**Peter Tells The Jews to Listen Up!**

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

There’s an old saying that says: In the first year of marriage, the husband speaks, and the wife listens. In the second year of marriage, the wife speaks, and the husband listens. In the third year of marriage, they both speak, and the neighbors listen!

In Acts 2, the Lord’s 120 disciples (Acts 1:15) have drawn a large crowd by speaking in tongues, and now that the crowd has gathered, Peter begins his address by telling them to *listen up!*

**“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know” (Acts 2:22).**

The first thing I’d like you to notice about Peter’s address is that he comes out swinging. He didn’t have to call the Lord “Jesus *of Nazareth,”* and you’d think he would have avoided doing so. You see, the city of Nazareth didn’t have a very good reputation, as we see when we consider what a man named Nathanael said when Philip first told him about the Lord:

**“Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, *Jesus of Nazareth,* the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* Philip saith unto him, Come and see” (John 1:45,46).**

As you can see, Nazareth had a reputation for being the armpit of the nation Israel. That’s one of the reasons the Jews didn’t accept the Lord. They couldn’t believe that their Messiah would come from such a *despised* city. But rather than play that down, Peter *played it up!* He didn’t back down from associating Him with a city that was so scorned by the people of Israel.

There’s something we can learn from that. You see, the message of grace is also despised. People call what we believe “easy believism.” Do you know what you should do when you hear that? *Keep preaching grace!* Don’t try to play it down, *play it up!* Don’t back down from preaching the truth just because people despise it, for God *approves* it.

And while the Jews might have despised the Lord for where He came from, Peter says that God “approved” Him by working miracles through Him. And I doubt that there was a Jew standing there who didn’t *know* that this approved the Lord, for one of their most beloved prophets wrote,

**“…your God shall come…*then* the eyes of the blind shall be opened…the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. *Then* shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing” (Isaiah 35:5,6).**

So when the Lord Jesus Christ came and *did* those miracles, who should they have known had come? Their God! Paul wrote that “the Jews require a sign” to believe *anything* (I Cor. 1:22), and the Lord had given them *plenty* of signs that He was their God.

But you’ll notice that Peter made it clear that it wasn’t the Lord who had done the miracles, it was God the Father doing them “by” Him. As strange as it sounds, the Lord Jesus never performed a single miracle. He was God in the flesh, but He was also a man. And as a man, He couldn’t do miracles, as He Himself admitted when He said,

**“…the Father that dwelleth in Me, *He doeth the works.* Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake” (John 14:10,11).**

Now if it sounds to you like Peter was saying that Jesus wasn’t God, just wait till you read what Peter said to Cornelius:

**“*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power:* who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; *for God was with Him”* (Acts 10:38).**

Here it sounds like Peter was saying that the Lord *wasn’t* God, that God was only “with” Him.

But if saying that God was with Him poses a threat to the doctrine of His deity, what are we to do with what John wrote in John 1:1?

**“In the beginning was the Word, *and the Word was with God,* and the Word *was* God” (John 1:1).**

As I’m sure you’d agree, John 1:1 is one of the strongest texts that we have on the doctrine of the deity of Christ. So saying that God was with the Lord in no way denies His deity. Peter is just explaining what most Christians fail to recognize, and sometimes struggle to grasp when they *do* finally recognize it, that God did the Lord’s miracles through Him. But if you don’t recognize that the Lord had all the limitations of a man when He was here among us, you have to conclude that He only *pretended* to get tired, or hungry, or thirsty.

The problem with that is that the Bible *says* He got tired, and hungry and thirsty. So instead of making the Bible a lie, and the Lord’s whole life a charade, it is better to just accept what Peter says. I know we have to adjust our way of thinking to believe that, but it’s always better to do that than to adjust what the Bible says to our way of thinking.

But when Peter finishes Verse 22 by declaring that God did those miracles by the Lord, “as ye yourselves also know,” how could Peter be so sure that they had all heard of the Lord’s miracles? I mean, “Jews…*out of every nation under heaven”* were on hand that day to hear his words. They had come from all parts of the known world for the feast of Pentecost, as the law of Moses required. But Peter knew they’d heard of the Lord’s miracles, forwe read,

**“…His fame went *throughout all Syria”* (Matthew 4:24).**

**“…He…came into His own city…And the fame hereof went abroad into all *that* land…And…they…spread abroad His fame in all *that* country” (Matthew 9:1,26,30,31).**

**“…His fame spread abroad *throughout all the region round about Galilee”* (Mark 1:28).**

**“And the fame of Him went out *into every place of the country round about”* (Luke 4:37).**

As you can see, the Lord’s fame covered quite a bit of territory. And you can’t make that big a splash without people hearing about it *throughout the known world.*

Of course, you also can’t make that big a splash without also making *waves*, waves that rocked the boat of the religious system in Israel. And when that happened, the Jews killed the Lord, as Peter goes on to remind them:

**“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” (Acts 2:23).**

That word “deliver” means to give or transfer something into someone else’s possession or power. And that’s exactly what God the Father did with His Son. God the Father possessed the Lord Jesus while He was here on earth, but He *transferred* His possession of the Lord to the people of Israel, by something Peter calls God’s “determinate counsel.”

Now you know what the word *determine* means, don’t you? If not, consider how the Bible says,

**“And Solomon *determined* to build an house for the name of the Lord” (II Chron. 2:1).**

And since Solomon was Israel’s king, nothing could stop his determinate counsel.

And nothing can stop *God’s* determinate counsel either. And the *counsel* of God is just another word for the *will* of God, as we see when Paul referred to “the counsel of His own will” when speaking of the mystery (Eph. 1:11).

So when you put all that together, Peter was saying that it was God’s will that He transfer possession of the Lord to the Jews—knowing full well what they would do to Him. That’s where God’s “foreknowledge” comes in (Acts 2:23). There’s plenty of Old Testament verses that show God knew that His people in Israel would reject and kill His Son, something He allowed to happen to pay for our sins.

But that doesn’t mean God *forced* them to kill Him to save us. If it did, the Jews would have an excuse on Judgment Day. They could legitimately say, “We *had* to kill Him to provide the world a Savior.” But the Lord put the kibosh on that kind of thinking when He said,

**“…the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, *as it was determined:* but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed!” (Luke 22:21,22).**

The Lord acknowledged that He would be delivered to die by God’s determinate power, but He did not excuse the one who delivered Him to the unbelieving Jews. That means that God didn’t make Judas betray the Lord, and He didn’t make Israel reject Him.

Centuries before He came, God made it clear what the Jews *should* have done when He transferred His power over the Lord to them:

**“...*blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord…*God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light; *bind the sacrifice with cords…unto the horns of the altar”* (Psalm 118:25-27).**

Doesn’t that sound like what they said when the Lord rode the donkey into Jerusalem? Mark says that

**“…they…cried, saying, Hosanna; *Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord”* (Mark 11:9).**

That means when they saw the Lord that day, the Lord who had showed them so much light, they were supposed to tie Him to the horns of the altar, like they did with sacrificial animals to keep them from escaping, and then sacrifice Him in faith, not crucify Him in unbelief!

They should have followed Abraham’s example. After God promised him a son, a son through whom He would bless the world, He then made him wait many, many years to receive him—then told him to kill him! In the same way, the Jews should have looked at the Lord as the Messiah for whom they’d waited for so many years, the promised One that would bless the world, and executed Him in faith, knowing God would raise Him from the dead, as Abraham knew about his son (Heb. 11:17-19). Instead, Peter says they crucified and slew Him.

Of course, God knew that they would do that, so He *predicted* that they would do it. But don’t confuse what God *knew* with what He *caused* to happen.The people of Israel made their own free will choice. If they would have chosen to *accept* the Lord, then *that’s* what the prophets would have predicted instead.

But while they crucified the Lord, you know what they say. You can’t keep a good man down! So Peter went on to say in our text:

**“Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it” (Acts 2:24).**

Here, notice that God says that it was God the Father who raised the Lord from the dead. That agrees with what Peter said a few verses later when he declared, “This Jesus *God* raised up” (Acts 2:24). And it also agrees with a host of other verses of Scripture (Acts 3:15,26; 10:40; 13:30,34; 17:31; Rom.4:24; 6:4; ICor.6:14; Gal.1:1; Eph.1:20; Col.2:12; IThes.1:10; Heb.13:20; IPet.1:21).

But I wonder if any of the Jews who heard Peter’s words remember that the Lord claimed that He would raise *Himself* from the dead, saying,

**“I lay down my life, *that I might take it again.* No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, *and I have power to take it again*…” (cf. John 2:19-21)**

As you can see, once the Lord died, His divine power was no longer limited. He was equal in power with the Father—and with the Spirit, who is *also* said to have been involved in His resurrection:

**“…*if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you*, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Romans 8:11).**

That’s one of the ways you can prove the doctrine of the Trinity, by the way. The fact that all three members of the Trinity are said to have raised Christ from the dead shows the oneness that each member of the God head had with the others.

Now if you’re wondering why Peter said that it was “not possible” that the Lord could be holden of death, it is because “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23), and He was no sinner. Sure, God put *our* sins on Him, but we know that God was “satisfied” with Christ’s payment for our sins (Isa. 53:11), or else He wouldn’t have raised Him from the dead.

Our prisons must often release men before they have paid their debt to society due to prison overcrowding, but there’s no way God would release the Lord out of the prison of death unless He was satisfied that He had fully paid *our* debt. Since He did, God *was* satisfied with His payment, so it wasn’t possible for death to hold Him. The justice of God simply wouldn’t allow it.

But you know what that means, don’t you? It means it’s *also* not possible for death to hold *you,* since Christ fully paid your debt, and God is satisfied with His payment! If that makes you feel eternally secure, why not take a moment and thank God for His unspeakable gift!

But Peter was unaware of any of this, for the substitutionary aspect of the Lord’s death and resurrection was not made clear until Paul declared it (Rom. 3:25). So he cited a *different* reason why it wasn’t possible for death to hold the Lord:

“**For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:**

**“Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:**

**“Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.**

**“Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.**

**“Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.**

**“Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;**

**“He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption” (Acts 2:25-31).**

In other words, death couldn’t possibly hold the Lord because the Bible predicted He’d *rise* from the dead! And as the Bible says many times, “scripture must needs have been fulfilled” (Acts 1:16).

So Peter’s point was that death couldn’t hold the Lord because David predictedChrist would rise from the dead, *and so* *it had to happen,* for “the scripture *cannot be broken”* (John 10:35). If the Word of God says that something will happen, it is impossible for it *not* to happen!

Now the passage of Scripture that Peter was quoting was Psalm 16:8-11, and Psalm 16 was was a psalm of David, a psalm he wrote about his own life and times. But it was *also* a Messianic psalm. That means it was alsoa psalm about *the Lord’s* life and times. We know the Jews were familiar with this concept, for while they couldn’t answer the question He posed to them about one of David’s psalms, there’s no indication they didn’t understand that it was Messianic (Mt. 22:41-46). So there’s no reason to think that Peter’s argument would have been lost on them here in Acts 2.

But if Psalm 16 was about the Lord Jesus, that means when David wrote, “I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved,” that the Lord Jesus *also* saw *His* Lord before His face when He was in the tomb, the face of God the Father.

Now the Father wasn’t with Him, of course; He was in Heaven. But the Lord’s faith was so strong that He *felt* like—as He said—“He is on My right hand, that I should not be moved.” But remember, that was also true of David! *His* faith was also that strong.

And there’s no reason why *your* faith can’t be even *stronger.* For you see, David didn’t understand that God’s own Son would *pay* for his sins—but you do! So when it comes time for you to die, you too can say of God, “He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved.” Aren’t you glad you’re saved?

Now as we read the next verse in our text again, remember that we are actually *eavesdropping* on what the Lord was thinking while in the tomb:

“**Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope” (Acts 2:26).**

What an amazing thing to say! I mean, you’d think that after being killed by His own people, the Lord would be *depressed* and *gloomy* in the grave. Instead He was *glad,* and *rejoicing,* for His flesh was resting in hope. Ever hear someone say, “I’ll rest when I’m dead”? I’m sure the days of the Lord’s ministry were so full that His three days in the grave just might have been His first three days of rest in a long time. And David predicted that He would rest be able to rest “in hope,” hope that God would not leave His soul in hell.

Now here we have to point out that the Lord did not go to the “hell” that most people think of when they think of that word. Back in our Lord’s day, hell had two compartments, a torment side and a comfort side (Luke 16:19-31). The Lord went to the “paradise” side of hell (Lu. 23:43), *not* the torment side. It is important to mention this, for there is an erroneous teaching in Christian circles that says the Lord had to endure the flames of hell for three days to pay for our sins. But right before your Savior died on the cross He cried, “It is finished!” (John 19:30), and He was talking about all the suffering that He needed to endure in order to pay for our sins.

But if the Lord was in paradise, why would He want to be raised from the dead? Wasn’t He happy in paradise? We know He was, for we already read how “glad” He was! But only His soul and spirit were in paradise. His body was still in the tomb. And you know what happens to bodies in tombs. They start to rot and decay, and experience “corruption,”to use the word that Peter used in Verse 27.

So God the Father showed His Son the way *out* of the tomb, as the Lord expressed when we hear Him pray,

**“Thou hast made known to Me the ways of life; thou shalt make Me full of joy with thy countenance” (Acts 2:28).**

Now “the ways of life” here (the way out of the tomb of death) is the way to *eternal* life, of course. And that’s a way that it is impossible for unsaved men to find in the grave:

**“…incline thine ear unto wisdom…wisdom…shall preserve thee…from the strange woman…For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again, *neither take they hold of the paths of life…”* (Proverbs 2:2-19).**

But God made known the way of life to the Lord, so He could look forward to seeing His Father’s “countenance,” or His face.

And we know that that was David’s hope as well, for he wrote:

**“As for me, *I will behold Thy face in righteousness:* I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness” (Psalm 17:15).**

And bless God, that’s our hope too! God made Adam in His own image, after His likeness, and in the resurrection, He plans to *remake* us in His image. And I don’t know about you, but I too will be satisfied with His likeness!

Now by the way, Peter probably knew that Jews who heard him quote Psalm 16 would automatically think about *another* Messianic psalm that David penned, one that sounds an awful lot like Psalm 16:

**“...the king…Thou hast made Him exceeding glad with Thy countenance. For the King trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy of the most High He shall not be moved. *Thine hand shall find out all Thine enemies:* Thy right hand shall find out those that hate Thee. *Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of Thine anger:* the LORD shall swallow them up in His wrath, *and the fire shall devour them”* (Psalm 21:1,6-9).**

See the similarities? This psalm *also* speaks of a king who is “glad” (cf. Acts 2:26) with God’s “countenance” (v.27), who “trusteth” that He won’t be left in hell (v.27) so “he shall not be moved” (v.25). But when this parallel psalm *goes on* to speak of how God will hunt down all the Lord’s enemies and devour them in the day of His fiery wrath, that tells us that this is what was supposed to *follow* the Lord’s resurrection! Of course, the dispensation of the mystery *interrupted* the fulfillment of the day of vengeance that Peter just finished describing in Acts 2:19,20, as we discussed in our last lesson.

But Peter didn’t *know* that the fulfillment of Psalm 21 had been interrupted, for the mystery wasn’t revealed until later to Paul. Besides, he would have welcomed any and all comparative thoughts of Psalm 21. You see, he *wanted* them to be thinking about God’s wrath, so they would respond properly when later he called on them to repent (Acts 2:38).

But first, he reminds them that David wasn’t just talking about himself!

**“Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day” (Acts 2:29).**

Peter is pointing out that David said he would rise from the dead before his body saw corruption, *but he didn’t.* So he was either talking about someone else, or else he was mistaken. And Peter knew that the Jews would never admit that there was a mistake in their Bible. But that means they *had* to admit that David was talking about someone else! And Peter was only too glad to tell them who the patriarch had in mind!

**“Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;**

**“He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption” (Acts 2:30,31).**

Now we think of David as a king, not as a prophet. But remember, we’ve already seen in our study of Acts that David is the one who predicted that Judas would have to be replaced (Acts 1:16). And being a prophet, he *also* predicted that Christ would rise from the dead.

And Peter went on to say that David predicted Christ’s resurrection “knowing” that God had promised that one of his descendants would be Israel’s Messiah, an oath God swore in II Samuel 7:12,13:

**“…when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, *I will set up thy seed after thee,* which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish His kingdom… *and I will stablish the throne of His kingdom for ever”***

But let me ask you, if the Lord had remained in the tomb, would God have been able to establish His throne and kingdom forever? Of course not! That’s why God raised Him up, to sit on David’s throne.

But here we have a dispensational difference, for Paul said that God raised Him from the dead for a *different* reason:

**“Jesus…was delivered for our offences, and was raised again *for our justification”* (Romans 4:24,25).**

Paul says that God raised Christ *to justify us,* something Peter knew nothing about! I know people say that Peter and Paul preached the same thing, but as you can see, they clearly didn’t! Read Peter’s message here in Acts 2 through to the end, and you’ll see that he never tells his hearers that they can be justified by simple faith in the atonement of Christ.

Peter *charged* the Jews with the death of Christ (Acts 2:23). He told them, as it were, “You did it! Repent!” Paul never says that. Paul says, as it were, “God did it! Believe!” Peter’s preaching of the cross made the Jews feel guilty. Paul’s preaching of the cross *takes away* our guilty feelings! Or at least it should, for it takes away our guilt. If you feel guilty about your sins, you shouldn’t, for God sees you as *not guilty* in His sight.

That’s why Paul wrote,

**“Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead *according to my gospel”* (II Timothy 2:8).**

Paul doesn’t want you remembering the resurrection according to Peter’s gospel, that Christ rose to sit on David’s throne in the kingdom, for you’re not going to have a part in the kingdom of heaven on earth. That’s Israel’s hope! Paul wants you to remember that Christ rose from the dead to pay for your sins.

But now, don’t get to thinking that Peter was being unkind in charging Israel with crucifying the Lord. He was only trying to get them to do what they someday *will* do, something Zechariah predicted when he quoted God as saying,

**“I will *pour* upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *the spirit…*and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him…” (Zechariah 12:10).**

God did His part to fulfil this prophecy when He poured out the Spirit at Pentecost. Peter was just trying to get the people of Israel to do their part and repent and mourn for what they had done to their Messiah. And someday, after the Rapture concludes this present divine interregnum of the mystery, that’s what the people of Israel will do.

Do you know what is going to happen in that day? Zechariah went on to predict,

**“And one shall say unto Him, *What are these wounds in Thine hands?* Then He shall answer, *Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends”* (Zechariah 13:6).**

Here it helps to remember that the Jews didn’t expect their Messiah to die, or even to be wounded. They expected Him to come and save them from their enemies by conquering them. So when He finally does triumph over Israel’s enemies in the battle of Armageddon, they’re going to say to Him, “Did you get those wounds in the battle?” And He is going to reply, as it were, “I didn’t get these wounds from My *enemies,* I got them from My *friends.”* Did you ever hear of dying by “friendly fire”? That’s what happened to our Savior.

Isn’t it good to know that the crucifixion of Christ didn’t catch God by surprise? Most people have a foggy idea that He was caught off guard, that He saw His Son get nailed to a cross and said, “Boy, I didn’t see that coming! Now what am I going to do? I know! I’ll use His death to pay for men’s sins.” No! God knew it would happen all along. He knew He’d deliver the Lord for our offences, and raise Him again for our justification. And that’s how Paul told Timothy to remember Christ.

Is that how you remember Him?