

Jesus Overcomes Death (Acts 2:24-36)

© 2013 Tony Garland^a

Context

1. **Feast of Pentecost**
2. **Jews of the diaspora visiting Jerusalem**
3. **Hear the wonders of God proclaimed in their native tongues, but by unlearned Galileans**
4. **Peter explains the miracle and how it points to the identity and work of Christ.**

Today's passage: the continuation of Peter's gospel presentation (Acts 2:22-36).

"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; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. For David says concerning Him: '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, 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.' Men and brethren, 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. 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. 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." ' Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.¹

The First Gospel Presentation of the Great Commission

1. **Almost exclusively Jewish audience**

2. Witnessing according to Jewish expectations

A. Appealing to the OT to explain the events

I. Joel

II. Two Psalms of David

a. Psalm 16

b. Psalm 110

c. It is beneficial Christians to become equipped to preach Jesus without reference to the NT.

- i. This was the practice of Paul, the apostles, and early church prior to the establishment of the NT.
- ii. Some whom we witness to will not accept the testimony of the NT (e.g., Jews).
- iii. This, of course, assumes we have a working knowledge of the OT.

Psalm 16

1. *My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption (Psalm 16:9b-10).*
2. David expressed his hope that he would live beyond the grave — that his soul would not be left in Sheol (the abode of the dead).
3. David's hope was rooted in his identification with another, referred to as God's "Holy One," would not see the corruption of the grave which follows upon death.
4. Because this "Holy One" would not be left in the grave, neither would David.

Psalm 110

1. *The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool." (Psalm 110:1)*
2. Peter appeals to Psalm 110 for at least two reasons.
 - A. The Psalm explains the predicted location and role of the Messiah: ascended and seated at the right hand of God.
 - B. The Psalm includes a riddle of sorts, which Jesus had posed to the religious

leaders and which they were unable to solve.

- I. The riddle is this: David refers to two Lords
- II. The one Lord is יהוה [Yahweh], the One True God of the OT.
- III. The other Lord is אדוני [’ādōnī], also used as a title of the One True God (Ps. 114:7).
 - a. This second person was understood to come out of David's loins as a descendant.
 - b. So how could David refer to one of his descendants as "Lord"? (A son or grandson was always considered to be lesser than his progenitor due to his dependence upon the father for his birth.)
 - c. The answer is found in the unique Son of David, the God-man Jesus, who is both David's son (by His humanity) and God (by His deity) before whom even David would bow.

What do we learn from these Psalms?

1. The OT predicted an individual who would overcome the grave.
2. This individual is uniquely described as God's "Holy One" (הַסִּידֵק [hāsîdēka]).
3. The individual was both David's descendant and his Lord.
4. The individual would one day sit at God's right hand. This presupposes his ascension to heaven (Acts 1!)
5. Peter makes the connection to Jesus
 - A. The phrase 'the Christ' is equivalent to 'the Messiah' and is used by Peter to indicate the role which Jesus fulfilled concerning the OT expectations of his Jewish listeners.
 - B. The death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus correspond with the OT predictions of the Messiah ("the Christ") Who is the "Holy One" and David's Lord.
 - C. Consider the role of the OT in the conversion [Michael Rydelnik^b](#), Professor of Jewish Studies at the Moody Bible Institute and a Jew.

- I. **“Messianic prophecy was the means God used to bring me to faith in Jesus the Messiah. My parents were Holocaust survivors who raised me in a traditional Jewish home. We were Orthodox in our Jewish beliefs and practices and, as such, I did believe in the future coming of a personal Messiah. Even so, it was not a central issue of my life. However, that changed when my mother announced that she believed in Jesus. This led to my father divorcing her and a radical shift in my life. I decided to study the messianic prophecies of the Hebrew Bible and prove my mother wrong in attributing their fulfillment to Jesus of Nazareth. Although I was initially quite confident of my opinion, in time I was surprised to see that there was far more credibility to the messiahship of Jesus than I had first anticipated. After dealing with my fears of ostracism from the Jewish community, based on my new conviction that the Scriptures foretold a suffering Messiah who would be rejected by His own people and provide forgiveness through his death and resurrection, I put my trust in Jesus as Messiah and Lord. . . . I would never have made this decision apart from studying messianic prophecy. In fact, apart from messianic prediction and fulfillment, Jesus could not be identified as the Messiah of Israel, and if not that, then He could not be the Messiah of the world. It is for this reason, joined with my commitment to exegetical accuracy, that I believe it is essential to understand the Hebrew Bible as messianic.”²**

Life is in Jesus

1. Focus on verse 24.

- A. . . . *God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. (Acts 2:24)*

2. “the pains of death”

- A. The word for “pains” in the original (ὠδίννας [ōdinas]) is used elsewhere to describe the pain of childbirth (1Th. 5:3). It includes the final agonies which so many experience when death is imminent or when faced with a long-term debilitating sickness or battle with poor health.
- B. Death is a constant reminder of man’s rebellion against his Creator, when physical and spiritual death first entered the cosmos.
- I. *Then to Adam [God] said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat*

of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return."
(Gen. 3:17-19)

- C. Death serves as a great chain on man's sinful independence - something God will *never* permit man to overthrow.
- I. ***Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" - therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life. (Gen. 3:22-24a)***
 - II. The search for human-initiated immortality will never find fulfillment, because the source of life is reserved as a unique attribute of God alone—who actively upholds His entire creation.
 - III. ***Baseball great Ted Williams, the last man to hit .400 in a major-league season, has become the best-known figure to be frozen in expectation of a future revival, using as-yet unknown technologies. . . . The Arizona concern that now houses Williams' mortal remains, Alcor Life Extension Foundation, speculates that sometime in the next century or so, technological advances will allow their frozen "patients" to be revived at a cost equivalent to a \$3 wristwatch. Alcor is currently tending about 50 patients [back in 2002], who have paid \$120,000 for a whole-body freeze, or \$50,000 for a head freeze. . . . Here's how the procedure is done: After a declaration of death, the body is put on a heart-lung machine for transfer to the freezing facility. The body is cooled in an ice bath, the blood is replaced with a preservative solution, and as much water as possible is drawn out from the remains — so as to avoid cellular damage from ice crystals. Then the body (or just the head) is cooled to around 320 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, using a liquid-nitrogen cryogenic system, and stored in a vacuum chamber until scientists figure out how to revive the body and repair the damage.³***
- D. Death is a huge billboard on the highway of life which indicates that the cosmos has suffered fracture due to the entrance of sin
- I. ***For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope . . . For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now (Rom. 8:20-22).***

E. Death is not how it was meant to be

- I. **Misguided attempts to minimize the horrors of death and accept it as a "beautiful cycle"**
- II. **Away with the nonsensical musings of godless men like John Muir!**
 - a. ***“Let children walk with nature, let them see the beautiful blendings and communions of death and life, their joyous inseparable unity, as taught in woods and meadows, plains and mountains and streams of our blessed star, and they will learn that death is stingless indeed, and as beautiful as life, and that the grave has no victory, for it never fights. All is divine harmony.” — John Muir. This quote was shared at the memorial service of a friend's father.***
4
- III. **The prophet Isaiah referred to death as, *The . . . covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.* (Isa. [25:7](#))**
- IV. ***The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.* (1Cor. [15:26](#))**
- V. **Solomon wrote, *For man also does not know his time: like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them.* (Ecc. [9:12](#))**
- VI. ***Remember how short my time is; For what futility have You created all the children of men? What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave? Selah* (Ps. [89:47-48](#))**
- F. **[Show book containing historical photos of adults from around 1907 - every one has gone to the grave!]**
- G. **Something worse than physical death: spiritual death**
 - I. **Separation and alienation from God**
 - a. **Born as 'living dead'**
 - i. Concerning living, breathing people, Jesus said: . . . *Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.* (Mat. [8:22](#))⁵
 - ii. *Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.* (John [5:24–25](#))
 - iii. As one popular Christian group described their ministry in song, *Wherever we're led all the Living Dead, wanna leave their Zombie*

*Mob. It's a touching scene when they all come clean. God help us, we just love our job.*⁶

- b. Thus, the need of spiritual birth, to be "born again."
- c. Unless we are "born again," we will leave this world in the same condition we entered: *spiritually dead and separated from God.*
- d. Only this time our alienation from God will be devastating and permanent: *And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment* (Heb. 9:27)

3. "it was not possible that He should be held by [death]"

A. Although Jesus died, death could not keep a grip (**κρατεῖσθαι** [*krateisthai*] upon Him.

B. Why not possible?

- I. Peter will refer to Jesus as, *the Prince of Life* in the very next chapter (Acts 3:15).
- II. The word "prince," **ἀρχηγόν** [*archēgon*], as used in that passage, denotes the initiator, founder, or author of life. Jesus, being God, is the very *source* of life-giving power.
- III. As John's gospel reveals, *All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.* (John 1:3)
- IV. Paul wrote to the Colossian church, *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.* (Col. 1:15-16)
- V. The life-giving power of God was not an event in the past, but continues moment by moment (Heb. 1:3).
 - a. "The entire cosmos depends upon God's will for its continued existence just as much as it did for its initial creation. While we type this, and while you read it, our fingers and your eyes continue to exist only because God upholds them. It is inadequate to imagine God as a cosmic clockmaker, first creating the universe, designing it to operate in a certain way, winding it up and then leaving it to tick along on its own. The fact that the

universe continues to function as it does, and that certain actions have certain consequences, needs to be seen in the light of God's continued, intentional, active, sustaining involvement."⁷

VI. The Creator could never be unwillingly subjected to the decay of His own creation.

C. Promises to destroy death

- I. As the source and active upholder of life, the work of Jesus on the cross is also central to the fulfillment of the promised final overthrow of death.**
- II. *He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth . . . (Isa. 25:8)***
- III. *I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! . . . (Hos. 13:14)***
- IV. Jesus demonstrated His power over death by raising Lazarus, a man who had already been dead for four days.**
- V. What is more amazing than this miracle is the claim Jesus made to Lazarus's sister Martha: *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)***
- VI. Christ's great proclamation as the divine life giver in the final book of the Bible**
 - a. . . . *I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. (Rev. 1:17-18)***

Sun Oct 13 20:15:10 2013



Endnotes:

1. NKJV, Acts 2:22-36
 2. Ref-1272, pp. 11-12
 3. Alan Boyle, *Patients pin hopes on a deep freeze*, MSNBC. [<http://www.msnbc.com/news/777776.asp>] accessed 20020709.
 4. John Muir, *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*.”
 5. Concerning the living dead, see Luke 9:60; Eph. 2:1; 5:14; Col. 2:13; 1Ti. 5:6.
 6. Lyrics to the song *Wherever We Go^d* by The Newsboys.
 7. Ref-1291, p. 107
-

Sources:

- NKJV** Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture references are from the *New King James Version*, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
- Ref-1272** Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic?* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010). ISBN:[978-0-8054-4654-8^e](#).
- Ref-1291** Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007). ISBN:[978-1-4335-0108-1^f](#).
-

Links Mentioned Above

- a** - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.
- b** - See <http://www.michaelrydelnik.org/>.
- c** - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org>.
- d** - See <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/newsboys/whereverwego.html>.
- e** - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?978-0-8054-4654-8>.
- f** - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?978-1-4335-0108-1>.