything the Jews and the Romans did was all part of God's predetermined, preordained, pre-established, previously planned purpose. Do not think for a moment that had God wanted, He could have stopped the actions of these Jewish and Roman leaders. And yet He allowed them to do what they did; to do what they wanted to do – and all of this was thought out and planned for in eternity past. For because of God's predetermined plan and foreknowledge, because He both plans out and therefore knows their sinful nature, their own sin will simply accomplished the goals and objectives of God's eternal plan. These things were no accidents but were rather just how God determined them to come to pass. Yet in all this neither the Jews or the Romans were absolved of their sin of putting Christ to death – they hated Him and all that He stood for. God

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does indeed determine all things whatsoever will come to pass for He knows all and plans all; yet in His wisdom and wonder, He does not coerce people to do anything that they do not already want to do. The Jews and the Romans wanted to put Jesus to death, truly out of their hatred for **"this man."** And it can be rightly said that God wanted to put Jesus to death truly out of His love for all men. Without their realizing it, these men who put Jesus to death were actually accomplishing the will of God.

I know these are "difficult" concepts to accept, but the truth of Scripture, seen even here in our text, is clear, God predetermines not only good actions that are freely performed by Christians, things like repentance, belief, and seeking the will of God, but He also predetermined evil actions that are freely performed by the wicked. Every free action of man is also predestined by God. And so every free action of a person is committed because that person wants to do it. The Jews and the Romans wanted Jesus dead in order to have salvation from God. But as we have said, God the Father also wanted Jesus dead for another reason, to provide salvation sin. In another sermon, Peter states the same thing. We read of it in Acts 4:25-28 -

***25 who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? 26 'THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.' 27 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.***

So we have seen in both our text in Acts 2 and others, that hatred of God can be anything or anyone we make more important than God and that God's purposes are never thwarted by man's hatred of Him. We might ask ourselves, "Why did Peter include these words in his sermon?" I say to you that Peter was seeking to convince the Jews that Jesus was not delivered up because of any weakness on His part. Nor was Jesus unable to rescue Himself. As God, Jesus could have stopped the events at any time, but for our sakes, for our benefit; so that we might have forgiveness of sin and the hope of eternal life, He chose not to.

Why would some not respond in faith and surrender to such a gracious One as this? Hatred – hatred; there is something or someone more important to you than God. It may be yourself; it may be another person; it may be materialism or power; but know this, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus as Lord. I beg of you and plead with you, bow down now in love and gratitude for so great a Savior as Jesus; for later may be too late and rather than sweet surrender, you will bow to Jesus as the just Judge who pushes you for your having hated Him. Ask God for a heart that loves Him and knows Him through His Son, Jesus Christ.

*Soli Deo Gloria*

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