



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Class Notes

Peter Interprets and Explains

Acts 2.14–36

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Introduction

1. After describing the coming of the Holy Spirit, listing various nations represented in Jerusalem for Pentecost, and taking note of their amazed and (for some) skeptical reaction (Acts 2.1–13), Luke reports Peter's interpretation and explanation of the events (vv. 14–36). We'll study his address in two stages.¹

God Had a Plan: Peter's Fulfillment Emphasis

2. Peter begins by rejecting the charge that what the people were witnessing could be attributed to drunkenness (Acts 2.14–16).²
3. He then quotes Joel 2.28–32, with some modification (e.g., v. 17 where he reads Joel's "after this" as "in the last days"; Keener 2014, 323).³
 - a. An example of a direct prediction—"this is that"—Peter was saying that what the crowds were experiencing had been declared by Joel centuries before.
 - b. Other prophets also said God would one day establish a new age characterized by the outpouring of his Spirit (cf. Isa 42.1–7; 44.1–8; 61.1–10; Ezek 36.22–33; 37.7–23; 39.25–29).
 - c. The same texts also indicated that, with the outpouring of the Spirit, God would act to restore a remnant of his people (Slate 1989, 95). Note the entirety of Joel 2.32, quoted in Acts 2.21.
4. That these events occurred on Pentecost is an indication that Luke intends to stress the fulfillment theme; notice that throughout his address, Peter will continue to emphasize it.
 - a. Jesus' betrayal and crucifixion were anticipated "according to God's determined plan and foreknowledge," part of his action to "end the pains of death" (vv. 23–24).
 - b. Jesus' death–resurrection–enthronement event (cf. Cranfield 1979, 833) inaugurated "the last days" (v. 21), in continuity with the dynasty of King David and promises about one whom God would not abandon in Hades, "the world of the dead"⁴ (vv. 25–28, 34–35; from Pss 16.8–11; 110.1).
 - 1) Note that "the last days" as used in the NT "denote[s] the new age inaugurated by the Christ-

¹ The main ideas here are condensed from chapter 10, "Fantastic News from Jerusalem," in David Anguish (2025), *Reinforcing the Foundations: Expositions on God, Sin, Salvation, and Service* (CarChlex Books), 127–139.

² Arnold (2002, 234) notes that "Peter begins by pointing out the absurdity of thinking that over a hundred people would be drunk at nine o'clock in the morning." Bruce (1988, 60) suggests the possibility that "the charge itself was made in jest." If so, "there is good humor in Peter's dismissal of it; it is too early in the morning, he says, for them to have had an opportunity to drink to excess."

³ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the CSB.

⁴ The translation, "the world of the dead" is suggested by Louw and Nida 1989, 5; discussion of ᾠδῆς, *hadēs* (1.19).

event” (1 Cor 10.11; Heb 1.2; 9.26; 1 Pet 1.20; 1 John 2.18) (Bruce 1988, 75 n. 63).⁵

- c. In explaining this connection, Peter was establishing that Jesus was not simply the latest great Jewish teacher and prophet, but was the one God had made “both Lord and Messiah” (v. 36).
- d. Thus, the outpouring of the Spirit was the last step in God’s plan to reconcile people to himself.

God Had a Way: Christianity is Christ

5. The subtitle, “Christianity is Christ”⁶ is appropriate since Peter’s main focus in the sermon is on Jesus; notice that he begins by referring to “Jesus of Nazareth,” calling attention to his human life and singling him out from all others who might have shared his name.
6. He then briefly summarizes his ministry with specific comments about the remarkable works that showed he was “a man attested to you by God with miracles [mighty works, ESV], wonders, and signs that God did among you through him, just as you yourselves know” (v. 22).
 - a. “Mighty works” (δύναμις, *dynamis*), “wonders” (τέρας, *teras*), and “signs” (σημεῖον, *sēmeion*) are the words typically used by NT writers to describe the supernatural works of Jesus and his disciples (cf. 2 Cor 12.12; Heb 2.4).⁷
 - b. But the deeds are only secondarily important to the fact that, in those actions, God was attesting (ἀποδείκνυμι, *apokdeiknymi*) to Jesus’ work and unique place.
7. Peter then moves to a short statement about Jesus’ crucifixion (v. 23).
 - a. He makes two points.
 - 1) Jesus’ crucifixion was not a defeat, a surprising frustration of God’s plan; it happened “according to God’s determined plan and foreknowledge.”
 - 2) The people who handed Jesus over for crucifixion were guilty of killing God’s anointed one.
 - a) “Lawless men” (ἄνομος, *anomos*) is used here in the sense of being outside the range of Israel’s law (cf. 1 Cor 9.21), not of exceedingly wicked people (Bruce 1988, 63).
 - b. Notice that the ideas of God’s sovereign plan and human choice and responsibility are not mutually exclusive (Keener 2014, 324).
8. In verse 24, Peter turns attention to his primary emphasis in the sermon: “Twelve of the sermon body’s fifteen verses (vv. 22–36) are concerned with declaring and defending the fact of Jesus’s resurrection and its implications” (Anguish 2025, 133).
 - a. His thesis is that Jesus’ resurrection validated his ministry and crucifixion.
 - 1) He was “released” (λύω, *lyō*; NET) from death’s control; because God decided to raise Jesus, “it was not possible for him to be held by death” (v. 24).⁸
 - 2) The image here is graphic: “pains” (ὀδίν, *ōdin*) was associated with the pains of a mother giving birth. “Death had no more power to hold Jesus in its clutches than a mother has the power to keep her baby from being born when it is time (Bertram 1974, 673)” (Anguish 2025, 133).
9. Notice that Peter does not just assert that Jesus had been raised; he offers evidence to show it was true.
 - a. First, he argues from prophecy: that the Messiah would overcome death had been anticipated in Scripture, notably Psalm 16.8–11, quoted in Acts 2.25–28.

⁵ “In the last days” should also be understood this way in 2 Tim 3.1–5, the oft cited text about conditions in our culture.

⁶ Ajith Fernando (1998, 107) uses “Christianity is Christ” as the subheading for his comments on Peter’s sermon in vv. 22–36.

⁷ “More common than the use of all three words together is their appearance in the phrase, *signs and wonders*, used to refer to remarkable things done by both Jesus and his close followers (see Matt 24.24; Mark 13.22; John 4.48; Acts 2.19, 43; 4.30; 5.12; 6.8; 7.36; 14.3; 15.12; Rom 15.19; 2 Thess 2.9). Significantly, the word *wonders* never appears in the New Testament apart from at least one of the other two words” (Anguish 2025, 132 n. 2).

⁸ “Held” (κρατέω, *krateō*) means “to accomplish something[ing] by overcoming obstacles” (Bauer 2000, 564).

- b. Second, he contrasts the situations of David and Jesus to emphasize that Jesus' tomb was empty.
 - 1) Notice Acts 2.29–31, which recalls ideas found in Pss 89.3; 132.11; 2 Sam 7.12–13.
 - 2) Peter's point is that David could not have been referring to himself as the person who would overcome death; he was still in his tomb in Jerusalem, a location some of those listening could have visited.⁹ For a resurrection to have occurred, an empty tomb was *necessary*.
 - c. But an empty tomb was not *sufficient* evidence; there are various reasons a tomb could be found empty.¹⁰ So, Peter's third proof was that there were "witnesses" to the fact of Jesus' resurrection (cf. cf. 3.15; 5.32; 10.41; 13.31; and Paul's expansion on the point in 1 Cor 15.5–8).¹¹
10. Having presented the evidence for resurrection from prophecy, the empty tomb, and witnesses, Peter turns to Jesus' enthronement.
- a. He returns to the theme of fulfillment, quoting Psalm 110.1 (one of the most quoted OT passages in the NT¹²) to substantiate his claim that because he was raised, Jesus was exalted to the Father's right hand and has sent the Spirit he received from the Father to authenticate and support those who submit to his reign (Acts 2.33–35).
 - b. Jesus' enthronement assumes his ascension (Acts 1.9–11) and puts him in position to rule as Lord (Matt 28.18).
11. Notice two ways he used his authority.
- a. First, he "poured out" what they could see and hear, proving the coming of his Spirit (cf. John 16.7, 12–15); this points his hearers back to the phenomena of Acts 2.1–11.
 - b. Second, he will subjugate all his enemies, also as anticipated in Scripture (Psalm 110.1).
12. Based on the above considerations—attested works, crucifixion, resurrection, and enthronement—Peter concludes with his thesis statement in verse 36.
- a. His Pentecost audience would have recognized "Lord" (κύριος, *kyrios*) as "the exalted title used more than 1,600 times in the LXX to refer to God (cf. Isa 45.21–25; cited in Phil 2.9–11)" (Anguish 2025, 136–137).
 - b. They would have also known that "Messiah" (Χριστός, *Christos*) was used to refer to God's anointed king, the promised descendant of David who would be Israel's deliverer (cf. 2 Sam 7.12–16).
 - 1) Use of this term serves to reinforce the fulfillment theme developed throughout the sermon.

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⁹ Do not miss the fact that Peter's sermon occurred in Jerusalem, the city where the events occurred just seven weeks prior, in the presence of people who had seen and heard Jesus and witnessed his death.

¹⁰ See, for example, the removal of Joseph's body from his Egyptian grave when Israel took him back to Canaan (Exod 13.19). More nefariously on the other hand, grave robbers were not unheard of (cf. Matt 28.1–15).

¹¹ See also Matt 28.9–10, 16–20; Mark 16.7, 9–20; Luke 24.13–52; John 20.11–29; 21.1–23. Note that a claim to have witnessed something is not self-validating; witness credibility needs to be examined, including their state of mind and motivation. We who present the case for a resurrection today must, therefore, be willing to have the evidence we present examined.

¹² See Arnold 2002, 235; Harris 2019, v. 35 sn 75.

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