

JESUS SAVES

Leader pages on pp. 142-145

THE POINT:
JESUS SAVES ALL WHO
TRUST IN HIM.

ACTS 2:22-24,32-41

²² "Fellow Israelites, listen to these words: This Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through him, just as you yourselves know.

²³ Though he was delivered up according to God's determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail him to a cross and kill him.

²⁴ God raised him up, ending the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by death.

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³² "God has raised this Jesus; we are all witnesses of this.

³³ Therefore, since he has been exalted to the right hand of God and has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, he has poured out what you both see and hear.

³⁴ For it was not David who ascended into the heavens, but he himself says: "The Lord declared to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand

³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool.'

³⁶ "Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

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³⁷ When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

³⁹ **For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call."**

⁴⁰ With many other words he testified and strongly urged them, saying, "Be saved from this corrupt generation!"

⁴¹ So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added to them.

MEMORY VERSE

KEYWORDS

Attested (v. 22)—Indicates that the individual had received accreditation from the proper authority to hold his rank. Jesus was accredited as the Messiah by God Himself.

God's determined plan (v. 23)—In His omniscience, God both determined and foreknew the

plan through which His Son's death would achieve salvation for humanity and restoration to all creation.

Pierced to the heart (v. 37)—Cut, stabbed to the heart. The Jewish hearers realized they were guilty of rejecting putting the Messiah to death.

WHY SHOULD WE TRUST IN JESUS?

When my wife and I were on a mission trip to Rome, we were introduced to a man who grew up Catholic. At the age of twenty years old, he experienced a crisis due to those in the Catholic faith saying one thing but doing another. So, he decided to become an atheist, one who believes that there is no God. At the same time, he decided to go to the university to study philosophy. He pridefully wanted to use the tools he learned from philosophy to write a book against God and the Bible. First, he thought he would start with reading theology books, but those books were what others said about the Bible.

So, he decided to read the Bible starting with the book of Matthew. When he finished reading Matthew, with a new understanding that he was a sinner, he fell down on his knees with tears in his eyes, and gave his heart to Jesus. After he rose to his feet, he felt great joy because he was born again.

This story is a testimony to Jesus having the power to save those who seek to disprove Him. In this lesson, we will see that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever put their faith in Him will not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

His Miracles Declare Him //

Acts 2:22-24

Without fail, religious groups want to come up with their own ideas or means of attaining salvation. At the same time, a rising percentage of society doesn't even think we need salvation. But, ultimately, even the most self-focused, self-satisfied people can experience those moments when they sense that something is missing, that there must be more to life. Of course, that something more is Jesus.

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter stood before the very ones who had called for the death of Jesus, and he proclaimed who Jesus is and what He did on the cross and through His resurrection so the people in the crowd could be saved. He began by explaining that God sent Jesus to be our Savior. He told them that Jesus of Nazareth was "attested to you by God." This means God demonstrated and proved that Jesus was who He claimed to be in several ways.

Jesus was verified by:

- Miracles that demonstrated His power
- Wonders that declared His person
- Signs that displayed His position



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Have you ever had to verify that you are who you claim to be? Maybe it was when you got your driver's license or opened a bank account, or you had to prove your identity for legal or educational requirements.

I recently took my daughter on a trip where we retraced the journeys of the apostle Paul across the Mediterranean. Knowing we would be leaving the United States, I knew I would likely have to prove her relationship to me, so I made sure to pack not just her passport but also her birth certificate. It also helps that she looks just like me!

God demonstrated that Jesus was the Messiah through miracles, signs, and wonders. He also verified Jesus, most dramatically, through His death and bodily resurrection. That's the most undeniable evidence possible.

I find it interesting how Peter connected his whole point—that God was demonstrating that Jesus is the promised Savior—by reminding his hearers they had a part in His death, and, thus, in fulfilling prophecy. He proclaimed that all of this happened right in front of them. It's not something they had heard about second or third hand. Peter said they knew it. Not only that, but the people of Jerusalem also used lawless individuals to nail Jesus to the cross and kill Him. Reminding them of this reality settled the question for those who heard Peter's message about whether Jesus died on the cross or just passed out, as some claim. They knew the truth. Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, proving Him to be the Savior of the world.

Can you imagine what it must have been like to be those people who heard Peter's sermon that day? It must have been different than us even reading about it today. Hearing that message just fifty days after the resurrection, with the events of that week still fresh in their minds, must have been powerful and convicting indeed.

I have the picture in my mind of a Jewish man or woman standing in that crowd, hearing Peter preach about Jesus of Nazareth and remembering how they had been in the crowd just a few weeks before shouting, "Crucify him!" I imagine, at the time, they thought that the death of this troublemaker and blasphemer would make them feel better. But it didn't. It only highlighted the emptiness and the fact that something was missing in their lives. When Peter preached about the death and resurrection of Jesus, their eyes were opened, and they realized that Jesus had lived among them, died, and was raised from the dead to give them what they were missing the most.

HOW WOULD YOU SUMMARIZE THE GOSPEL FROM THESE VERSES?



DIGGING DEEPER GOD'S DETERMINED PLAN

Peter stated in Acts 2:23 that Christ was "delivered up according to God's determined plan." Jesus being given over to "lawless people to nail him to a cross and kill him" was appointed or determined by God. Peter spoke this based on the Old Testament scriptures. In the book of Isaiah, the prophet spoke about the beating of Christ. He said, "I gave my back to those who beat me, and my cheeks to those who tore out my beard. I did not hide my face from scorn and spitting (50:6). Isaiah also prophesied concerning the crucifixion when he said approximately seven hundred of years earlier, "But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds" (53:5).

What comes to mind as you ponder that God determined His Son would die in this way for mankind's sins?



His Resurrection Defines Him //

Acts 2:32-36

Peter continued his sermon by further testifying to the resurrection of Jesus. After all, it was a historical fact, and many witnesses, including many of those gathered, could verify this historical event. In fact, this was the greatest historical event that had ever occurred, with broad-ranging implications for humanity and for the world.

As a student of history, I'm aware that many days have been considered great in human history.

- The fall of Constantinople on May 29, 1453, marked the end of the Byzantine Empire and a major shift in world power..
- The signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, was a pivotal moment in the founding of the United States.
- The end of World War II in Europe on May 8, 1945, brought relief to millions who had suffered through the horrors of that war.

This list could go on. While these are significant, the greatest, most impactful day in history wasn't any of those, nor was it a day from your own life, no matter how remarkable or significant it might have been. The greatest day in history was the day God raised Jesus—literally and bodily—from the dead.

Peter said that by raising Jesus from the dead, God had exalted Him as “both Lord and Messiah.”

What does that mean for us today? We've already seen how the Father verified Jesus's messiahship through miracles, wonders, signs, and His resurrection. But how should Jesus's exaltation as Lord impact our daily lives?

I previously shared about my pastor friend Nicholas from South Africa, who translates the word “Lord” as “Boss.” That's how the resurrection of Jesus and His exaltation as Lord should influence us. We should recognize that He is the promised Messiah, sent by God to redeem us from sin and rescue us from hell. We must surrender our lives to Him as Lord, acknowledging Him as the Boss of our lives.

HOW CAN WE EXALT JESUS AS LORD IN OUR DAILY LIVES?

Conviction Makes Us Desire Him // Acts 2:37-41

Peter proclaimed the good news of Jesus on the Day of Pentecost. He told the people that God had sent Jesus to be our Savior and had exalted Jesus by raising Him from the dead. He explained that through Jesus's death and resurrection, God had made Him both Lord and Messiah—the Savior. The people were “pierced to the heart,” which means they were convicted, and asked Peter what they should do. Peter told them to repent. What is repentance?

- Repentance is more than conviction of sin.
- Repentance is more than sorrow over sin.
- Repentance is even more than confessing your sin.

Repentance involves all of these, but there's more to repentance. The Greek word for repentance is composed of two words that mean to change your mind. But it's more than just changing your thinking. It's more than fixing your attitude or turning over a new leaf.

Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of heart that leads to a change in direction. It's the picture of doing a 180—a U-turn. You're going in one direction but have a change of mind; so, you decide to turn around and go in a different

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direction. That's a simple way of understanding the concept of repentance.

That's the beautiful and wonderful thing about Jesus. He not only allows spiritual U-turns, but the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ tells us that the only way to get on the right road spiritually and have our sins forgiven is to make a U-turn—to repent.

Repentance is central and essential to the ministry and the message of Jesus. His first sermon in Matthew 4:17 was a message of repentance, and His last message in Revelation 3:19 is a message of repentance. Jesus proclaimed how He would "... suffer and rise from the dead the third day, and repentance for forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46-47).

HOW DOES TRUE REPENTANCE DIFFER FROM FEELING SORRY FOR SIN?

Notice that Peter also told the people to be baptized. Baptism is such an important outward sign of what God has done on the inside of a person, that the practice is recounted often in Scripture. It is written as a command. Baptism was a sure sign that the people had received the Holy Spirit and were following Jesus.

DID YOU KNOW?

In our society, some people believe the idea that all religions lead to the same God, referred to as religious pluralism. The advocates of this ideology argue that ethical teachings of major religions align, like the promotion of compassion, love, and the Golden Rule. They also argue that while one religion might imperfectly reflect the full truth, other religions are not necessarily false. To answer these positions, Christians need to remember that Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Furthermore, if this were not true, Christ would be a liar, a false prophet (Deut. 18:22). Theologians call this having the "light of consciousness."²⁷ It is Scripture affirming that ethical teachings are in other major religions.

Biblical Truth: "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

How does declaring that Jesus is the only way for salvation impact your witness to others?

LIVE IT

How will you actively live and share the truth that Jesus is the only way of salvation?

As you reflect on the life-changing, eternal destiny-determining truth that "Jesus saves," consider these three steps to deepen your relationship with Him this week:

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- **Examine.** Consider your heart and life to see if what's missing is a personal relationship with Jesus. If so, check out the inside cover of this book for how to repent of your sins, trust Jesus, and experience the greatest miracle of salvation.
- **Identify.** Find one area in your life where you need to repent of sin or surrender to Jesus's lordship—and take actionable steps toward reconciliation or change, trusting in Jesus for strength.
- **Share.** Look for opportunities to share the gospel of Christ. Communicate the testimony of how Jesus has saved you with someone this week. Whether in person or online, be bold in declaring the good news that Jesus saves those who are lost.

DAILY READINGS

1. CHOOSE YE THIS DAY // ROMANS 6:23

Jesus sacrificed His life to give life to all who will accept it. While God does not wish that any man perishes (2 Pet. 3:9), He will never force us to receive the gift of salvation offered through His Son's shed blood. The choice is our own to make. However, the awful truth about not accepting Jesus as our Lord and Savior is that we, by default, choose death over life, sin over salvation. Sin is not only enslaving, but its paycheck is deadly. Jesus's sacrifice, by contrast, freely offers us all the gift of eternal life. Sin, therefore, no matter how appealing, will never be worth sacrificing Jesus's ultimate sacrifice made for us.

Jesus chose death so that we could choose Life.

2. JESUS RESCUED US! // GALATIANS 1:4-7

God, from the beginning, had a plan to save us. Genesis 3:15 mentions that Jesus would "crush the serpent's head," and the serpent would "strike his heel." This passage of Scripture speaks to what happened on the cross. The serpent bruised Jesus's heel with the stakes, but Jesus then bruised the head of the serpent upon His resurrection from the dead. Through Jesus's obedience, He made a way out of eternal damnation for all of humanity. He rescued us from an eternity in hell. His obedience saved us from the consequences of our disobedience. His gift to us is free because He paid it all for us on Calvary.

Jesus's blood reversed the curse.

3. MOTIVATED BY LOVE // MATTHEW 1:21

Matthew 1:21 provides the Hebrew meaning of the name Jesus, which is Jehovah Saves. Unlike modern Western society, where parents generally name their offspring based on preference rather than purpose, newborns born during biblical times were given names that described the person's identity. The angel Gabriel supplied Mary with Jesus's name because this was His purpose in coming to earth: to save His people from sin.

Salvation is found in no one else; there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which man must be saved (Acts 4:12). The name of Jesus describes the purpose of the Son in totality. His one desire and all-consuming passion in coming to earth was to save us. All that Jesus did as He walked the earth was done with saving us in mind.

Jesus has salvation on His mind all the time.

4. LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE // COLOSSIANS 3:12

God is not only the epitome of love; He is Light. This means that God's love within the believer should be on full display in our lives and genuinely perceived by others. Colossians 3:12 encourages the believer to "clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience." These qualities listed are attributes of God, and because God lives within the heart of every believer, these qualities are at the believer's disposal to be put on full display in our lives. God desires that Christians not only teach, preach, and write about the Truth—He desires that our lifestyles poetically preach His Truth. Love is meant to be put on display to lead a dying world to the only One who can save: Jesus.

Jesus displays who He is through us.

5. EMPATHY IS EVIDENT // ROMANS 12:15

Given the many atrocities, hate, and inhumane mistreatment that one can quickly and abundantly witness just by turning on the television or scrolling social media, empathy has hit an all-time low in the world. We live in a world where human motives have become self-centered; a world where humanity loves money and uses people instead of using money and loving people. Empathy is sometimes mistaken as a weakness. Empathy builds connection and keeps us mindful of others so that we do not become self-absorbed with our concerns only. Rejoicing with those who rejoice and mourning with those who mourn models Jesus's response and therefore puts His love on full display.

Jesus's life exemplified empathy.