

# Acts 2:22-28

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/acts/acts-2/acts-22-28/>

*Peter preaches that Jesus's death was part of God's plan, and that He has been resurrected from death by God. King David had prophesied this resurrection in his psalms.*

Peter has just explained to the crowd in Jerusalem that the Holy Spirit is working through the disciples. Now he shifts to preaching about Jesus Christ. He addresses his audience a second time, *Men of Israel*, to draw attention to what he is about to say: *listen to these words*. The words he will speak are for the *Men of Israel* specifically, because they have a firsthand connection to the subject of his sermon, *Jesus the Nazarene*, who is Israel's promised Messiah.

Doubtless the local men in the crowd knew instantly who Peter was talking about. *Jesus* spent three years of ministry traveling around *Israel*. He was *a man attested to the Israelites by God with miracles and wonders and signs*: he healed sick people, brought dead people to life, cast out demons, and more. These *miracles* were a testament to the people that He was sent by God. Jesus also had very public confrontations with the community leaders of Jerusalem: the Pharisees. Jesus preached about the Kingdom of God, and attracted a large following of people, sometimes gathering crowds in the thousands. In a small country like Israel, most people would have heard of or seen Jesus at some point.

Peter reminds his audience they certainly knew this man, that the miracles he performed were attributed to *God who performed through Him in the midst of the people of Israel*. Peter directly states: *just as you yourselves know*. They know who he refers to. Peter's statement anticipates the audience has direct experiential knowledge of Jesus and His works.

Even many of the Jewish pilgrims from all over the Roman/Parthian Empires (from Rome to Iran) likely knew who Jesus was, for a great number of them were in Jerusalem fifty days ago when Jesus was put on public trial and executed on a hill, on display, on a cross. The crowds that were gathered there for Passover took part in His death sentence (Matthew 27:22-23).

So, Peter says, *this Man*, this *Jesus of Nazareth*, who was *attested* to the Jewish people as someone sent by *God* from *the miracles and wonders and signs* He performed *by God*, was more important than the crowds knew.

Peter reminds the crowd of their part in Jesus's crucifixion: He was the man *you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death*.

But, the important fact of the matter elevated by Peter was that Jesus was *delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God*. His death was prophesied. It was not a surprise, nor a defeat, but a *predetermined* part of God's *plan*. Really it was the entire point of Jesus's coming to earth (John 3:16).

What the crowds did not know, or perhaps had heard rumor of, was that though they put Him to death, Jesus did not stay dead: *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.*

Peter makes three incredible statements here:

1. That *God raised Jesus up again* from the grave.

Those listening would have ample resources to check out the evidence supporting Peter's claim. If the claim was easily refuted, it would have been.

- That this action put *an end to the agony of death*, hinting that death has been defeated (1 Corinthians 15:57).

This implies that there are wide-reaching effects of this resurrection available to others. Peter is making this claim a short time after it occurred, to people in the direct vicinity.

- That *it was impossible for Jesus to be held in the power of death.*

Other people had been raised from the dead throughout the Bible and in Jesus's own ministry. It was uncommon and amazing, and probably hard for many Jews to believe who had not witnessed it, but they were familiar with the idea that God raised some people from the dead. Even some people were resurrected the moment when Jesus died (Matt. 27:52-53), and were most likely creating a stir by their return to life among those who knew them. But Jesus's resurrection was obviously special, based on what Peter says here, that the *power of death* could not hold Him. It was *impossible*. Jesus had, in some sense, accommodated death for a brief time, then defeated death. Death was not something He would ever experience outside of His choosing, and He chose to die out of submission to God the Father (Matt. 26:39). But it was *impossible* for Him to stay dead. He was God the Son, which Peter will reveal to the crowds in a moment.

Peter quotes from the Psalms of David, Psalm 16:8-11, to prove that Jesus was the eternal Davidic king promised by God centuries ago:

The immediate context of David's psalm quoted by Peter was about fearing for his own life, and hoping to outlast the threat of his enemies. He writes how God preserved his life and brought him hope: *'I saw the Lord always in my presence, the Lord did not abandon him, he was always in the presence of the Lord, who was at his right hand, right beside him, to give him confidence, so that he would not be shaken* (Psalm 16:8).

Because the Lord did not abandon David, he writes, *Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted*. He is encouraged, and praised God with his *tongue*. Moreover, he writes, his *flesh also will live in hope*. His body remains, his *flesh* is shown to *live in hope* and safety from threat of death (Psalm 16:9).

His *hope* is founded on God's preservation of his body. He writes, *Because God will not abandon my soul to Hades* (Psalm 16:10). The Hebrew word in the original psalm is "Sheol." Luke used the Greek *Hades* to translate "Sheol" in Peter's quote of Psalm 16:10. "Sheol" in the Old Testament is translated in various ways, including "Sheol" (a transliteration rather than translation), pit, grave, "among the dead," and hell.

Hades is the place of the dead in Greek culture. Both capture the same idea of being dead. It simply means that God kept David from death. More strikingly, David writes that God would not *allow Your Holy One to undergo decay*. "Holy" means "set apart" or "chosen." David was God's anointed king, a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14).

David praises God for protecting him,

*'You have made known to me the ways of life;  
You will make me full of gladness with Your presence.'*

But Peter, empowered by the Holy Spirit, sees a deeper meaning to this Psalm. It is not only about David being saved from murder by his enemies. It also speaks of the resurrection of Jesus, the son of David and heir to the Davidic throne. It is common for prophetic passages to have multiple layers of meaning, and multiple fulfillments. This is such an instance, where the passage has an immediate application as well as a future one.

That Luke used "Hades" to translate "Sheol" when quoting Psalm 16:10 indicates that the Greek model for Hades was substantially similar to the Jewish idea of where people went after they died. This is further confirmed by Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus, found in Luke 16:19-31. In that parable, Jesus speaks of an uncaring rich man being tormented in Hades, which is separated by a gulf from paradise, which Jesus calls Abraham's Bosom. This model of two compartments, one for the righteous and one for the wicked is apparently accurate. At the end of this age, Hades is thrown into the Lake of Fire along with death, so it will terminate along with death (Revelation 20:14). The Lake of Fire will be the destination for unbelievers and is called the "second death" (Revelation 20:14, 1:8).

In reciting Psalm 16, Peter is making clear that Jesus would be resurrected. Jesus told the thief on the cross that he would be with Him that day in paradise (Luke 23:43). So apparently Jesus did go to paradise when He died. But as predicted by Psalm 16, Jesus did not remain there, but rose from the grave. Paul says that Jesus is a firstfruits of those who have died (1 Corinthians 15:20). Jesus' resurrected body was able to disappear or walk through walls, while still being solid and able to consume food (Luke 24:31; John 20:20; 21:12-15). Paul calls the resurrected body a "spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44).

In the days between His resurrection and His ascension, Jesus taught His disciples about the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). He also opened the scriptures to them to allow them to see that they spoke of Him:

"Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must

be fulfilled.' Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures"  
(Luke 24:44-45)

Peter had clearly been reading the Psalms of David and had seen layers of meaning in them after Christ opened his mind to understand how they spoke of Jesus. This approach to the scriptures was and is common among Jews. He cited two Psalms in Acts 1 to show that Judas Iscariot's position among the 12 apostles needed to be filled. And here in this sermon to the Jewish pilgrims, he points to the Psalms again to show that a resurrected Jesus was alive and with God the Father.

### **Biblical Text**

**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.'**