

## **The sermon/illumination**

### **Intro**

This morning we're going to look at the aftermath of Jesus' resurrection.

Can you think of a time that you got it wrong? You sided with the wrong party. You condemned the innocent while siding with the guilty. Not only that. You thought you were siding with those in power, when in fact, you sided against the one who was actually in charge. As a result, there's regret. I rejected the innocent. And perhaps more so, there's fear. I sided against someone with power over me.

It's hard to find a precise analogy. Maybe a parent taking the side of one child over another to find out later you sided with the liar and accused the truth-teller of lying. Maybe someone sitting on a jury rendered a guilty verdict only to learn months after the trial that someone else committed the crime. Maybe someone in the workplace siding with a person they thought was going to become supervisor only to find out that the person they slandered was now their supervisor. I picked the wrong side. I offended the one in power. What's going to happen to me?

Let's turn to Acts 2 to see how Jews in Jesus' day processed their rejection of Jesus.

### **READ PASSAGE**

### **Body**

#### **Point 1: Jesus was attested by God with miracles (2:22)**

*“a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him”*

When Jesus came to earth, he caused a stir. People followed him wherever he went because they heard reports about the mighty deeds he was doing. The miracles couldn't be disputed, so the religious authorities were afraid of how enormous his influence would grow if something wasn't done. So they plotted to kill Jesus. Even on Palm Sunday, days before his death, Jesus approached the city with a massive, supportive audience.

#### **Curious crowds**

The problem was most of the crowd didn't understand Jesus correctly. Is he a prophet? Is he demon-possessed? I might get kicked out of the synagogue. Is he worth following? Do I like what he's saying?

#### **Miracles**

Peter refers to Jesus' miracles as works (supernatural manifestations of divine power), wonders (people were amazed by what Jesus did), and signs (Jesus' miracles pointed to a greater reality). Jesus cast demons out of the demon-possessed, healed various illnesses and diseases (e.g., withered hands and the blind), raised the dead, and told the wind and rain what to do.

#### **Attested by God**

Attested by God means God endorsed Jesus through these miracles. God was the source behind Jesus' miracles. Why should we pay attention to Jesus' claims? Because of his miracles.

There was no argument from Peter's audience. Because they witnessed the miracles themselves. Or at least heard eyewitness accounts. Interestingly, Jewish sources (e.g., Josephus, the Jewish Talmud) concede Jesus performed miracles. How do those who reject Jesus explain his miracles? It was sorcery. He was empowered by Satan. This agrees with the gospel accounts where the Pharisees claimed Jesus cast out demons because of demonic powers (Matt 12:24).

It's highly significant that those who rejected Jesus conceded his miracles. If Peter was making this up, he would have lost all credibility.

**Peter's point?** You know Jesus performed miracles. God was the source of Jesus' miracles.

### **Point 2: Jesus was crucified and killed (2:23)**

*“this Jesus...you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men”*

Peter's audience didn't physically crucify Jesus. But they played a part. Some of them were there in the crowd shouting “Crucify him! Crucify him!” to Pontius Pilate.

Why were they shouting “Crucify him! Crucify him!”? Because they were persuaded by their religious and political leaders, the Sanhedrin (chief priests [mostly Sadducees], scribes [mostly Pharisees], and elders.

The Sanhedrin didn't physically kill Jesus either. They gave Jesus over to Rome (“*lawless men*” = men without the Law of Moses) to be crucified. They judged Jesus worthy of crucifixion and begged Rome to kill him.

### **What happened to Jesus?**

Crucifixion was designed to maximize humiliation and pain inflicted (duration and intensity).

The awful thing about crucifixion was that Jesus' ankles were nailed to the vertical post and his wrists were nailed to the horizontal beam. Because of difficulty breathing, Jesus had to alternate between putting the pressure on the nails in his wrists or the nails in his ankles. Death came by suffocation or heart attack or blood loss.

To make matters worse, before crucifixion took place, Jesus was flogged/scourged and forced to carry his cross. That's Jesus' exposed back lashed with a whip composed of sharp pieces of bone and metal. The effect was ripping of the flesh, deep lacerations, extreme pain, and loss of blood.

**Peter's point?** Jesus actually died. And you, my hearers, are guilty of his blood.

### **Point 3: Jesus' crucifixion was planned and carried out by God (2:23)**

*“this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God”*

The religious authorities persuaded the crowd. The crowd agreed. The religious authorities handed Jesus over to Rome. Rome carried out the execution.

But the crucifixion of Christ wasn't merely human activity. Behind human activity was God's eternal plan. In the crucifixion, there's both human activity and divine activity. There's both God's good intention and man's evil intention. Both divine sovereignty and human responsibility. But before man acted, before man was created, the whole complex of events surrounding the death of Jesus was a done deal because God predetermined these events. God's plan came first.

*“definite plan”* indicates the crucifixion was fixed, settled, a done deal before the foundation of the world. The divine decision came first. *“foreknowledge”* ≠ God passively foresaw what would be. God foresees his own actions. God foresees his eternal plan coming to pass.

*“delivered up according to”* = the ultimate cause of the crucifixion was God's eternal plan.

**Peter's point?** God planned the crucifixion. God wanted the crucifixion to happen. God made the crucifixion happen.

**Point 4: Jesus was raised from the dead by God (2:24-31)**

*God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.* – 2:24

Peter makes three claims here:

1. God raised Jesus from the dead.
2. David foretold the death and resurrection of Jesus in Psalm 16.
3. Jesus couldn't stay dead because what the Scriptures say must happen.

*“God raised him up”* = Jesus' human body didn't stay dead because God gave Jesus' dead body life.

Peter supports his claim with Psalm 16:8-11 (2:25-28).

**Peter's argument (2:29-31)**

1. David died and was buried. His body didn't rise from the dead. We know where his grave is. We could dig him up right now.

Approximately a 1,000 years after his death, the people still knew where David's burial site was. This argument wouldn't have worked if Peter was making it up.

2. God made an oath to David about a future descendant who would reign on David's throne.

*“And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”* – **2 Samuel 7:16**

3. Jesus is this risen descendant of David.

**Peter's point?** Psalm 16 foretold the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus had to die and be raised because the Scriptures said it would happen. Jesus is David's descendant who will reign forever and ever.

**Point 5: Jesus' death and resurrection was attested by eyewitnesses (2:32)**

*This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.* – 2:32

Jesus' resurrection was confirmed by eyewitness testimony. The eyewitnesses are the apostles and some of Jesus' disciples.

How could we, 2,000 years later, know about the death and resurrection of Jesus apart from eyewitness testimony? How could we have access to that eyewitness testimony apart from a written account? So we have the Bible.

**Resurrection proofs**

- 1) Eyewitness testimony.

Normal legal procedure is to accept eyewitness accounts unless proven false. Most credible is the testimony of those who were present. Most credible are records closest to the actual events.

Presenting unfavorable details of early leaders like Peter suggests authenticity. Deceivers don't highlight their faults.

Women are presented as key eyewitnesses at a time when the witness of women wasn't valued. If deception was intended, this didn't help their cause.

In the gospels the resurrection events are presented in diverse ways with each eyewitness adding their own details. A rehearsed conspiracy/lie wouldn't allow for this diversity.

2) The empty tomb.

Jewish authorities didn't have Jesus' body. To end Christianity all they had to do was produce Jesus' body.

In Matthew 28, the Jewish explanation was Jesus' disciples stole the body while the Roman guards were asleep. This account would do nothing to convince people to follow Jesus if it wasn't the actual story that was being circulated. Matthew's desire to persuade suggests it was the actual story being circulated. A stolen body remains a popular explanation of critics.

If the disciples stole the body, why weren't they arrested?

How could Roman guards fall asleep when the punishment for failure was likely death?

If the soldiers were asleep, how did they know what happened to the body and who took it?

How did the soldiers remain asleep while the tomb was disturbed?

The evidence suggests the disciples had no opportunity to steal the body and there was great motive to maintain the body, yet the Jewish leadership couldn't produce the body!

3) Persecution endured

Assuming, for a moment, the body was stolen and the early Christians never saw Jesus in a resurrected body, is it likely the apostles would be willing to die for something they knew was false? Early believers were executed for their faith. People don't die for claims they know to be hoaxes. No disciple gave up the "hoax" when threatened with death.

**Peter's point?** Myself and many others witnessed Jesus in a physical, resurrected body.

**Point 6: Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit after his resurrection (2:33-36)**

*"he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing"* – 2:33

Peter's audience saw Jesus' Jewish disciples speaking in the actual foreign languages of those gathered from outside Israel for the day of Pentecost. This was supernatural. The risen Christ is the living and active Christ. Jesus is alive! Having ascended to the right hand of the Father, Jesus was exercising authority from heaven, giving believers supernatural ability to speak in foreign languages, confirming the claims of his followers.

Peter cites Psalm 110:1 to demonstrate that Jesus is David's Lord, the one who sits at God's right hand and will make a footstool of his enemies. Under his feet means conquered, defeated. Peter's clear: the crucified Jesus is **"both Lord and Christ."**

In short, Peter told his Jewish audience that Jesus is your promised Messiah whom God raised from the dead. Having been raised, Jesus is ruling with the Father and working the miracles you see today. Jewish people, you crucified your Messiah!

Jews, you killed the one who's going to rescue the Jews from the nations (Ezek 34:27-28). You killed the one who's going to execute judgment on the nations and shatter them in pieces (Ps 2:7-9; 110:5-7). You killed the one who's going to reign forever and ever (Ezek 37:24-28).

**Peter's point?** You killed your Messiah. But he's not dead. The evidence? Jewish disciples speaking in foreign languages.

### **Point 7: Jesus requires repentance and baptism (2:37-41)**

*Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" – 2:37*

Peter's audience is getting it. I was there that day. I demanded the release of Barabbas. I cried out "Crucify him! Crucify him!" These people heard in the synagogues all about what the Messiah is going to do to his enemies. I want you to see the weight of this here. They're thinking, what is Jesus going to do to me? I've rejected the wrong guy! Thoughts racing. Fears rising. So they ask Peter, what do we do now?

#### **Response required**

*And Peter said to them, "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. – 2:38*

Peter says you need to repent and be baptized.

On the cross, Jesus died as a substitute so that all who believe would have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. If you trust in Jesus, Jesus took the punishment in your place and purchased your forgiveness with his death. If you refuse to trust in Jesus, your sins remain and you will experience the punishment yourself: weeping and gnashing of teeth in hell, forever and ever.

To repent means to change your mind about Jesus. He's God the Son who took on human flesh. He died on a cross to take away the sins of the world. He rose from the grave. He's coming again to judge the living and the dead. I ought to follow him. I ought to love him.

To repent means to change your mind about sin. Sin is rebellion against God. My sin makes me worthy of God's judgment. Sin is bad. Sin ruins my life. I need to turn from sin.

To be baptized is to be baptized by the church. According to Matthew 28:19, baptism follows repentance. The church verifies a disciple has been made. The church commends baptism. The believer consents. The believer is baptized.

**Peter's point?** The right response to Jesus' death and resurrection is repentance. After repenting, you need to be baptized.

### **Point 8: Jesus promises forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit (2:37-41)**

*And Peter said to them, "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. – 2:38*

Peter promises, if you repent, you'll receive forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit.

#### **Forgiveness of sins**

If you repent, Jesus won't hold your cries "Crucify him! Crucify him!" against you. Jesus won't hold the fact that you've broken God's commands against you (failure to honor father and mother, murder = hatred, adultery = lust, theft, lies, coveting your neighbor's property). You will be totally pardoned of all your sin: past, present, and future.

Jesus extends mercy to those who wanted him crucified! How can Jesus overlook rejection and rebellion? Because his death is a worthy payment for sin.

#### **The Holy Spirit**

Peter's saying those who believe will experience newness of life. A new heart with new desires, new loves, new perspective. What Christians call being born again. Newfound love for God. Newfound distaste for sin.

Before his death, Jesus had promised, "*Whoever believes in me... Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water*" (John 7:38).

The evidence of Christ's resurrection mounts with every changed life!

**Peter's point?** If you repent, all your sins will be forgiven by God. If you believe, you will have a new heart.

### **Conclusion**

People believed. They repented of their cries "Crucify him! Crucify him!" and were baptized. The weight of the evidence was too much for them to bear. So the church grew. We're given a glimpse into how the crucifixion of one man became a worldwide movement.

If you're visiting with us and you haven't repented of your sins, you need to believe these events happened. They're true! That's why Jesus matters!

Eyewitness accounts give the Bible credibility. You need to believe the Bible accounts are true. If Jesus has power over death, you can trust he can ensure his words are properly preserved!

You need to believe the significance of these events. Jesus has power over death. Jesus has ability to change your heart. Jesus has authority to forgive sin. Jesus has authority to punish sin. You need to believe what is promised will actually happen!

You need to respond to these events. Repent of your sin. Trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus. If you don't repent and believe, you have guilt not forgiveness. Punishment awaits.

What's your verdict? Do you believe? What's your response?

**Christian**, rejoice that you serve a risen Savior. Following Jesus is worth it. One day Jesus will return. His enemies will be his footstool. No more threats. Sin, death, and suffering will be no more in Christ's kingdom!

While you wait, you're not alone. Jesus is sustaining you by the same Holy Spirit he poured out.