

JESUS IS BOTH LORD AND CHRIST

Acts 2:22–41

Key Verse: 2:36

“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

What’s first and foremost in your heart? It might be that certain romantic someone, a job, a life goal, children, a house, or money, to name just a few. And our heart can float between these things, depending on where we’re at in the moment. Is this okay? In today’s passage, at the Feast of Pentecost, Peter stands up and speaks to a crowd of thousands. It’s been less than two months since Jesus was crucified. Many who’d been there are present now. As he addresses these people, Peter summarizes all that’s happened. Though they thought they got rid of Jesus, Peter proclaims who Jesus is now. And he calls on these people to repent. Though it seems unlikely, because of the Spirit’s power and presence, 3,000 people accept the gospel and are baptized. It’s amazing. But what’s it got to do with us here today? This passage contains a timeless message of who Jesus still is and what he can do for anyone. We want to reflect on how and why we might be rejecting him. We want to look at what real repentance is, and what happens when we do. Most of all, we want to learn what it means to make Jesus both Lord and Christ of our lives. May God speak to us through his word.

As we saw in the first part of chapter 2, at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came on Jesus’ followers, he miraculously enabled them to speak in foreign languages. When people heard them speaking, they were amazed and perplexed, and wondered what it meant. Some even made fun of them, saying they were drunk. God moved Peter to stand up and explain. He told the people that the Holy Spirit had come on them all, sons and daughters, young and old. It was all part of God’s plan, according to the prophecy of Joel, to pour out his Spirit on all flesh. God still wants to give his people visions and dreams of what he wants to do. As this vivid experience has captured their attention, Peter seizes the moment to share the gospel.

Look at verse 22 (ESV). The Spirit has made Peter bold and courageous. He enables Peter to turn the attention not to himself but to Jesus. Peter calls him “Jesus of Nazareth.” At that time, Nazareth was a village in Galilee of about 400 people. That Jesus came from such a tiny place was one of the reasons people in Jerusalem couldn’t accept him. But in Acts, the apostles repeatedly refer to him as “Jesus of Nazareth.”¹ He was a real, ordinary man, from a poor and humble family. At that time, most people didn’t know his parents were from the lineage of David, or that he was actually born in Bethlehem, the city of David.²

Peter goes on to say that Jesus of Nazareth “was a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves

¹ 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 10:38; 22:8; 26:9.

² Luke 1:27; 2:4.

know..." (22b). In Greek, "mighty works" is "dunamis," like our English word "dynamic," a word repeated many times in Luke and Acts.³ Jesus' ministry wasn't dry or superficial; it was dynamic, pulling so many broken and lost people into new life. Most had heard of it or even seen it with their eyes. The evidence is clear: God's mighty work through Jesus proves God sent him.

And what did those who saw it do? Peter says, "...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men" (23). They humiliated Jesus, nailed him down, and murdered him. What a wicked, rebellious, treacherous act! Peter had been a coward who denied Jesus three times during his trial. But now, full of the Holy Spirit, he's so changed, that with fiery passion he rebukes them all. He also proclaims God is in control. God knew in advance what they'd do, and God was working out his own definite plan. God's plan was to cause his Son to suffer all these things, be rejected, and killed, for the sin of the world (Luke 9:22). Through it, God planned to proclaim good news to the poor, liberty to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, liberty for the oppressed, and the year of his favor (Luke 4:18–19). God planned a new covenant of grace through the shed blood of his Son, and to make him a light for revelation to the Gentiles (Luke 22:20; 2:32b).

How could it happen? Look at verse 24. It was not possible for death to hold Jesus. Why? Because God is the Almighty Creator, and Jesus is his Son. God Almighty raised Jesus his Son from the dead. In Acts, the resurrection of Jesus is the main message of the apostles. Time and again they proclaim, not his crucifixion, but that God raised Jesus from the dead.⁴ At that time the Jews believed there'd be a general resurrection on the last day. But they had no idea the Messiah they were waiting for would rise from the dead.

To enlighten them, Peter, with the help of the Holy Spirit, quotes Scripture. Look at verses 25–28. This is from Psalm 16:8–11. David wrote this psalm. David had many enemies, without and within. King Saul tried many times to kill him. But David took refuge in God and asked God to preserve him. He wrote in this psalm that he found nothing good apart from God. He said he set the Lord always before him. He believed the Lord was at his right hand, right there to help him. Because of God's presence, David was sure he would not be shaken. He was glad, and full of joy and security. He knew he would not be abandoned by God. Then, with prophetic insight, David could see that God also would not let his Holy One see corruption. In fact, through the Spirit, David, facing death, could see the paths of life, and had the hope to be full of gladness in God's presence.

Peter discerned how this well-known psalm applied to Jesus. Look at verses 29–31.⁵ Though nobody had seen it before, through the Holy Spirit Peter could see that Psalm 16

³ This Greek root word is variously translated as "power," "miracles," or "mighty" (Luke 1:17,35,49,52; 4:14,36; 5:17; 6:19; 8:46; 9:1; 10:13,19; 19:37; 21:26–27; 22:69; 24:19,49; Acts 1:8; 2:22; 3:12; 4:7,33; 6:8; 7:22; 8:10,13; 10:38; 19:11).

⁴ 1:22; 2:24,31–32; 3:15,22,36; 4:2,10,33; 5:30; 7:37; 10:40–41; 13:30,34,37; 17:3,18; 26:23.

⁵ The "oath" God made about David's descendant is in Psalm 132:11, as well as in 2 Samuel 7:12–13. The angel had also told Mary that her son would fulfill this promise (Luke 1:32).

predicted the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus is the descendant of David who came to sit on David's throne forever and establish his eternal kingdom. Though his own people crucified him, Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Christ. Look at verse 32. Here again we see the word "witnesses." Literally it's the word "martyrs," and it's also repeated many times in Acts.⁶ The Twelve were "witnesses" because they had accompanied Jesus during all the time he went in and out, beginning from John's baptism until the day he was taken up (Acts 1:21–22). They were "witnesses" of all Jesus did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem (10:39). They were "witnesses" because they actually ate and drank with Jesus after he rose from the dead (10:41). Now Peter, standing there with the Eleven, speaks to this crowd and says, "This Jesus God raised up, and of that *we all are witnesses*" [emphasis added]. It's such a powerful testimony. The resurrection of Jesus is not an idea, or a metaphor, but a historical fact. There are so many witnesses to it. The Scriptures testify to it.⁷ His apostles with one voice testify to it.⁸ The Holy Spirit testifies to it.⁹

Peter goes further. Look at verse 33. Peter proclaims not only the resurrection of Jesus but also his ascension to God's right hand. God is so holy, no one could ever dare be at his right hand, not even Abraham, or Moses, or David. Jesus of Nazareth, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin Mary, who suffered, died, and rose from the dead—he alone is exalted at the right hand of God. Jesus is the one and only Son of God, equal with God.¹⁰ At the right hand of God, he alone has received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit. Peter says it's this Jesus who has poured out the Spirit on his followers, which this crowd has just seen and heard. Jesus, God's Son, at the right hand of God, is the only one who can baptize with the Holy Spirit.¹¹

To help them understand, Peter again quotes Scripture, this time, from Psalm 110. Look at verses 34–35. At the right hand of God, Jesus not only pours out the Holy Spirit; he also reigns as King. It says here that in these last days God the Father is working to put all the enemies of his Son under his feet. Partly, it's by bringing sinners to repentance and faith in him. Partly, it will be by bringing the unrepentant to one day face him as Judge of the living and the dead.¹² Again, no one among the Jews ever imagined that the Messiah would be exalted to God's right hand. But the prophecy of Psalm 110 proves it.

Peter then concludes. Read verse 36. This is the gospel: crucified, risen and exalted Jesus is both Lord and Christ. In the original Greek sentence, the word "Lord" is in the emphatic position. Joel's prophecy calls him "Lord" (21; Joel 2:32a). David's prophecy calls him "Lord" (34; Ps. 110:1). Peter proclaims him as the Lord of salvation and the Lord of the Spirit. So often,

⁶ Translated as "witness," "testify" or "testimony" (1:8,22; 2:32,40; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39,41–43; 13:31; 14:3,17; 15:8; 18:5; 20:21,23–24,26; 22:15,20; 23:11; 26:16,22; 28:23); cf. Isa.43:10,12; 44:8.

⁷ 8:35; 17:2–3,11; 18:28.

⁸ e.g. 10:42; 20:21; 28:23.

⁹ 5:32.

¹⁰ 7:56; 9:20; 13:33; cf. John 5:18; 10:30.

¹¹ Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5; 11:16.

¹² 10:42; 17:31.

Acts calls him “the Lord Jesus.”¹³ What does it mean that he is “Lord”? Yes, Jesus is risen and exalted, but most of all, he’s God the Son. He’s the living one (Rev.1:18), “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev.19:16). One day, as Lord, everyone, friend or foe, will bow before him (Phil.2:10). One day, as Lord, every eye will see him, even those who pierced him (Rev.1.7). Because he’s Lord, we always need to honor him in our hearts as holy (1 Pet.3:15). We not only confess with our mouths and believe in our hearts that he’s Lord; we need to live with him as Lord practically. We need to make him Lord of our lives, including what direction we take, how we spend our time, even Lord of our hearts and affections. To make him Lord, we need to learn to pray, “Not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42b). If he’s not our Lord, we’re trying to be in the driver’s seat.

Risen and exalted Jesus is also “Christ.” “Christ” means “King” and is similar to “Lord.” But “Christ” or “Messiah” also means “the one I put my hope in,” the one who tells me all things, who *is* all things to me (John 4:25–26). He’s our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isa.9:6). If he’s not really King of my heart, if anything or anyone else is reigning there, I’ve got a spiritual problem, regardless of what I think I know.

Peter adds: “...this Jesus whom you crucified” (36b). Peter is not just teaching abstract, doctrinal truths about Jesus. He is telling these people, in so many words, to repent. Of course, those listening need to repent; they’re the ones who crucified Jesus. But these words, “this Jesus whom you crucified,” still speak today. We may think we’d never crucify Jesus. We think our sins are not as bad as others’. But whenever we sin, we unknowingly participate in his crucifixion. We may just be trying to find some hope or satisfaction in something or someone else. We may just be trying to live by our own plan, or have our own way. But when we do these things, we’re rejecting Jesus as our Lord and Christ and pushing him out of our lives. Sometimes, we want to enjoy the world, or sinful pleasure. That, too, is crucifying Jesus. In fact, every time we rebel against God, we crucify Jesus. Every time we live in arrogance and mock others, we crucify Jesus. Every time we try to make ourselves seem righteous, we crucify Jesus. The truth is, it wasn’t the obviously sinful, but the most religious people who crucified Jesus. Before his conversion, Saul thought he was most zealous. Blinded by self-righteousness, he was persecuting Christians. Then the voice of the Risen Jesus came to him: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” (Acts 9:4b). Is he speaking to me, too? We live in times when people have little awareness of sin. Many feel entitled or victimized, angry about others but clueless about the state of their own soul before God. The Bible says one of the main tasks of the Holy Spirit is to show us more of who we really are, our own desperate need for repentance.¹⁴ Even David, the man after God’s own heart, famously wrote: “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” (Ps.139:23–24)

¹³ 4:33; 8:16; 11:17,20; 15:11,26; 19:5,13,17; 20:21,24,35; 21:13; 28:31; see also Luke 1:17,43,76; 2:11; 3:4; 5:8,12; 6:5,46; 7:6,13,19; 9:54,59,61; 10:1,17,39,40–41; 11:1,39; 12:41–42; 13:15,23; 17:5–6,37; 18:6,41; 19:8,31,34; 20:42,44; 22:33,38,49,61; 24:3,34.

¹⁴ John 16:8.

Look at verse 37. People were “cut to the heart,” not because Peter was a skillful speaker, but because the Spirit of God was helping him speak the word of God boldly.¹⁵ These people don’t just feel badly; they ask, “Brothers, what should we do?” They’re desperate to take action. This is where repentance takes us. What does Peter say? Read verse 38. Ultimately, repentance doesn’t mean to just feel sorry; it means to come back to God in commitment to Jesus, believing his promises. Real repentance leads to the forgiveness of sins from God himself and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Read verse 36 again. May God help us repent of putting other things or people first, and hold onto Jesus only as both the Lord and Christ of my heart.

¹⁵ 4:13,29,31; 9:27–28; 13:46; 14:3; cf. 1 Cor.2:4.