

Acts #9
The Preaching of Christ
Acts 2:22-24

In the midst of all the changes that are taking place around us, and even the changes that we are experiencing in the way we do church, many of us long for those ways and days gone by. We fondly recall those days of Southern Gospel music, shaped notes hymnals, and spitting, shouting preachers. We sang the great old hymns of the church exclusively, and our worship was comfortable. **It was comfortable because we all pretty much shared the same culture, values, and style.** Please do not get the idea that I am being critical of those days because I'm not.

But whether we like it or not, the world of 2003 is radically different than the world of yesteryear. Statistically, science has gained more knowledge in the last fifty years than it did in the previous 5,000 years of recorded history. Therefore, our church is filled with four generations, with four radically different worldviews, radically different physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, as we try to coexist under one roof.

In light of these rapid changes, Leonard Sweet says that it is much more difficult for the church to minister today than ever before.

In our last study of the book of Acts we looked at the difference between the "last days" and the "last day." The Bible teaches us that we are living in the "last days" as we fast approach the "last day." This week we are going to look at Peter's Pentecostal sermon that pricked hearts and caused 3,000 people to turn to Christ.

Verse 22 reads like this, "You men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know." Notice that Peter directs his statements to "You men of Israel, hear these words..." **These men were descendents of Jacob, and Peter was seeking to prove to them the divinity of Christ.** Peter begins by telling them something they already knew, as he says, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God...by miracles and wonders and signs...as you yourselves also know."

The miracles of Jesus were so outstanding that Peter appealed to the Jews to remember those miracles and realize that only God could have performed them.

The miracles of Jesus began as He attended a marriage in Cana of Galilee, as seen in John 2:2-11, "And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.

And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.”

And then we have the miracle of giving life, as seen in John 4:46-54, “So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house. This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee.”

Then there was the miracle of healing and the forgiveness of sins, as seen in Luke 5:17-26, “And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them. And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee,

Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day.”

Peter was aware of all the events in the ministry of Jesus, and he was also aware of the fact that the Jews knew about them. Therefore, he now acclaims them to the fact that Jesus was the true Messiah.

He continues in verse 23, “Him, (being Jesus) being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” The word translated “delivered” is used many times of those who are surrendered into the hands of their enemies, and this is what Jesus revealed in John 19:10-11, “Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.” This same truth is seen once more in Mark 10:32-34, “And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.” And then we are told in Matthew 27:1-2, “When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.” And then we are told that Pilate “Then released Barabbas unto them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.”

The Scriptures make it clear that the death of Jesus was no accident, but was done “by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” God was not compelled to surrender His Son to die on the cross, but allowed it to be because of His love for us, as seen in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” And then the truth of 1 John 4:8-10 becomes more meaningful, “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

It was the will and plan of God to offer our salvation to a lost and dying world, as seen in 2 Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as

some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

Now the only way for God to offer this salvation for mankind was to make sure that justice had been served for the breaking of God’s holy law, and this was fulfilled in Christ, as seen in John 1:14, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” The penalty for sin was death, and this penalty had to be paid once and for all, and only the sinless person of Christ could satisfy the requirements of God, as seen in Hebrews 10:1-10, “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

The crucifixion of Jesus was divinely decreed just as surely as were the circumstances surrounding His birth, but Peter was not trying to prove that Jesus died, for all the people everywhere had heard about this fact of Christ. Peter was saying that this man Jesus was divine, and that God had raised Him from the dead, as seen in verse 24, “Whom God, hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it.”

Since Jesus came to conquer death, hell, and the grave, and since He was God in the flesh, it was impossible for Him to fail in His mission, and that is why we can read in Revelation 1:18, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of hades and of death.” Therefore, it is no wonder that He said in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

You might be sitting there thinking, “What does any of this have to do with the changes that are taking place around us?” **The answer is simple – regardless of the changes that are taking place in our society, and regardless of the changes that we make in our methods of trying to reaching people for the cause of Christ, the message stays the same!** It is Jesus Christ then, it is Jesus

Christ today, and it is Jesus Christ forever! There is no “Plan B” when it comes to salvation and eternal life!

If you are not saved, why not come tonight?