

Let's open our Bibles to Acts 2:14 this evening.

The book of Acts is Luke's second volume of work. He reported it to a good friend. His name is Theophilus. (We really don't know what his name was; that just means lover of God). But Luke wrote the gospel of Luke as well as this book of Acts. Nearly 25% of the entire volume of the New Testament came from Luke's pen, Luke the doctor. And most people believe that whoever Theophilus was, he was a rich man who financed Luke's travels with Paul; later got saved and probably was a Roman guy. But we don't know that for sure.

We have looked at the beginning of this book of Acts. The first few verses cover the first forty days after the resurrection and until Jesus is caught up into heaven (verse 11). That's the first forty days of information that we have after the resurrection of Christ. Verses 12 through 26 cover the next ten days of chapter 1, and it moves us to the fiftieth day forward, if you will. We've looked at the resurrection, we've looked at Jesus' appearances, we've looked at Peter's call that he believed was upon him (and upon them) to replace Judas. He saw that as needing scripturally to do so.

And then we saw, last week in chapter 2, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon these born again believers. And really the book of Acts is the story of the work of the Holy Spirit - you can't really separate the two. Without His work, this just doesn't go any further. We just stop. But God, by His Spirit, came upon these men and women who, on Easter evening (Luke 24), were saved, were told that they were to wait until they received power from on high because God wanted to have them be His witnesses starting in Jerusalem but going to the uttermost part of the earth. And that really is God's plan for the church, still today. He's not putting it on you; He's putting it upon you to be a vessel for Him so that He might work, His Word might go out, His name might be lifted up. And so we looked at the baptism of the Holy Spirit last week, which is really the explanation for everything that follows - the church's success for sure. In the next thirty years (which is about what the book of Acts covers in terms of time), according to Paul's words, everyone on the planet had heard the gospel or at least every city, every land had already heard the gospel. That's not true today. We are losing ground just to the

population explosion around the world. Less and less people are hearing the gospel than ever before, rather than more. We're not gaining ground. And God help us, that He might stir us again.

Last week, we finished through to verse 13. We looked at the Pentecost morning and how, when the Lord poured out His Holy Spirit, things happened that wouldn't happen again. They are unique to a specific work of God. That are not repeatable. They are not reoccurring. We read that there was a sound like a "rushing mighty wind." It doesn't mean there was a wind, just sounded like it, and it gathered the people who were there (by the hundreds of thousands) in town for the Passover. There were "tongues, as of fire" that sat upon the heads of these 120 that were gathered, waiting upon this promise of God; they sat atop their heads. It didn't have to be real fire, putting off real heat, but it looked "as fire" to those who saw it. And then we saw the disciples begin to speak in tongues, a gift of God to the church later on, that is never understood - speaking heavenly things, not in man's language. But, at least on this day, everyone in town from different dialects and languages understood as the men and women began to praise the Lord as the Holy Spirit fell upon them. It was very different. It created a very curious phenomenon. People gathered by the thousands to watch what was going on. And everyone had an opinion as to what was going on.

Well, tonight, we join Luke's report of this awesome Day of Pentecost with a sermon from Peter. It is his first sermon. We will run into his second one at the end of chapter 3; it'll be Peter's "sermon on the porch." This one is by the upper room somewhere. And to me, there's nothing better. There are a lot of sermons in the book of Acts, and I think it's so that you and I can walk away from the reading, saying, "God's Word works, people are changed by it." If you can develop a confidence in God's Word and then the power of the Spirit to take it and apply it to the heart, you'll marvel at what God can do with you. Because these weren't hugely laid out plots. These are just people that love the Lord, studying the Bible, who are willing to regurgitate it, if you will, bring it forward again. "Here's what I learned, and here's what I want you to know," and they shared it with great confidence. In fact, literally most everyone in the book of Acts went to their deaths believing it to be so rather than giving up their hope in Christ to save their own necks. So this is an amazing day. And we thought it would be good for us to look at Peter who is now filled with the Spirit (great boldness that comes upon him), and he is given the privilege of presenting the first sermon of the gospel of Jesus to the world.

Now, at least we're going to look at verse 14 through verse 36, which is the entire sermon, twenty-two verses. But I want you to know that this was a sermon delivered to the Jews by a Jew on a Jewish feast day regarding a Jewish Messiah, using only the Old Testament to verify the things that were being said. And they were familiar with them. This was an audience that would have understood. When we get to chapter 10 of the book of Acts, we will find Peter being given the privilege of giving the first sermon to the Gentiles, and it'll be an entirely different procedure. He's now relating to people that have no Bible background, that don't believe the Bible to be authoritative, that don't have any Bible history. He just has to meet them where they've come from, wherever that might have been, but it'll be from a culture that believed in lots of different kinds of gods. And so his approach there will be to talk to people who had no biblical background for faith. So, imagine Peter (as much as he bumbles) early on, being given this awesome privilege to speak to the Jews and to the Gentiles and give, to both of them, the first official message of salvation by grace through the Person of Jesus Christ.

We mentioned to you when we started, and it's a good practice (and I'll just kind of keep mentioning it to you and you'll jump on when you want to or ignore me if you like), it's very helpful as you go through the book of Acts because you want to learn from the Lord how the church is supposed to function. Where can we find this power? How God, can You use us, in our generation? But I've tried to say to you every time you read through, write in the margin when you discover the kinds of people that God uses. Chapter 1:12, chapter 2:1, chapter 1:14 as well - men of prayer or those who obey the Lord. Here, last week in chapter 2:4 - they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Tonight, verse 16 - these are men and women of the Word. I mean, Peter is so good to go back to the Scriptures. And if you can make a list of "this is the kind of person that God uses," I think you'll have a pretty good list of attributes to be able to say to the Lord, "Make me this kind of man" or "this kind of woman." In the history of Israel, never was this kind of outpouring seen. Now there's some pretty cool stuff that you read in the Old Testament - when Moses was raised up or Elijah or even David. But never like this. There had been 400 years of absolute silence from heaven to God's people. No one had spoken to them at all, no prophet since Malachi; and only recently did John the Baptist come upon the scene. And then they had Jesus in their midst, traveling for three and a half years, and now Jesus is gone. And now there's this, and the people can't believe their ears and their eyes. And so we had ended last week by people (verse 12) being "perplexed" and "amazed." "What does this mean?" And other people -

we laughed at verse 13's comment about, "They're drunk," as if, somehow, you can speak new languages; your drinking improves your language skills. But that was the crowd's opinion.

So Peter is now moved by the Spirit to stand up to do two things. Number one - answer what they see; number two - make sure that he turns that conversation immediately to Jesus and how you go to heaven. Because that's what he's there for, right? That's what the gospel is that has been presented to them like it's been presented to us. So he wants to answer their explanation. He wants to give them a biblical basis for what they're experiencing. But he ultimately wants to turn the boat around to head right for Jesus. It's a very simple, straight forward message. We will save the reaction of the crowd till next week. So we're just going to stop with Peter's message in verse 36. Verses 37 through verse 41 - the crowd's response - we'll look at that next week, Lord be willing. And then in two weeks, we'll look at chapter 2:42-47, where we get a flavor for - now that these people are getting saved - what does an early church do? How do they meet? What is their interest, and what do they major upon? So, you might want to - at least in your own mind - think about getting up early, and you're hearing noises in town, and you've come for a religious holiday. Maybe you've traveled for hundreds of miles, and it's early in the morning, and everyone's running outside, and they want to see what's going on. There's an event in town and thousands of people standing around, and they just gawk and watch, and they're amazed, they don't know what to say. And this is the message that they get to hear from Peter, on this first day when the church really is born. They get to hear about sin and the Son of God.

Verse 14, "But Peter," (in response to the people's opinions) "standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, 'Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only ' (9:00 in the morning) " 'the third hour of the day.' " So, Peter gets their attention, and then he immediately turns to the Scriptures. Notice that verse 16 begins with the words, "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel." "This is what was spoken by the prophet." Immediately, Peter turns lots of speculation in the minds of the people to the Word of God. Right? "Listen up, guys. This is what the Bible says." Pretty good advice to us. He turns them from speculation, from foolishness, from doubt, to the authority of the Word of God by which the Holy Spirit always speaks. Now Peter had become a guy that was pretty good already at handling the Scriptures. He's

been saved seven weeks and a day, so he's got a badge. "Fifty days, I'm in." But over the last fifty days, he's been studying. I mean, if you go back to chapter 1 (and we talked about Peter's conviction that they needed to replace Judas - we told you why we didn't think that that was so; he's not corrected, he's a young disciple in the Lord, he's hungry for the things of God), he is certainly a man of the Word. In fact, if you look in your Bible - and most Bibles will have quotes from the Old Testament in Italics - there're big portions of this that are just quoting the Bible. Because Peter was ready with an answer for what was going on in their midst. He wanted them to know. "This is what." "What is this?" they said. And he said, "This is what." "What is this?" "This is what was spoken by the prophet." Look, spiritual phenomena always draw a crowd. But so will an accident.

So, when people are gathered together by what God is doing, there will always be people that bring questions that need answers, and it is vital that we have explanations for what we believe and why, what we see and what we experience. Sometimes, unfortunately, people get explanations about spiritual issues from folks that are not very based in the Scriptures. They're driven by experience-oriented explanation, and we don't want to do that. We want to be able to say, "This is that which the Bible says we should expect to see." Very important as you share your faith that you're biblically-based and you're able to stand upon what you are sharing with others. But Peter's quite a guy. In the seven weeks he's been saved, he's a student, he has committed himself to the Scriptures, he believes it with all of his heart, he divides it absolutely brilliantly. God is leading him. He's learning. Paul would write to the Ephesians, years later, to the leaders there (and even to the church, when he was leaving there) in Acts 20:32, "I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." And Paul thought that was his last chance to ever meet with these leaders. There's a pretty good possibility he saw them again, but regardless, when he left, he said, "Here's what I want to leave with you. This is what's going to work in your church, and this is what has worked around the world."

In a couple of chapters, when we get to chapter 4, Peter is going to be arrested with some others, and they're going to be brought before the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the land, and they're going to be chastised - that they can't any longer speak in the name of this Jesus. But there's a comment, there in chapter 4:13, where it says that the Sanhedrin looked at these men that were supposedly ignorant men, and they took note of them "that they had been with Jesus." They

were ignorant to the Sanhedrin; they were below their level of intelligence. They didn't measure up in their knowledge in a worldly sense. But how ignorant can you be when you know Jesus? And they stood their ground - filled with the Spirit. And God used them. If you want God to use you mightily, be a man or a woman of the Word of God. Paul said to Timothy (in the last letter he would ever write, before he was killed), "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). And that was Paul's last counsel to Pastor Timothy. Know the heart of God, receive it yourself, share it with others.

So Peter stands up - and there were thousands, thousands of people - "Men and brethren, listen! Nobody's drunk here. This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel." And he was able to reach into the prophets and bring out the truth for the audience that was gathered, led by the Holy Spirit. I don't know if you could reach into the book of Zechariah and go, "Here's what the Bible says," but that's what our goal should be - that we can rightfully divide the Scriptures. Look, Joel was a minor prophet. Minor, not because he was less significant - those twelve Minor Prophets in the Old Testament are minor, for the most part, because of their length. They're not very long, but they're very specific in their targeted audience. Joel wrote to the southern kingdom of Judah. It was about 825 or so B.C. He was sent to warn those in Jerusalem that there was difficulty coming if you kept going down this road of idolatry. "You're going to get in trouble with God. You're going to fall. You're disobedient." And they didn't listen. Two hundred and eighteen years later the Babylonians would come in. But, see, God was already sending prophets out to warn His people, "Don't go down this road." That was Joel. But yet, in the book of Joel - like every prophet - is this prophetic look towards the end, towards the last days, towards the consummation of everything God planned. And like all of the prophets, as you read them together, they have this seamlessness between what happens in a short term and what happens in a long term. And Peter was able to distinguish between the two. He's an amazing guy who's coming up so quickly.

So here's what he said. " 'This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "And it shall come to pass in the last days," ' " (verse 17) " ' "says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy." ' " Now whenever you read the term (in the Bible) "the last days," just

get it in your mind it is always a reference to what happens between the first and the second coming of Jesus. Everything in between those two is "the last days." And the way you determine what part of "the last days" is being spoken of, you have to look at the context. But that's a general term, if you will, for just that word of prophecy. And you'll find it used in the Scriptures a lot. Paul will write to Timothy, "Know this, that in the last days perilous times will come" (2 Timothy 3:1). Or Peter will write, "Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts" (2 Peter 3:3). Or Paul will write to the Hebrews, "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:1). So don't let the term "the last days" freak you out, like, "Where are we?" No. It just depends on the context. But from the time of Jesus' death and resurrection to His return, from His ascension to His return, those are "the last days" in the Bible, and they are referred to as such. And, like I said, it's dependent upon the context. What's going to happen in "the last days," after Jesus ascends into heaven? Well, this first thing. Right? Because we're only fifty days away from His resurrection and only ten days from His ascension. The first thing is God's going to pour out His Spirit; that's what He promised. And so he's got the right Scripture, and he's handing it to the people. He's not saying, "Well, this is what He told us, and we're part of that group. We know stuff." No. He's going, "This is what the Bible says. This is what God promised us." He's turning the hearts of the people in the audience to the Scriptures. "He's going to pour out His Spirit, here, upon all flesh. Your sons, your daughters" (by the way, those are Jews) "will be poured out upon. And His maidservants and menservants," which is usually a reference (at least in the context) to the Gentiles, "upon all flesh." Now that would be news to everyone in Jerusalem because they're pretty sure they were the only chosen ones. They looked with disdain at the Gentiles. And it would be a long time, a long time, years, before the gospel of Jesus was acceptable (not to the Gentiles - they're ready) to the Jews who were saved to look at, then, the Gentiles and go, "Okay, God chose them as well." We're going to be halfway through the book of Acts before we can deal with that hurdle, at least for the people there at the time. Right? That was this big struggle.

But I want you to notice that the intensity, here, of the work of God's Spirit in "the last days" is not a trickle, it's not a drivel, it's not a shower. It's a torrent, a downpour! That's literally what the word "poured out" means. In these "last days," as Jesus now goes to heaven and sends the Holy Spirit, there's going to be this downpour upon the life of every individual who walks with God. That's His promise,

His Spirit. From the young (in visions) to the old (dreaming dreams) - and all of them together being able to "prophecy." The word, by definition, means being able to put forth the Word of God. I know prophecy, we think, tells about the future. Well, you're kind of doing that when you preach the Bible anyway, but that's what the word, by itself, means. And the result, in verse 21, is, " ' "And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." ' " So everyone's going to be a part of this work of getting the gospel of Jesus to the world. And Peter says that in his explanation. "These guys aren't drunk, man. This is what God said would happen. The Spirit is being poured out - the young, the old, the sons and daughters. They're bringing forth the Word of God. They're going to prophecy and share and minister."

It's interesting to me that, as the prophets of old, you and I are now called to speak about His good news to our generation. And you can look at the response to the prophets if you're discouraged. Because that is true in every generation. You'll bring the truth of God's Word, and, for the most part, folks don't want to hear it. You're really out of step. In reality, Christianity, early on, was a youth movement. Jesus was thirty when He came upon the scene. He was thirty-three when He died. The apostles, most of them, were the same age that Jesus was and some of them significantly younger than He. I think that, biblically, God finds the most willing hearts among the young. Statistically, the older you get, the less likely you are to be saved. Now that's not always true, but that's generally true. Because, as you get older, you become narrow-minded. You've settled in. You're hung up. You have peculiarities. You're not so flexible. "It's not the way we've always done it. It's not the way it goes." I'm speaking from experience. I thought to myself - I was telling my wife something the other day - and I said, "It sounds just like my dad," and it was awful. I mean, I love my dad, but I didn't want to sound like my dad. And I pray about not becoming that old. Which is why the young see visions, and the old are left to dream. But you need both. You need the wisdom that comes with age and the enthusiasm and energy that comes with the young. The church needs fathers and sons, daughters and moms, and that's the way the church is addressed. But it is always, in every age group, the work of God's Spirit that's going to accomplish the work of getting the Word out to the world. This is that day that this all began, but it was spoken of in 825 B.C. by a prophet, a minor prophet, in the midst of talking about something entirely different, mind you, about coming to work in the days when the nation would need to be restored from their captivity. But, in the long term, it is a word from the LORD about what takes place in "the last days" between Jesus' first and second coming.

We read, in verse 19, " "I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." ' ' Now, "the last days" refers, like I said, to those times between the first and second coming of Jesus. "The day of the LORD," in one way or another, refers to the coming of Jesus for the second time to judge. And it is more specific - it ties yourself in to the last portions of man, if you will, from the rapture of the church, forward, where there is a Great Tribulation. And then there's Jesus' return, and there's the inauguration, the initiation of the Kingdom Age and the judgment that comes with it. That really is "the day of the LORD," when the Lord comes to finish those works as God has told us He would. So "the last days" is much bigger, "the day of the LORD" much smaller but kind of tagged to the end of what is going on. If you read Matthew 24, Jesus (in chapter 24:29) talks about, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." It is a statement of Jesus to the end of this Great Tribulation, when it is almost over, except for His coming, the judgment and then His millennial kingdom that is ushering it in. Now, all of that is in Joel's prophecies. But for Peter, this work of God's Spirit begins that road that ends there, that this is going to eventuate; this work of God's Spirit is going to continue like this until the Lord comes.

Joel, verse 21, notice he speaks about an age of grace, where you can call upon the LORD, and you can be saved; with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It's not limited to one generation. It comes every generation until the Lord comes back. This is an ongoing work. If you want to know where you fit into everything that God's doing, you're one generation amongst many that God pours His Spirit upon and says, "Go reach the lost. Go preach My Word. Depend upon Me. Be that vessel until the church is removed." And during the Great Tribulation, national Israel will be the primary source of witness to the world. It'll still be the work of God's Spirit, but it's different. It's not individual in the sense that God, now, is upon you to send you out; and you can hear His voice, and you can be used by Him. In the Tribulation, it's going to be different. It's going to be lots of things going in the heavens and angels helping out, but it's going to primarily be the nation itself, through whom God will seek to be the witness.

But notice verse 21. For now, salvation is just that easy. People like to complicate how you go to heaven. "What do I have to do to be saved?" Simply call upon the name of the LORD. Right? That's the message you and I have to preach. It's that publican in Luke 18 who leaves justified because he cries out for God's forgiveness; or the thief on the cross who calls out for forgiveness because salvation includes repentance; or what Paul wrote in Romans 10:9, that if we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in our hearts that God has raised Him from the dead, we'll be saved. It's not too complicated. "Oh, do you have to pray a certain way?" No. "You have to use certain words?" No. You just have to know you're a sinner, and He's a Savior and call for His help, repent of your sins. So, he pulls the best Scripture out of nowhere - filled with the Spirit, led of the Spirit, wise as can be in the Spirit.

And then, in verse 22, he just changes. "All right. Now we got that squared away, let me talk to you about Jesus." And he says, in verse 22, "'Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know - Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death.'" So Peter uses verse 21, which comes right out of Joel 2:32, and he turns on that salvation message to say, "Let me talk to you about Jesus." The crowd had questions; Peter had Jesus. "You got questions? All right. I've got Jesus." Right? What did Paul say to the Corinthians in chapter 4? He said, "For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5). We would do well to realize, I think, as we go share it with others, that people don't need your opinion. They don't need your understanding. They need His promises. They need His Word. They need His work. They need to trust in who He is. Just preach Jesus! That's what Peter would write. And when you say to him, "How did your first sermon go?" he said, "Oh, I just preached Jesus." Because that God honors. Look what God did with him. And notice he stops the people as they're muttering. He said, "Now, listen. I want to tell you about Jesus of Nazareth." The reason "of Nazareth" is there is because apparently there were a lot of people around town naming their kids Jesus, which would mean Jehovah Yeshua, "God is our Salvation." They were all hoping that maybe they could have the boy that would be the Savior. So this is the different Jesus; He's the one from Nazareth. And then he defines Him further, "He's a Man who God attested or approved or proven" (if you will) "among you. How did He prove Himself among you? Because what God did in Jesus' life with the miracles

and the signs and the wonders. God did it through Him." We've said that before to you. Jesus did not do His miracles as Jesus the Son of God. He was filled with the Spirit because He's our example. We have to follow Him. So our hope has to be, "Gosh, fill me with the Spirit. Speak to my heart. Move in my life. Speak to me and tell me what to say." He's my example. That's why He was baptized. He stood where I'm supposed to stand. To be my example. So, He's been a Man that was approved among you, attested to. How? By miracles. The word is "*dunamis*," power, by the supernatural work of God. By wonders. The word "wonders" is something which causes astonishment, which causes you to just go, "I've never seen anything like that! What in the world is going on here?" And the word "signs" means just that - arrows that point to the truth. He was the One who just said, "It's over here. Follow Me." So God did through Jesus what everyone was able to see. Nicodemus shows up and says to Jesus in John 3:2, "No one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." "No one has done those kinds of miracles. '*Dunamis*.' Nobody has power like You have. You have power with God. That's why I'm here at night, trying to find out what it is that You want to say to me." The man who was born blind and is healed, and then he is questioned by those who were unbelievers, finally says, in John 9:30, to these folks, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! He's the One I want to follow. He's the One that I want to know. You might not know Him, but I want to know that Man with that kind of power." The very works that Jesus began to do when John the Baptist's disciples came to Him (there in Luke 7:20) and said, "Are you the guy we're waitin' on or what? Let's get this thing on the road." I think John wanted to be busted out of jail, and, "Let's get goin'." And Jesus didn't say anything except He began to heal the sick and preach the gospel to the poor and open the eyes of the blind, and He just turned around and went, "Go tell John what you see. Deliver the message the Messiah is here with signs and wonders and miracles." And Peter says to the crowd, "You know about Him. It's not like these things were done in the dark. These were public knowledge. The sign which God did through Him in your midst, you yourself know." Jesus had great credibility, didn't He? Great credentials. Who else walked on the water?! Nobody! Who else multiplied food to feed the thousands? Who banished demons from the lives of the people? Who healed diseases that were absolutely incurable? Who overcomes death? No one but Jesus. Look, if you're not going to believe in Him, who are you going to believe? Who outdistanced Him when it comes to proof? Irrefutable signs. Paul was able later to stand before Festus and Agrippa (there in Acts 26:26) and look them in the eye and say to them, "You know these things which I am speaking freely about. Though none of them, maybe, have persuaded you, these

things were not done in a corner, King. Everyone knows about these. This is not new stuff. You know this! You should make that and allow that to move your life." I had that argument with my dad. It took eleven years for him to get saved. He was so antagonistic when we first got saved. But he said to me, "You're different," and I said, "You see? That's not me, that's the Lord working in me." It's nice to be able to point to something God did in reference to what you want people to believe. Preach Jesus. And Peter just stood up, and he said, "Jesus, you know Jesus. You know what He did. You know how He proved Himself. There's no one like Jesus, there is nobody like Him," he says to the crowd.

" 'He's the One,' " verse 23, " 'being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death.' " "Against all of the proofs, you rejected Him in your wickedness, and you cried for Him to be killed. You plotted and plotted and bound together to do one thing - let's kill this Jesus." Pilate had said, "What do you want me to do with Jesus?" (Mark 15:12) and they yelled out, "Crucify Him!" "But He hasn't done anything wrong!" "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). "May His blood be upon us and upon our children" (Matthew 27:25). That's what they said, even though no one had done anything like Jesus had ever done. But notice that Peter declares to them that the death of Jesus was no accident because God determined beforehand that it would be so. God knew the consequences of giving you free will (and me). He knew that Jesus would have to come and pay a price to save us. He willingly took that road. "I'm the Good Shepherd," He said (John 10). "I know My sheep. I'm known of Mine. As the Father knows Me, I know Him. I've come to lay My life down for the sheep." This was God's plan. God knew it would be like this, which is why Jesus, on the cross, could yell, "It is finished" (John 19:30) and dismiss His spirit and pave the way to glory in His blood. The Bible, in the Old Testament, said lots about Jesus' death. Go read Psalm 22, go read Isaiah 52, Isaiah 53, and lots of other places. Jesus came to die by the will of God. But that doesn't excuse anyone's behavior. It's God's will that He dies, but woe to you if you're part of that! Because God's sovereignty and man's responsibility coexist in God's Word and in God's world, and they're both valid. And the big debates between sides for the last two thousand years - the sovereignty of God, the free will of man - Peter covers and marries together in one verse. He literally says, "God is sovereign, man is responsible, we'll just leave it at that." And he moves right on, which'll save you a lot of reading. J.B. Phillips, in his New Testament translation commentary, said, "If God is small enough for us to understand Him, He's large enough for us to worship Him."

So Peter just said, "Look, here're the proofs that Jesus is the One we should be believing in. Number one - the works that He did, the miracles, the signs, the wonders. Number two - the central argument (verse 24) the resurrection, what He did in terms of death. "You put Him to death, but," verse 24, "God raised Him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it." Central to every New Testament presentation of the gospel is the resurrection. Because if you just preach His death, you got nothin'. You got someone dead in a tomb. There're lots of guys who have come and gone and said, "Yeah, I'm the Savior," and they're dead, and they stayed dead. And you go, "I don't think You're the Savior. You're dead." The Rastafarians believe that their Savior is coming again. But let's face it, he died years ago, and he's not coming back; he's dead! But Jesus is alive. No value in a cross without the resurrection, which is why it's at the heart of Christianity. And Peter said that, I think. He said, "He has begotten us to a living hope through the resurrection" (1 Peter 1:3). We have hope because He rose, and Peter turns to that, immediately, here in verse 24. "You killed Him, you put Him to death. But, hey, death can't hold Him because of who He is. That's His proof. He's attested to you by His miracles, signs and wonders. And let's face it, He's attested to you by the empty tomb." Paul would write to the Corinthians (in 1 Corinthians 15:16-17) that, "If there's no resurrection, then Christ isn't risen; and if Christ isn't risen, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain, and we might as well just eat, drink and be merry because we're gonna die!" But there's a hope by the resurrection, and Peter sets that before the people. Their guilt of sin, the proof that they should have responded to what they saw, and ultimately, the empty tomb - the resurrection. The empty tomb in Israel is one of our favorite places to stop. The angel said to the ladies (on that Easter morning), "He is not here; He is risen! Come see the place where He lay" (Matthew 28:6). Pretty cool to walk into an empty tomb and go, "Yep, He's not here. Verified. Checked off the list. He's not here." And Jesus had told His disciples He would die, and on the third day He would rise again. He said it tens of times. It never went and registered until He rose. They just heard "dead" and stopped thinkin', stopped listening.

Why was it impossible that death should hold Him? The only answer is He's God, and He has power over death even though He died to pay the penalty for our sins. And then there's this prophecy that He wouldn't leave His Son in Hades, in the grave; and you find it in David's psalm, in Psalm 16. And Peter will quote from it, as well, here. Psalm 16. He reads it out to them. It's not possible that it could hold Him. Why? " 'For David says concerning Him:' " (verse 25) " ' "I foresaw the LORD

always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades," ' ' " (the grave) " ' "nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence." ' ' " So, here's the promise that Jesus goes to the cross with, and Peter hangs onto the Word, he applies it correctly. This is a prophetic writing of David the King in 1000 B.C. while Jesus is hanging on the cross. Read Psalm 22 sometime about the hope that He had in the promise of His Father, or in this psalm. The Old Testament saints, if they were reading at all, might have wondered how the Messiah would die and yet not see corruption in the grave. The answer is the resurrection. The truth is they would never want to reconcile those things. So they never thought about Him dying. "Oh, Lord, You're not going to die!" said Peter (Matthew 16:22). "You're going to live." But the answer was the resurrection. Verse 25 and verse 26 - prophetic words that gave Jesus confidence as He went to the cross: the joy that was coming, the hope that He could hang onto because He needed to live by faith like we did. He emptied Himself. "Father, I know You're not going to leave Me to see corruption." Look, that's your promise today, in Christ. You're not going to be dead in a grave, you're going to heaven! "I don't want to be in that box." You're not going to be in any box, you're going to be in glory! Far better than a little box, no matter how pretty it is. You're not going to stay there. You're going to go to be with the Lord. That was Jesus' hope, that's your hope and mine. That's the way that we believe. Right? "You're not going to abandon me." That's what the word "leave" means or "forsake my soul." God promises. And notice what it says in verse 28, " ' "You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence." ' ' " This is God's promise to Jesus; it's God's promise to us. The way of life - paved in the blood of Jesus. But there's a way of life. Pretty good message he's preaching, isn't he?

" 'Men and brethren,' " he said (verse 29), " 'let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.' " So he literally takes Psalm 16:8-11 and says, "Look, this isn't about David," which is what the rabbinical teaching had always been. "This is about David's hope for the future and David's

deliverance." And he says, "Look, that's wrong. David's dead. He's buried. In fact, we have his tomb with us. No. We're talking about the resurrection of the Messiah. That's how this applies." God had sworn to David, who according to his flesh - through his loins (2 Samuel 7), that he would have a descendant who would rule forever. Peter's nailin' it, man. He knows the Bible well, and he sticks right there with the people. It's a cool lesson to learn about preaching. Right? And he foresaw the resurrection of the Christ. He foresaw it, prophetically (verse 31). When Jesus died, His body was taken by Joseph of Arimathea and placed in a new tomb. But His soul went to hell, to Hades, to the grave, if you will, which Jesus told us (in Matthew 12:40) was at the center of the earth; that place where those who died were kept. Paul tells us that, for three days, while Jesus was in the grave (Ephesians 4:8), " 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.' He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth, that He might fill all things." And so we have this whole understanding of Jesus dying and how He went to that place where the dead were kept, waiting for heaven's doors to be opened by the blood of Jesus. In the gospel of Luke (Luke's the one who is writing this), Luke 16, you have the whole story there of a rich man who died, and he went to hell, and then his servant went to a place called Abraham's Bosom. There were two compartments - one was peace and joy and waiting, the other was suffering and fire and misery; and there was a gulf between the two. It's not a parable, there in Luke, because there are names (and there are never names, if you will, in parables). But this was Hades, this two-compartment place, where the spirits of men who died went before Jesus rose. And so David was there, Isaac and Deborah and Moses - all waiting for the Messiah. And one day the doors swing open, and Jesus says, "Ta da! We did it! It's finished!" and He was able to gather together the souls of men for which He had died and lead them to glory, take them to heaven, present them to the Father. "Well done. Come on in." Which left just this other place - which still exists - where the souls of men who denied Christ and are waiting (for one day) to be finally judged. And, at the last judgment, they will be gathered at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20), and it says that Death and Hades (hell) will give up their dead, and they'll be cast permanently into the lake of fire, where there's wailing and there's gnashing of teeth. But also you should know that this Gehenna place, this final judgment, the Bible says God created it for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). He didn't really intend for you to go there. That's why He sent His Son. But for the devil and his angels - those who have made that choice - that's where they're headed. You don't really want to join them. The only way you'll join them is to willfully refuse God's love shown through His Son. So, Peter's argument to these guys is, "I know this is

always the way you've read the Bible - David's writing for himself. But I suggest to you he's writing it about Jesus, who died believing He was going to rise." In fact, David prophetically spoke about the resurrection, and he really has these guys in his audience, I think, on the ropes. They were listening.

He says, in verse 32, " 'This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.' " This is what happened forty days after the resurrection - Jesus ascends into heaven, He sits down at the right hand of the Father. What is He doing there? Well, there are a lot of things He's doing there, but one of the things He's doing is, He said, "If I leave, I'm going to send the Spirit to you" (John 16:7). He received from the Father the Holy Spirit and poured it out on the church. This is the way God's going to save the world. He's going to use people like us, empowered by His Spirit. Oh, He's doing other things there. We're told that Satan is the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10), that the Lord sits there to defend us. "Who is he who condemns?" (Romans 8:34) "It is Jesus who died and rose again, who sits at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for us." It'll be at the right hand of the Father where Jesus will stand up (in Acts 7:55) and welcome Stephen who becomes the first martyr. We find Jesus standing up to greet the first martyr for the church. It'll be from the right hand of the Father that Jesus will come (in Revelation 5:7) and take from the Father the scroll deed to the earth before He pours out judgment upon a Christ-rejecting world. There's lots going on at the right hand of the Father, this place of power. But it starts with Jesus doing what you see. This is why He went there. This is what David said.

And so the disciples remembered that He said, "It's expedient for you that I go," (John 16:7), and here the Holy Spirit has been promised. And Peter - not only had the thousands gathered to see what they hear, but now they're getting to hear something they can understand - the Scriptures themselves.

Finally, verse 34, Peter says this, " 'For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.' " ' " Since he is running with David, he now turns to Psalm 110 (by the way, an entirely different psalm of David's). But he literally says to this - what he wants to drive home is David's not speaking about himself, he's talking about Jesus. Right? He's looking forward. And he takes this Psalm 110, and he quotes verse 1 of it (in verse 34), and it literally reads, "The LORD" (see

how they're all capitalized?), Jehovah or Yahweh, "said to my Lord," (small Lord), "Adonai" (it's a title of authority). David did not arise, but David said this about the Lord. Now, here's Jesus' argument. He'll use this exact same thing in Mark 12:36 to argue with the Pharisees about who He is. But here's his argument - no Hebrew father would ever call his son "Lord" because dads ruled the roost; kids were submissive to their fathers. But here, David calls his LORD "the Lord." David did. He called His Son according to the flesh his "Lord." So, He's my descendant, but He's also "my Lord." There's the difference, right? He's my descendant, He's also "my Lord." Peter's really good with Scriptures - takes two different psalms, puts them together and says, "So you see what I'm saying here. This Jesus that came is so different. He's the One who is now at the right hand of the Father." And so Jesus used this exact argument in Mark 12:36 to talk to the disciples.

And Peter ends with this, verse 36, " 'Therefore let all the house of Israel know' " (without a doubt) " 'assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord' " (*Adonai*) " 'and Christ' (*Mashiach*, the Messiah). Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' " "You crucified Him." By the way, it's the second time he said, very directly, "It's your fault" (verse 23, verse 36). "You killed Him. You turned against Him. You've denied Him. You've set Him apart." Now, a lot of these folks weren't even in town; they were hundreds of miles away. They lived in different parts of the world. They came to celebrate what God had done, but they were still guilty in the fact that sin drove Jesus to the cross. So in that way, all of us are kind of guilty, aren't we? And yet He came to save us from our sins. But here, look. Jesus has the last word. "You've killed Him, but the whole of Israel should know assuredly that this Jesus who you've killed, God has made His Son to be the Lord and to be the Christ. He's the One who brings life. He's the Messiah. He's the only way for you. They crucify Him, God crowns Him. They entombed Him, God enthrones Him. They cast Him out, God caught Him up and set Him up. They executed Him, God exalted Him with a name that is above every name." That's Peter's message, the whole message. "God said it would be like this in the last days. This is exactly what God said He was going to do. I want to talk to you about Jesus. You know who He is. You've seen what He's done. The Scriptures declare who He is. You just need to know Him through those things because we are guilty of His death. It is our responsibility. And, hey, you tried to eliminate Him, but you can't get rid of Him. He's God. He's back! And He's not goin' anywhere." And the people listening went, "We are absolutely busted. What are we gonna do?" It is the classic outline because he starts (in verse 21) with the

grace of God, and in a couple of minutes - laying out, just with some Scriptures about who Jesus is and what He's done - brought the people to say, "What are we supposed to do?" Because the work of the Holy Spirit is using the Word of God to convict the hearts of men so that they might be saved. Always that way.

I'll tell you what. You want to share with your neighbors? You want to share with your family? You want to talk to others about Jesus? Go learn the Bible, and share what you know. You don't have to come up with fancy words or great illustrations. Just share the Scriptures. There's power in this Book to change a life. It is the most powerful message that you have to preach. You want to see revival? Go preach the Bible. Share it with people. You don't have to share the King James Version, "And thus He saith to you and thee." (Laughing) People will just think you're nuts. Just read them what's there. Just share with them what you've learned.

And Peter, to be honest with you, pretty much stuck to the text, and he put them together. He didn't, "All right, let me just explain." No. He just stuck them together. "Here's the truth. Let it work on you." And boy did it ever work on them.

May you be encouraged that God, His desire is that you, filled with the Spirit, would take His Word to the world. You'll do that, the world'll change. Your world will change. And people will get you'll just stand in awe like, "Man, they just got saved! I can't believe all I did was read them a book out of Matthew or a Scripture out of John. They got saved! It's crazy, man!" It is crazy! Because that's the way God works. And all the pressure is off of you, then. All you have to do is be the mailman, be the deliverer. Delivery! Candygram. (Laughing) All you old Saturday Night Live people. All right.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
November 15, 2017