

But God Raised Him!

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[0 : 00] Well, it had been an awful weekend for the followers of Jesus as they watched the events unfold. First, Jesus' betrayal and capture in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Then the corrupt and humiliating proceedings of Jesus' trials before the religious leaders, before King Herod, before Pilate.

Then came the brutal treatment of Jesus by the soldiers as he was beaten and mocked. After that came the grueling procession of Jesus with criminals to the place of the skull, Golgotha.

And finally came the agony and pinnacle of his suffering as Jesus was nailed alive to a Roman cross and hung up to die.

And die he did. After his death, his followers helped with the burial of his body in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

[1 : 14] But then came the morning of the first day of the week. Listen to the account from Luke chapter 24.

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb.

But when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.

In their fright, the women bowed down with their faces to the ground. But the men said to them, Then they remembered his words.

When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles.

[2 : 32] But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen laying by themselves.

And he went away, wondering to himself what had happened. Later that same evening, Jesus appeared to his followers when they were all together.

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, Peace be with you. They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.

He said to them, Why are you troubled? And why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself.

Touch me and see. A ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have. When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did, they still did not believe it, because of joy and amusement.

[3 : 41] He asked them, Do you have anything here to eat? They gave him a piece of boiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.

He said to them, This is what I told you. This is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms.

Then he opened their minds so that they could understand the scriptures. He told them, This is what is written. The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.

And repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

I am going to send you what my father has promised, but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.

[4 : 44] Well, Jesus continued to appear to his disciples for a period of about 40 days. And he continued to perform signs and miracles to prove that he was alive.

At the end of this period, his disciples watched as he was taken up to heaven before their very eyes. And it went like this. On one occasion while he was eating with them, he gave them this command.

Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Then they gathered around him and asked him, Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel? He said to them, It is not for you to know the times or dates the father has set by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

[6 : 13] So the sadness and grief of Jesus' death was very quickly replaced with the triumphant joy in the hearts of all Jesus' followers who saw him alive.

But 40 days later, Jesus, the risen Savior, was gone, taken up to heaven by God. And there his disciples sat in a house in Jerusalem, waiting for the promised Spirit of God to come.

And come he did, just as Jesus said. The moment was spectacular. There they sat, in the room, when suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them.

Can you imagine this? The sound of this ferocious wind. And at the same moment, this bright, glowing something.

[7 : 25] And out of that something, these licks like fire, tongues like fire, coming out and resting on each of them in the room. The Spirit of God himself came upon them.

And as evidence, he enabled them to speak in other known languages. Well, at some point, they moved outside the house and these followers of Jesus begin declaring the wonders of God in many different languages, such that people from all over the Mediterranean world who had come to Jerusalem for the festival could hear and understand what they were saying in each their native tongue.

And it caused quite the commotion. Many were amazed and recognized it as a sign from God, while others doubted and accused them of being drunk.

The Apostle Peter stood up in this moment and he addressed the crowd that had gathered there in Jerusalem. And he first began by explaining, No, we are not drunk.

It's nine o'clock in the morning. How could we be? No. And he explained to them what was really happening. That just as God had promised long ago, so now he was doing.

[8 : 45] God had poured out his Holy Spirit upon them and he was enabling them to speak prophetic words on his behalf. Now, at this point of the story, you might wonder if I've got the wrong sermon for this morning.

If, I mean, it's Resurrection Sunday. This all happened 50 days after Jesus rose from the dead. But now let's consider for a moment what it was like for many of the Jews who weren't believers or followers of Jesus before this day.

They knew very well about Jesus. They knew what had happened with him just over a month ago. Many of them had been at his trials. Some of them had even shouted, Crucify him.

Some of them had probably witnessed and seen him dying on the cross. And everybody since then knew the stories that had been going around about how he had risen from the dead just a few days after.

And the religious leaders and the Roman soldiers, they were saying that his disciples had stolen the body in the night. And the followers of Jesus were saying, No, he's alive.

[9 : 59] Some of us have seen him alive. Even as far away as Galilee in the north, reports were coming in from there that Jesus had been seen alive.

Well, for those Jews who hadn't believed or followed Jesus before his death, this probably sounded and felt absurd. And where were those disciples of his now?

Those 12 men who had been traveling with him all over the place. They must be sneaking around or hiding because we can't seem to find them after all this. Why don't they show their faces now that

Jesus is gone?

And if Jesus is alive, prove it. This is probably how many felt in the days following Jesus' death and resurrection. And now this here was the annual festival of Pentecost.

And countless thousands came from all over the Mediterranean world to observe the feast. And perhaps they were also eager to catch up on what had happened since they were last there for Passover.

[11 : 05] To hear the news about this Jesus, the one called Messiah, whom some were claiming had risen from the dead. Could it be true? The rarest and greatest of all miracles.

Something God only ever did in connection with a prophet. Or perhaps Jesus is the Messiah that we've all been waiting for. This may have been some of the feeling and the wonder of those days. Until finally this day of the feast when the silence was broken and Peter, one of the 12 disciples, emerged and spoke on the heels of this great sign and said this.

No, we're not drunk. It's nine o'clock in the morning. How could we be? No, this is what God promised long ago. He's poured out His Spirit on us.

He's enabling us to speak on His behalf. And this day God has something to say to all of you about what happened 50 days ago. Fellow Israelites, listen to this.

[12 : 11] 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.

This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge. And you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross.

It's as if Peter is telling them and us that this is what really happened at Passover. Let's set the record straight. Jesus, the man from Nazareth, God Himself made it clear to all of you who Jesus was.

He gave proof of it. He put His stamp of authenticity upon Jesus by performing all kinds of signs and miracles and wonders through Him.

Things that only God could do. And you all know it. You witnessed it. He did these things among you. Some of you tasted in your mouths the very bread and fish that He made out of thin air.

[13 : 30] Others of you were healed or knew someone healed by Him. These things God did among you right here in your midst. You know it. You were witnesses of it.

And this man, Jesus, was handed over to you. But make no mistake, this happened according to the very plan of God.

God knew that it would go this way even before it did. In fact, He deliberately brought it about that it should happen this way. This man, Jesus, was handed over to you and you, with the help of wicked men, you killed Him.

You put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross. Yes, Jesus, the man accredited by God Himself, did die.

You put Him to death, 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.

[14 : 49] Here it is. This is the moment where God chooses to break the silence and puts it on public record for all to hear from the lips of the official spokesperson, the Apostle Peter himself, yes, I did raise Jesus from the dead.

I imagine that this was quite the moment for Peter. Peter, the man who couldn't even bring himself to admit to the servant girl at the door that he was a disciple of Jesus on the night that Jesus was betrayed.

Peter, the man who had been huddling quietly in the house with the doors locked even after meeting Jesus alive for the first time. Peter, the fearful one who cared too much about what others thought of Him.

Yes, I saw Jesus alive, but if I say that out loud to anybody, they're going to think I'm crazy. Just like I thought the women were the day that they came running back from the tomb.

But here's Peter now, and God's Spirit has come upon him with power, and he's declaring for the first time to this huge crowd in public, despite what the religious leaders may think or may do, you killed Jesus, but God raised him from the dead.

[16 : 11] dead. And Peter has some specific things to say about this to them. He says, by raising Jesus from the dead, God freed him from the agony of death.

Now, this is a bit of a tricky phrase here. A very literal translation of this is given by the New King James Version. It says, whom God raised up having loosed the pains of death, or having released or set him free from the pains of death.

And interestingly, that word pains is the same word that's used to describe the pains of childbirth. I thought this was surprising, and apparently there's a whole bunch of connections to the Old Testament and how this word was used.

We're not going to get into that this morning. I think it's sufficient to say that Peter wants us to think of labor pains, even as we think of the end-of-life dying pains that Jesus suffered.

There are similarities between them. End-of-life dying pains and labor pains. Both may come upon a person suddenly and forcefully.

[17 : 29] Both may be rhythmic and part of a drawn-out process. loss. The outcome of both is inevitable and uncontrollable.

Labor pains and end-of-life dying pains, both of them take hold of you and they don't let go until the end result comes. And in the case of Jesus dying on the cross, the end result of those pains came. He died. He wasn't loosed or set free from actually dying. He did die. Yet amazingly, by God's intervention, just as labor pains lead to new life, so Jesus' dying pains led to new life for him as well because God raised him from the dead.

And Peter explains this a little bit further. here. He says, God freed him from the pains of death, the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

This is the interesting part about Peter's choice of word here. Just as eventually, the pains of childbirth must give way to something good, the new life of the baby, in the same way the pains of death that Jesus suffered had to give way to something good as well, to the resurrection that God had prepared for Jesus.

[18 : 59] And I love this last phrase here in verse 24, it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. Death is personified here as that which holds us and doesn't let go.

And once it's got us, that's it. It's got us. But in the case of Jesus, Peter says it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

As powerful as death is, God's life-giving power is greater. And so through Peter, God declares, yes, I raised Jesus back to life from the dead.

I set him free from the clutches of death itself on that first day of the week, resurrection morning. God will be going to go on and he's going to add to this.

He's going to speak about this shocking to many and perhaps unexpected truth that this was God's plan all along. Not just the death of Jesus, his chosen one, but also the raising of Jesus back to life from the dead.

[20 : 14] And basically in the next number of verses, to sum it up, Peter says that God hinted, God foreshadowed, God foretold that he was going to do this long ago.

And what Peter does is remind the people of the words of David from Psalm 16. If you know the story of David, he lived about a thousand years before Jesus was born.

And God specially chose David to be the king of Israel. And David was a musician and a songwriter. And more than that, he himself, David, was a prophet.

Peter says as much in verse 30 of chapter 2 in Acts, but David was a prophet. And so David's psalms and poems and songs and prayers were very special.

They were his words, but by the Spirit of God speaking through David, they were also God's words. And so that's what Psalm 16 is.

[21 : 20] It's a God-inspired utterance of David, a psalm, a prayer in which David was speaking to God and expressing at the same time the very words of God.

And Peter wants all of his hearers in this moment in public to reflect back on Psalm 16. Now, they would have been much more familiar with this psalm in their culture and day in Israel than probably most of us are, so we're going to go back and just look at it for a couple minutes here, Psalm 16, and see what it says.

I'll just read through it for us. These are David's words to God. He says, Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge.

I say to the Lord, you are my Lord. apart from you I have no good thing. I say of the holy people who are in the land, they are the noble ones in whom is all my delight.

Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more. I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods or take up their names on my lips.

[22 : 36] Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup. You make my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places.

Surely, I have a delightful inheritance. I will praise the Lord who counsels me. Even at night, my heart instructs me.

I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices.

My body also will rest secure because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead. Nor will you let your faithful one see decay.

You make known to me the path of life. You will fill me with joy in your presence. With eternal pleasures, at your right hand.

[23 : 42] So David had a confidence in God that his life was secure. Even though all throughout his life he was surrounded by enemies, he was able to rest.

He was able to have peace. Even as his father-in-law, King Saul, hunted him all over the Judean wilderness, David knew with confidence that even if he was captured by Saul, he could not be killed.

Why? Because God had chosen him to be the next king of Israel, and nothing can stand against the choice and plan of God. But eventually, David did become the king, and he got old, and death drew near for him.

And yet here, David expresses something that's quite remarkable in this prayer. He says to God, my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices. My body also will rest secure.

Why? Because you, God, will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one or your holy one see decay.

[24 : 58] This is maybe a surprising statement from King David. He expresses this confidence that God will not leave him to stay in the place of death, the realm of the dead.

And we notice, it's not that he'll never go to the realm of the dead, not that he'll never die, but that God won't abandon him there. He's expressing a hope in God for life after his death.

He's saying, I'm happy. My heart is glad because you won't let death have me in the end, nor will you let your faithful one, your holy one see decay.

And so David expresses this confidence in God that God will not allow his body to decay or to rot in his burial tomb. God will not raise him to him.

He says, you make known to me in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. What is David saying here?

[26 : 10] This is what Peter is trying to get his audience to see there in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. David was expressing confidence that God would raise him from the dead.

He was saying, there is a path to life. There is a path to joy in the presence of God. There is a way to get eternal pleasures. That word eternal is a dead giveaway.

David is thinking about heaven, life after death, and he has this confidence that he himself will enjoy good things with God forever.

God will not allow his body to decay, to rot in the grave. He will not leave him for dead after he dies. Now let's look back to what Peter is saying. He is quoting these words of David. Let's see how Peter applies these words to Jesus back in Acts chapter 2.

[27 : 13] Peter says, David said about Jesus, because I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Therefore, my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices. My body also will rest in hope because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead. You will not let your Holy One see decay.

You have made known to me the paths of life. You will fill me with joy in your presence. Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried.

And his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet. And he knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne.

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.

[28 : 25] God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. What is Peter saying here?

He's saying that David was not just talking about himself and the confidence that he had that God would raise him from the dead. He was speaking as a prophet by the Spirit of God about something that was to come, something he saw coming.

God revealed it to him. David spoke of what he saw, and what he saw was the resurrection of the Messiah. A thousand years before it happened.

What he saw was that there was coming one of his descendants after him who would receive his throne, who would die, but who God would raise to life, whose body would not be allowed even to see decay.

David was speaking prophetically about Jesus all those years ago, says Peter, which means that God intended and planned all of this right from the start to raise Jesus, the son of David, back to life.

[29 : 54] And I love how Peter concludes this section. He just declares it. God has raised this Jesus to life. And we are all witnesses of it. Do you hear how unashamed and bold Peter is in this moment?

He puts himself and others forward as eyewitnesses. We've seen him alive, all of us. Let it be known, let it be heard, God really has raised him from the dead.

Now at this point, perhaps some people in the crowd that day were wondering, well then where is Jesus right now? Peter's next portion here explains this a little bit.

Peter says, exalted to the right hand of God, he has received, that's Jesus, from the Father, the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. 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.

Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this, God has made this Jesus, whom you crucify, both Lord and Messiah. we're not going to dig too deeply into this piece here, but basically Peter is telling them what happened after Jesus' resurrection.

[31 : 31] He's explaining, Jesus was exalted, he was lifted up, he ascended to heaven, to the right hand of God. He's telling them that his ascension is proof that he is greater than King David was.

It's proof that this descendant of David, Jesus, is in fact the Lord of David. The one whom God will allow to sit at his right hand until he has fully established his kingdom.

Peter's saying that God himself has already installed Jesus on the throne, in heaven, at his right hand. He has made him king, he's made him Messiah and Lord over all.

Well, how do the people respond to this? It seems that God had been working in their hearts already, even as they were listening to this. They don't laugh at Peter, they don't think that he's crazy.

This is their response. Verse 37, when the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, brothers, what shall we do?

[32 : 43] 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. The promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord, our God, will call.

with many other words he warned them and he pleaded with them, save yourselves from this corrupt generation. Those who accepted his message were baptized and about 3,000 were added to their number that day.

So many listened to Peter and believed. They were cut to the heart, it says. The message of Peter struck a chord deep within them.

They realized that what Peter was saying was true. That yes, they had done a wicked thing. They had killed the Messiah, the one that God had sent.

[33 : 53] And in this moment they're somewhat at a loss for what to do next. Brothers, what shall we do? Amazingly, God's mercy and forgiveness is so great that yes, these Jews who had participated in the murder of his son, God is willing to forgive them.

What must they do? Repent, says Peter. Turn to God with a contrite heart, confess your sin to him, and ask for his forgiveness.

That's what repent means. repent, repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Baptism is the outward, tangible act that Jesus gave his followers to do, which marks their repentance and their belief in him.

And the call is to everyone, every person in the crowd, every single one of you, do this, repent, repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And not only that, but you too will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. He's not just for us, says Peter, he's for everyone, for all who God will call, for all who will believe.

[35 : 27] And Peter tells us that 3,000 people accepted his message and were baptized that day. or Luke, I should say rather. I love this story.

Yes, it had been 50 days already since the first day of the week when Jesus had risen, but it's this day where we start to see the impact of this glorious reality going public and spreading. No more was this just a wonderful, cherished reality that his faithful followers kept to themselves behind closed doors. Jesus is alive. now they began to declare what they had witnessed to the world.

God has raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses of it. This is precisely what we're celebrating today, over 2,000 years later.

Our Lord Jesus died, yes, to atone for our sins, but God raised him from the dead. God set him free from the clutches of death.

[36 : 37] It was impossible for death to keep its hold on him because Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Messiah.

He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Right now he's seated on heaven's throne at the right hand of God waiting for his enemies to be made a footstool for his feet.

It's as true today as it was back then. And through Jesus Christ we too can say with David in confidence therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices.

My body also will rest secure because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead. nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life.

You will fill me with joy in your presence with eternal pleasures at your right hand. The resurrection of Jesus is wonderful all by itself but it's also wonderful in that it opens the way for our resurrection from the dead.

[37 : 51] Listen one more time to the words of Jesus. This is what he said on one occasion John 6 verse 40 he said for my father's will is that everyone who looks to the son and believes in him shall have eternal life and I will raise them up at the last day.

Have you believed this good news for yourself? It's only those who believe in him that receive this eternal life.

It's only those who believe in him that will enjoy these eternal pleasures at the right hand of God forever. Have you been cut to the heart because of your sins against God?

Have you repented? Have you received the wonderful forgiveness forgiveness of God for your sins? Do you believe that God raised Jesus from the dead?

If not, I want to extend these words to you today. Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

[39 : 11] And if you've done this already, then today is all for rejoicing. Our Savior and our King was raised to life and when he comes, you and I will be too.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank you that even death could not stop your plan, that you are greater, that you are stronger, that you are the author and giver of life.

Lord, it's wonderful to think that Jesus' body was lying there lifeless and then all of a sudden, his heart began to beat and you pulled him out of death back to life.

God and it's awesome to think that one day when he returns, the same thing will happen for each one of us who believes and that we will live with you forever in your kingdom, your good kingdom.

Thank you for the gift of Jesus and thank you that you love us and forgive us even though we don't deserve it enough to give us all this.

[40 : 39] We just give you praise and we do it in the name of Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.