

The Miracles Of Pentecost – Part 2

Acts 2:4-24

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We're looking in Acts 2 at what I've called the Miracles of Pentecost. Acts 2 is one of the most important chapters in all of the Bible. The primary event that takes place in Acts 2 is the birth of the Church—the Church is actually born. A lot of times people don't stop to think about when the Church started. In the Old Testament there were the people of God that were called out by God, but in the New Testament we have what is called the Church, the body of Christ. What that means is, as Paul uses the metaphor, Christ is the head and we are connected to Christ. We are united together, members of this body. I believe that the body—the bride, the family of God, the Church—was born or started on the day of Pentecost with what is called the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Paul actually says in 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...and have been all made to drink into one Spirit," which is Christ. We've been formed into a body, and Christ is the living head.

Let me just recap. We've actually covered three of the miracles, and I want to share the fourth tonight. The first we looked at was the miracle of the day. Look at Acts 2:1. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." The Church was born on a very special day. It was known as the day of Pentecost. The name "Pentecost" means fifty. It basically is 50 days after the Passover. Jesus was crucified at the Passover. After Passover they had the feast of first fruits which symbolized the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The third was the feast of Pentecost. It was one of three annual feasts in which all male Jews had to attend in the city of Jerusalem. On the day of Pentecost there was the fulfillment that the Church was born as prophesied in the picture in the Levitical feast of Leviticus 23.

The second miracle we looked at was the miracle of the wind and the fire. I want you to notice it in verses 2-3. "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind." There wasn't necessarily an actual wind. There was no hair blowing or the candles weren't being blown out. It's kind of interesting, you've got this wind but you have these flaming tongues of fire which you would think the wind would've blown out. There wasn't really any wind, there was the sound of wind, and then you have the flaming tongues of fire. "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." By the way, notice that as they were filled with the Holy Spirit they were sitting. They weren't jumping. They weren't rolling. They weren't swinging. They were sitting. Sometimes people get the idea that you can't have the Holy Spirit unless you are jumping up and down or rolling in the aisle. You've gotta have the holy jumps to get the Holy Ghost. I've always taken note of the fact that they were just sitting there, and the Holy Spirit also filled them.

Notice in verse 3, "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire," so like as of a rushing mighty wind and like as of fire, "and it sat upon each of them." Remember, there were 120 in that upper room on the day of Pentecost, so there's the miracle of the day being fulfilled

when the Church was born, and the miracle of the sound and of the sight. They saw these cloven tongues. I believe that the wind and the fire represented the presence of God. The Bible teaches there is one God. Judaism and Christianity are monotheistic—one God, not three gods, not a multitude of gods—one God. The Bible teaches what we call the triune nature of God—He is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Three separate persons all equally divine in their essence, all having the same divine attributes, but three separate persons in the Godhead. The Holy Spirit arrived, but it was a representation of God in the fire and in the wind. We talked about that last Wednesday as well.

The third miracle was the miracle of the Spirit's baptism. This is where we get the birth of the Church. The word "baptism" isn't used in the text, but when you go back to chapter one, it's clear that Jesus said tarry in Jerusalem until you be indued with power on high, "...John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." The fact that Jesus was glorified, He sent forth the Holy Spirit and the body of Christ was born. We turned for just a moment to 1 Corinthians 12:13 and talked about the birth of the Church and the formation of the body of Christ.

Now we come to the fourth miracle, and we could take the whole night on this miracle but we're not going to. I'll give you some things to refer you to. The miracle of the Spirit's filling we looked at last week, so miracle number 5 is the miracle of speaking in tongues. Let's read beginning in verse 4. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." Remember they were there for the feast of Pentecost, and it was one of the annual feasts that they had to come to and attend. Josephus, an ancient historian, actually said that Jerusalem would swell to about 200,000 pilgrims as they would celebrate this Passover feast. There were a lot of people there.

It says, "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. 6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language." We get our word "dialects" from that word that is translated "language." They heard them speak in their own dialects. Verse 7, "And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? 8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" He lists the different places these people were from and heard them speaking this language. They were "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes," those would be Gentiles who became Jews. They would proselyte into Judaism. In verse 11 it says, "Cretes and Arabians," I want you to take very special note of what they heard, "we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. 12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? 13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine." These people are drunk and they speak in foreign languages. You know, when you get drunk there's the tendency to speak in a foreign language, right? I think, How crazy are people's ideas that they get when they want to oppose the work of

God.

Here's the day of Pentecost. There was the fulfillment of the day, the sound, the sight, and then there was the strange speech. It's obvious that tongues has divided Christians for a long time. It's kind of like, to speak or not to speak, that is the question, you know. When someone said, "It's not the tongues movement that divides the Church, it's the movement of the tongue that divides the Church." When I taught 1 Corinthians 14 (and this is not a cop out. I'm not trying to avoid dealing with the subject), I dealt very thoroughly with tongues as they would be used today in light of the public assembly. I want to refer you to that. If you didn't know it, you can go to our website and click "Media," and it'll open up all of my teachings archived there. You can go back and listen to it as much as you want. You go to "Expository Sermons," click that, and it will come up 1 Corinthians. You find chapter 14, and click that. It will all be there, so you can do your own research.

Let's look at this text, and then I want to make some comments about the speaking in tongues issue. It says in verse 4, "...began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." They were speaking in a language that they did not know, they didn't learn, they didn't fully even maybe understand; but the Spirit was the one that gave them that ability. What was this tongue speaking or the speaking in other tongues? First of all, I believe that it was a known dialect. It wasn't just gibberish. It wasn't just sounds. It was actually a language. It's clear in the passage (verse 6), "...that every man heard them speak in his own language." It wasn't ecstatic utterances. I do tend to believe, and I'm not dogmatic about this, but I think there's reason to believe that the tongues talked about in 1 Corinthians 14 is a bit different than the tongues that were experienced in Acts 2, wherein chapter 14 there was the need for those tongues to be interpreted. They couldn't understand it unless there was an interpretation. There was no need for an interpretation here. They were speaking in a known dialect. The miracle wasn't in the listener's ears. The miracle was that these believers were given the ability to speak in a language that they didn't know or hadn't learned. This was going to be a sign to the Jews that God was there, God was visiting, God had arrived, and Paul talks about that in the book of 1 Corinthians 14. It was a known dialect, and jump down to...I want to make sure I don't miss it, verse 11. "...we do hear them speak in our tongues," what were they speaking? "...the wonderful works of God." They weren't cursing God. They weren't blaspheming God. They were magnifying and glorifying God in these languages. These men and women, from these different areas of the world, heard the wonderful works of God in their own dialects or their own language.

Speaking in tongues is mentioned in three books of the New Testament. I want to give you this if you want to write it down. They're mentioned in Mark 16:17, which is an historical account of the gospel. Then, they're mentioned in Acts 2, Acts 10:46, Acts 19:6, and we'll deal with those as we go through the book of Acts, but this is the historical reference to speaking in tongues in the New Testament. The other place they are mentioned is in 1 Corinthians 12:10, as a supernatural gift, and in 1 Corinthians 14. Those, in its entirety, are the places in the Bible where you'll find the references to speaking in tongues. The first in Mark and Acts are historical record, and then in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 you have the didactic or the doctrinal explanation of

the supernatural gifts.

What were these tongues at Pentecost? Let me tell you what they were not. They were not a miracle of hearing. In verse 4 it says the Spirit gave them the ability to speak in tongues, so it wasn't just the hearing, they were actually speaking in unknown tongues. Secondly, it was not an unintelligible ecstatic speech. They were speaking in a dialect. Thirdly, they were not preaching. I want to make sure that I convey this point. A lot of people, usually those who say that tongues are no longer in existence, they are not for today (I'm going to talk about that in just a second), they usually say that on the day of Pentecost tongues were for evangelism, for preaching the gospel. The explanation in the text says they heard them speak the "wonderful works of God." It wasn't that they were preaching the gospel and calling people to repent and believe in Jesus. Peter stands up (and we're going to get there in verse 14) and begins to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in their language, not in tongues but in the language that they spoke. It's not really used for evangelism. If the gift is given today, I don't believe that it's used for evangelism, although God is a God of miracles, God is a God of wonder, and if you go to a foreign country and God wants to give you that gift to communicate, I'm not going to argue with God. He can do that if He wants. Perhaps that has happened, but that's not really what we find in the New Testament. It's not for preaching or evangelism; and clearly, from the text, it's not that they were drinking too much wine.

The crowd that was standing around—the unbelieving crowd—said, "What meaneth this?" I want you to notice that. "Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine," verses 12-13. Peter's sermon is going to answer those two issues. What does this ecstatic utterance, this wind, this flame in tongues, what's going on? Peter is going to answer that in his sermon. He first of all answers the accusation that these men are full of new wine. Notice what Peter says in verse 14. "But," that's intended to be a very stark contrast, "Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice," these would be the 11 disciples or apostles, "and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: 15 For these," these people speaking in foreign languages, "are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day."

The "third hour of the day" by Jewish reckoning was nine o'clock in the morning, and Peter basically says, "They're not drunk. It's only nine o'clock in the morning." What significance does that have? We used to jokingly say, "The bars weren't open yet," you know. I don't think you have the new believers hitting the bar yet, so I don't think that's the case. We used to just say that jokingly. The issue is that orthodox Jews wouldn't drink wine or eat on the feast day until after the sacrifice had been offered, that was at nine o'clock in the morning, so it would be later in the day. Some translate this "sweet wine." It would be a wine that could intoxicate them, and Peter is basically saying, "Look, it's too early for that. This doesn't happen this time of the day. That's a foolish concept that these men are full of wine." Then, Peter goes on to answer really what the problem or issue was. He does it by quoting from the book of Joel 2:28-32. There's a long quote, and we're going to look at that in just a moment.

I want to say the gift of tongues, I believe, is still a gift that is available today. In the body of

Christ, we basically have two groups. We have Christians who believe that tongues ceased with the last apostles—the miracle of healing and these sign gifts are all gone. They are called cessationists. They believe, with a full canon of Scripture in the Bible completed, that we no longer need these miraculous sign gifts. They are called cessationists. I am not a cessationist. I believe that God still gives this supernatural gift. Having said that, let me say some important things.

I don't believe that tongues are evidence of salvation. There are groups that would say, "If you don't speak in tongues, you're not saved." That is not true. We're going to see as we go through the book of Acts that there are a lot of people who are saved who didn't speak in tongues. They base that on the few times in the book of Acts where people came to the Lord and spoke in tongues. They say, "See that? The sign of being born again and having the Holy Spirit is that you speak in tongues." There's usually some other doctrine that is heretical or aberrant that goes along with groups that hold that position. I don't believe it's biblical or scriptural, and I reject that. If you have someone ask, "Do you speak in tongues?" and you say, "No. God hasn't given me that gift." Don't let them put you on a trip and say, "Well, you're not saved," or "You're not born again because you don't speak in tongues."

Secondly, I would say tongues are not the sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit nor of the Holy Spirit's filling. There are a lot of what are called mainline pentecostal denominations and they're called pentecostal because they focus on this pentecostal experience in Acts 2. They sometimes call themselves "full gospel." I guess other churches are semi-gospel or half gospel or not full gospel. I don't really care for that term, but they basically say that you haven't been baptized in the Holy Spirit unless you speak in tongues. I don't believe that is the case either. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, all the believers in Corinth had been baptized by one Spirit into the body of Christ, yet in chapter 12:30 he asks the rhetorical question, "Do all speak with tongues?" The expected answer is no, so not all Christians speak in tongues. It's not the sign of being saved or being Spirit filled.

Thirdly, tongues are not a mark of spirituality. I wish I would have been told that when I was a young Christian. There are some Christians that will disagree with me, and that's okay—you can be wrong if you want to. I won't argue with you—but I believe that it's possible to speak in tongues and still live a carnal life. You can still yield to carnality, and it is no evidence of being spiritual. Last Wednesday, I believe it was, I said that when you're filled with the Holy Spirit... please listen to me carefully and grab ahold of these truths. When you're filled with the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 5:18 commands us to be filled. When you're filled with the Holy Spirit you are spiritual. You have the fruit of the Holy Spirit and you are Christlike. The filling of the Holy Spirit is an ongoing, continual, appropriating of the Spirit's power in your life. The command is what is called in the present tense. It's all-inclusive. It's an imperative. It's a command, and in the Greek it's what's called the passive voice. That means you let the Holy Spirit fill you. The results of being Spirit filled are joyful, thankful, and submissive—the same results of letting the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. I believe that to be Spirit filled is to be spiritual, and to be Spirit filled is to be Word filled—to let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly—and you are daily, moment by moment, yielding to the Spirit's control, walking in obedience to God's Word. That's

a spirit-filled life.

The Bible says if we walk in the Spirit we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh in the book of Galatians, but I have seen and I've seen it over and over and over and over people who speak in tongues yet they are not living spiritual lives. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are no guarantee of spirituality, but the filling of the Holy Spirit is guarantee of spirituality and guarantee of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It's so very important. Some of the greatest Christians in church history did not speak in tongues, yet they were men and women that God used so mightily and wonderfully so it's no sign of spirituality. Tongues are still available for today. They're a gift that God gives you, and you have to study 1 Corinthians 14 to get an understanding of how they work and how they function. I believe that tongues is always directed to God, not to men. I don't believe in a "message" of tongues. Someone doesn't speak in tongues and then someone interprets it as a word from God to the Church. I believe tongues is always directed to the Lord, and if it happens in the public assembly...I said I wouldn't get into 1 Corinthians 14, but I don't want to miss this. If it happens in a public assembly, it must be followed by an interpretation. It can only happen by two or by three. It has to be interpreted or there should be silence in the church. Paul said, "It's better when we get together if I speak in a language which you can understand and everyone be edified than I speak 10,000 words in an unknown tongue." I've seen preachers up on the pulpit, in the middle of preaching they start speaking in tongues. People are just looking at them speaking in tongues. There is no interpretation, no explanation, and you're just kind of like, "Oh, that's nice. Good for you."

When we're together, the principle is always mutual edification not individual bless-me clubs. We don't gather corporately so that you can kind of do your own thing. When we gather, we worship together, we pray together, we study together, we glorify God together as one voice. We take the bread together. We drink the cup together. Otherwise, you might as well go home and do it in your own private devotions; so when we come corporately, there needs to be mutual instruction, edification, and Christ needs to be glorified. The Bible says, "Let all things be done decently and in order." We shouldn't divide over the subject of tongues, to speak or not to speak. It's not something that's a matter of orthodoxy or something that should be dividing the body of Christ. It grieves and saddens me that Christians have fought over this particular gift of the Holy Spirit, and we have entire denominations built on it and people splitting over it. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It's available today, and the Spirit can use it in your life as a wonderful thing, but it's not something that we should fight, divide, or argue over. I don't see any reason to believe that it has ceased with the last apostles or with the full canon of Scripture.

Let's go back to our text. Peter, standing up, begins to answer the critics. "These men are drunk! They're full of new wine. They're speaking in these foreign languages." What a different Peter we have now that he's full of the Holy Spirit. It wasn't too many days earlier that Peter was warming himself by the enemy's fire in the courtyard of Caiaphas denying that he even knew Jesus. He said, "I don't know Him." He denied Him and cursed and swore, but now Peter has been filled with the Spirit. Peter has experienced the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What a transformation comes into our lives when we experience the resurrection and we are filled with the Holy Spirit. This is the first sermon ever preached in the dispensation of the Church Age or

the age of the Holy Spirit. Peter preaches a marvelous, marvelous, marvelous sermon that is biblical, Christ-centered, and that calls for people to repent and believe on Jesus Christ. Peter, standing up, has the idea of being presented forward. Peter was the spokesman of the eleven.

Mentioning the eleven could indicate they all kind of took a quick vote and said, "Peter, you're on." Peter had no sermon notes. He didn't have a sermon outline, but he'd been with Jesus, he's full of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is going to bring things to his remembrance, and he preaches this marvelous sermon. We'll analyze a little bit of it tonight and then continue it next Wednesday.

"But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea," he's speaking to the crowd that had gathered, the unbelieving crowd from the different areas that had gathered. Another thing to notice, when a man or a woman is full of the Holy Spirit, they can't help but tell others about Jesus. Amen? When you are filled with the Spirit of God, you are going to talk about the Son of God. One of the primary purposes of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus Christ, so this sermon is all full of Jesus Christ. Peter doesn't stand up and go, "We're Spirit filled! We've got the Holy Ghost!" No. He gets up. He opens his mouth. He starts to quote Scripture, and he preaches Christ to them. By the way, when he does explain what is happening, he quotes Scripture. It's always important that whenever you have an experience with God that it be solidly based upon the Scriptures, that you can find a Scriptural basis for what you are experiencing, so you don't want to put all your stock in the experience. You want to make sure that your experience is supported and backed up by, and has a foundation in, the Word of God.

Peter says (verse 15), "...these are not drunken, as ye suppose," it's only nine o'clock in the morning. People aren't drinking yet. "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; 17 And it shall come to pass," he begins to quote from the book of Joel, and he's giving an explanation of the day of Pentecost. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams," I think that's kind of cool. The old guys get to have dreams. They get to go to sleep and dream. "And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: 19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: 21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

I believe that Peter is quoting Joel to show what is happening on the day of Pentecost. I believe it only has a partial fulfillment of the prophecy in Joel (and we're going to look at it), but he was also quoting Joel to get to that verse which says, "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved," verse 21. All of that, verses 17-21, is a quote from the book of Joel in the Old Testament, and you can go back to Joel and look at it in its context when the prophet Joel gave these words. What is Joel prophesying, and how is Peter using this prophecy from the book of Joel? He basically says that we've entered into the last days (verse 17) when God is pouring

out His Spirit upon all flesh. Then he breaks it down, "...your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy."

Now, if you study the prophecy of Joel, I believe that it has kind of a two-fold fulfillment that at the beginning stages of the Church and in the Church Age, it's also known as the dispensation or the age of the Spirit...Remember last week I talked about the unique relationship that we have now to the Holy Spirit in the new covenant? In the Old Testament, the Spirit would come on people, fill people, empower people, but He could leave people. Now that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, rose again, ascended into heaven and sent forth the Holy Spirit, we now, in the new covenant, have God's Word written on our hearts and the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of us taking residence in us. We've been born again, and every one of you know the Lord, from the least unto the greatest. We all have a relationship. It wasn't just the king of Israel who has the Spirit upon him. All of us have a relationship with God. We have the Holy Spirit living inside of us from what you might call the least unto the greatest. The ground is level at the foot of the Cross. We all have the same relationship with God. We all have bodies that are the temples of the Holy Spirit. The beginning of this fulfillment is the Church Age. Technically, the last days (and there are other Scriptures in the New Testament that will support that) actually begin here—the introduction of Christ Messiah came, the Church is born—and it will come to a conclusion at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It's a large period of time, but we live in that age of the Spirit when God is pouring out His Spirit.

I believe it has a secondary application and fulfillment in what is known as the Kingdom Age or the Millennium and there, clearly, only believers will enter into the thousand-year reign of Christ—the Millennium or the Kingdom Age. At that time, all flesh will have the Spirit upon them and "...your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." I believe this also will be fulfilled during the Kingdom Age or during the Millennial reign of Christ. I want you to notice in verse 19. He says, "I will shew wonders in heaven," the wonders there are the effect that they have on the people that see them, so "...signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke," then notice verse 20, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come." I believe that projects out to the tribulation period. Jesus said in Matthew 24 that the sun will be darkened and the moon will be turned to blood, and it happens just before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It happens during the tribulation period, so this prophecy has a beginning fulfillment with the day of Pentecost and the Church Age but will also go into the tribulation period and then into the Millennial period.

Peter is basically quoting this just to say that God is fulfilling prophecy; this is a work of God. These people aren't drunk as you have supposed but is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel. God is beginning to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. It will culminate in the Millennial reign of Christ, and these signs and wonders—the moon to blood and sackcloth of the sun turning black—all of this is going to happen, I believe, in the future during the time of the tribulation. Not to complex the subject or confuse anyone, I believe, we right now as the

Church will be taken up to meet the Lord in the air—raptured—before the tribulation period. We won't see the sun turn to black, and we won't see the moon turn to blood. That will be something that happens during the time of the tribulation.

I'm always leery of those that are getting so hyped up about signs in the heavens and signs above, solar eclipses...did you see all the YouTube stuff on the solar eclipse that happened a few weeks ago predicting that Jesus Christ was coming back and that it was the end of the world? I thought, Man, that's just ridiculous. Jesus said, "No man knows," what? "the day or the hour." Do you know that we could get raptured before we take communion in a moment? We could be taking communion in heaven. Can you dig that? I can! The Lord is going to come and catch us to heaven to be with Him, and all of this blood moon and the sun turned black, all these signs and wonders, these are going to happen just before the Second Coming during the time of the tribulation. We read about those things in the book of Revelation. This prophecy of Joel covers a large period. The day of the Lord, verse 20, covers the tribulation and the Kingdom Age—the tribulation and the thousand-year reign of Christ. During this time, whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Peter begins the actual sermon, and we're just going to go to verse 24. He says, "Ye men of Israel," so verses 17-21 is an explanation of what happened on the day of Pentecost as was prophesied by the book of Joel. Now, he gets into his sermon and preaches Christ. "Ye 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 ye yourselves also know: 23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: 24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he," that is, Christ, "should be holden," or held, "of it."

There are three basic things that Peter says about Jesus. First of all, he says that He was "approved of God...by miracles and wonders and signs." He starts by calling Him, "Jesus of Nazareth," Jesus the Nazarene. This is His lowly, humble, earthly name. The name "Jesus" is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament name "Joshua." Joshua in the Greek is Jesus, and Jesus means "God saves," Jehovah shua—Joshua—God is salvation. That name was given to Him at His birth because He came to save us from our sins. Amen? The angel actually told His mother, "You shall call Him Jesus because He's come to save us from our sins," and He's from Nazareth, so He's called Jesus the Nazarene. Notice He's a man, speaking of His humanity, but He is "approved of God," or He was shown to be from God. He was given the approval. It means to be pushed forth or set forth and presented. It would be used in politics, of presenting a politician or presenting someone as sending them forth. It means that God ratified or approved Him among you. How? Miracles, wonders and signs.

What were these miracles, wonders and signs? The miracles are the power of God through the Son of God. Jesus performed miracles, didn't He? I believe that Jesus performed the miracles. People sometimes try to explain them away, "Jesus didn't really walk on the water. It was low tide and He just knew the rocks were right there, so He was just stepping on the rocks

just perfectly and it looked like He was walking on water.” “Jesus didn’t really multiply the bread and the loaves. Everybody had their lunch stuffed up their sleeve, and when they saw the little boy’s generosity it convicted them, so they all pulled out their lunches and ate together.” There are all these people trying to explain away the miracles. Listen. Jesus came from heaven. He was conceived in the womb of a virgin. Jesus Christ was born of a virgin. His growth and development in the womb were natural. He had a natural birth, we call it the virgin birth. It was a natural birth, but He was born of a virgin.

Jesus was fully God and fully man. It’s called the hypostatic union. That’s the theological term. It means two natures in one person—fully God, fully man, one Person. No one ever before Him, no one ever after Him, has been the God man, Jesus Christ, unique; so He’s perfectly suited to be our Savior. He lived a sinless life. He never sinned. He never thought an evil thought. He never said a cross word. He never broke God’s laws. He lived a perfect life. While He was here, He not only spoke like no one ever spoke but performed miracles, the first of which He turned water into wine just to gladden the heart of man. Then, He raised Lazarus from the dead, He multiplied the bread and loaves, He cleansed the lepers, He raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead. He put His hands on blind eyes and they saw. He’d speak at a distance and the fever would leave, and people would be healed. He cast demons out. He calmed the storms and the sea. Jesus was approved or proved to be of God by the miracles.

The crowd was listening to Peter here and they’re probably all going, “Yeah, we remember that. We remember Jesus. Yeah, that’s true. He was doing all these wonderful miracles.” The wonders are the effect that they had on the people that saw them. It was the awe and the wonder that took place in their hearts and minds when they saw the miracles. They are also called signs because they pointed to something. They pointed to the deity of Christ—Jesus was God—and He was working miracles among them. He says, “as ye yourselves also know,” so, Jesus was proven to be of God by His works.

The second point Peter makes about Jesus is in verse 23, He died according to “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” Now we have the death of Jesus Christ. There’s a lot that could be said about that, but Peter is trying to point out that it was all preordained, designed by God, before the earth was ever created. God wasn’t caught off. God knew that Jesus would come, He would die, and it was preordained and preplanned by God in eternity past, yet they were responsible because he says, “ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain,” Him. Peter wanted these Jews to realize that Jesus was the Messiah and that God’s design and purpose for the Messiah was that He would suffer and die. It wasn’t like God was caught unaware, that God didn’t know it was going to happen. It was all planned. Before God even created the universe, in eternity past, God knew one day that Jesus Christ would have to come and die for the sins of the world. It was all part of God’s preordained purpose and plan and design, yet man is responsible. It’s interesting that God can use the wrath of man to praise Him. When you think, Oh, so tragic that they crucified the Son of God, yes it is—God at His best, man at his worst—yet, God used the evil of man, crucifying the Son of God, to fulfill His purpose and to bring salvation to a lost

world. He points out to them that you, by your wicked hands, have crucified and slain Him.

Here's the third point he makes about Jesus (verse 24). Jesus rose from the dead. He performed miracles. He died on the Cross for our sins (we celebrate communion tonight and we remember that Jesus died for our sins, the substitutionary death on the Cross), but God (verse 24) raised Him from the dead. "...having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." That's really an amazing statement. It was impossible that He could be held by it. Why? Because He was the pure and holy and sinless Son of God. Death could not hold Him in the grave. Jesus died on the Cross for our sins. Jesus was buried. Then, Jesus rose again victoriously from the dead. Amen? And He couldn't be held by those pains of death. It's the same word that's used for birth pains, unavoidable labor pains, when a woman gives birth to a child. These pains of death could not hold Him, and Jesus Christ rose victoriously from the grave. Jesus said, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," and Jesus rose again from the dead. He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Scripture says He was speaking of the temple of His body.

We just barely got our feet wet in Peter's sermon. We're going to continue it next week, but basically he opens up with, "...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," God preordained that He would come, suffer, and die on the Cross, even though you, "...by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up," from the dead. Jesus Christ rose for our justification. Amen?