

The Man Death Could Not Hold (Resurrection Sunday)

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[0:00] Let's turn to Acts chapter 2.! We are taking a break from our series in Matthew for Resurrection Sunday.! Acts chapter 2. Acts is in the New Testament.

! The second, fourth of the book. It's the fifth book in the New Testament. After John. Let me pray now for the reading and preaching of God's Word.

Heavenly Father, what... What amazing grace that... You take sinners like us...

and adopt us as your sons and daughters. Lord... You are so high and lifted up.

And what grace, Lord, that you... employ someone as lowly as me to proclaim and herald your Son, Jesus Christ.

[1:21] So, Lord, grant us all... Ears to hear.

Eyes to see. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts as we listen be pleasing in your sight.

Oh, Lord, our rock and our Redeemer. Amen. Amen. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you are able, please stand and join me for the reading of God's Word to honor God as He addresses us from His written Word in Acts chapter 2, verses 22 to 32.

Jude 22. Men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, 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 know, this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

God raised him up, losing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For David says concerning him, I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken.

[2:54] Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced, my flesh also will dwell in hope, for you will not abandon my soul to Hades or let your Holy One see corruption.

You have made known to me the paths of life. You will make me full of gladness with your presence. Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried and his tomb is with us to this day.

Being therefore a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.

This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. This is God's holy and authoritative word. Please be seated. No serious historian doubts that Jesus was a real historical figure who lived between 6 BC and 33 AD and was crucified by Pontius Pilate.

As Mark Allen Powell, a professor and founding editor of the Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus, writes, quote, 150 years ago, a fairly well-respected scholar named Bruna Bauer maintained that the historical Jesus never existed.

[4:32] Anyone who says that today, in the academic world at least, gets grouped with the skinheads who say there was no Holocaust and the scientific holdouts who want to believe the world is flat.

Even Bart Ehrman, an avowed atheist and outspoken critic of Christianity who teaches New Testament and religion at the University of North Carolina, writes this, Jesus certainly existed as virtually every competent scholar of antiquity, Christian or non-Christian, agrees.

How else do you explain tens of thousands of ancient New Testament manuscripts speaking of Jesus? With Paul's letters, included in the New Testament, being written in the 50s and the 60s AD, within the lifetime of Jesus' own family members, Jesus is an unusually well-attested historical figure.

Likewise, no serious historian doubts the historical and cultural impact of Jesus. Historian and sociologist Rodney Stark puts it simply, Western civilization would not exist had not there been Jesus.

H.G. Wells is today best remembered for his fictional work, *The War of the Worlds*, *The Time Machine*, but during his lifetime, his best-selling work was actually a history book entitled *The Outline of History*.

[6:00] In 1935, Wells wrote a newspaper article entitled *Greatest in History*, where he mused about the greatest figures in human history. And even though he was an atheist, H.G. Wells argued that Jesus is the single individual who has left the most permanent impression on the world.

He writes this, Now, it is interesting and significant that a historian, without any theological bias whatever, should find that he cannot portray the progress of humanity honestly without giving a foremost place to a penniless teacher from Nazareth.

Yet, more than 1900 years later, a historian like myself, who does not even call himself a Christian, finds the picture centering irresistibly around the life and character of this most significant man.

It is one of the most revolutionary changes of outlook that has ever stirred and changed human thought. The world began to be a different world from the day that doctrine was preached.

Maybe you've seen the widely circulated quote of uncertain origin, probably an excerpt from an otherwise forgotten sermon from an unknown preacher like me.

[7:19] It's entitled, usually, *The Greatest Man in History*. Jesus had no servants, yet they called him master. He had no degrees, yet they called him teacher.

Had no medicines, yet they called him healer. He had no army, yet kings feared him. He won no military battles, yet he conquered the world. He did not live in a castle, yet they called him Lord. He ruled no nations, yet they called him king. He committed no crime, yet they crucified him. He was buried in a tomb, and yet he lives today.

The tiny group of Jesus' disciples around 40 AD spread from Jerusalem all the way to Turkey, Asia Minor, Greece, Rome, Ethiopia, Egypt, as far as Spain and India by the end of the first century. Historians estimate that the number of Christians grew by 40% every decade. And by the fourth century, they numbered in the millions, and since then, Christianity has remained the world's largest religion for 1,700 years straight.

[8:29] The cultural and intellectual impact of all the followers of Christ is incalculable. This one man, Jesus, from the no-name town of Nazareth, as it says in verse 22, had a singular, unparalleled impact and influence on this world.

He is the pivot upon which world history turns from before Christ to Anno Domini, the year of our Lord, AD. And his followers, as their detractors once said in Acts 17, 6, have turned the world upside down.

Who is this man? Acts chapter 2, 22 to 41, which we just read, teaches us that Jesus Christ is the risen Lord to whom we bear witness.

We're going to first see how he was attested by God and then delivered up by God and then raised by God from the dead and then finally that he is witnessed to by men.

Peter says in his sermon in verse 22, man of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, 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 know.

[9:52] Peter addresses men of Israel, but this is what grammarians call the generic usage of the word man, which is inclusive of both men and women.

We know this for a fact because a few verses earlier, in verses 17 to 18, Peter confirmed that there were both sons and daughters, male servants and female servants in the audience that received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

But Peter's choice of the word men puts extra emphasis on the introduction of Jesus as a man attested to you by God. In other words, Jesus was a man just like you all.

He was truly, really human like the rest of us. This is the reality of Jesus' incarnation. The Son of God became a Son of Man.

He took on human flesh. He has a real earthly hometown called Nazareth, and He has a real earthly human mother called Mary. As Hebrews 2:17 says, in order to represent humanity and save humanity, Jesus had to become human in every respect.

[11:05] In the same way that sin and condemnation and death came into the world through one man, Adam. So the free gift of God's grace and righteousness and justification and eternal life can only come through a man, the one man, Jesus Christ.

But this humanity and manhood of Jesus is brought into sharp relief by what? By this remarkable fact that He was a man attested to you by God. To attest is to demonstrate or to prove something. Men who write books need other men to write endorsements on the back cover. Men who publish academic articles need to be peer-reviewed in order to be credible.

Men who are doctors need degrees from medical schools attesting that they are qualified to practice. Men who would be lawyers need to pass the bar exam administered to by other men in order to be licensed.

We all seek out recommendation letters and references in job applications because we need other people to attest to our credentials. But Jesus needs no attestation from man because He was attested to us by God.

[12:25] He says in John 2, 24 that Jesus on His part did not entrust Himself to man because He knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man.

Jesus did not seek approval or commendation from people because He didn't need it. Jesus said in John 5, 37 the Father who sent me has Himself borne witness about me.

God Himself testified to the kind of man that Jesus is. God Himself put His stamp of approval on Jesus by doing mighty works and signs and wonders through Him.

try to put yourself in the shoes of people listening to Peter's sermon in the first century. Notice that Peter doesn't even attempt to prove that Jesus did signs and wonders and miracles.

Imagine if you were trying to make up you know if you were a charlatan let's say trying to sell some fake miracle drug that's a panacea to cure all things wouldn't you then invent fantastic stories and hire people to write fake reviews online and to provide fake testimonials but Peter makes no attempt to prove that Jesus did mighty works and wonders and signs.

[13:46] Why? Because He doesn't need to. Jesus did all of them out in the open in plain sight of the public.

So Peter simply says a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst as you already know. The crowds have already been witnesses of Jesus' miracles themselves.

So Peter doesn't need to call up oh hey Mary remember Jesus cast out seven demons from you come here come here share your testimony for Lazarus come up here remember he raised you from the dead I mean maybe you don't remember that because you were dead but you came back to life remember come tell everybody what happened it's redundant the crowds are themselves witnesses of Jesus' mighty works and wonders and signs it's fascinating that when you read the gospel narratives and you see the clash between Jesus and the Jewish leaders Jesus' naysayers the Jewish leaders who opposed him never questioned that Jesus did miracles miracles they only ever questioned how Jesus did those miracles for example they argued that the miraculous powers at work in Jesus were because he was in league with the prince of demons that was their accusation Jesus doing miracles he's like yeah yeah he's doing miracles but it's because he's in concert with the prince of demons which doesn't make any sense why would the prince of demons help Jesus cast out demons we see that same assumption even in the non-biblical historical accounts of Jesus' life the first century

Jewish historian Josephus who did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah writes this about this time there lived Jesus he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly he won over many Jews and many of the Greeks some other translations render surprising feats wondrous feats it's a reference to signs and wonders to miracles similarly

Chalcis a second century Greek philosopher who debated Origen who was a Christian minister debated him extensively and wrote a comprehensive tract against Christianity he said this Jesus performed miracles by means of magic notice once again that he takes for granted that Jesus performed miracles because the fact in that day and age was indisputable and therefore it was fruitless to argue against it instead he dismisses the miracles as being performed by means of Egyptian magic that's what he attributes it to

Jesus was attested to you by God himself through the signs the mighty works and the signs and the wonders he did through him there are people who come to church sometimes to critique and to evaluate and to judge the teachings and claims of Jesus Christ but Jesus does not need the attestation or approval of any man I once heard a story and I've shared this with the church a long time ago before I once heard a story about college art students who took a trip to Paris to visit the Louvre the world's largest museum they were examining a famous masterpiece I wasn't told exactly what it was maybe a Da Vinci or a Raphael or Rembrandt when one of the students who was evidently immature and arrogant began to rant and criticize the painting the professor that was leading the group grew impatient and after losing his patience he rebuked the student saying this is an undisputed masterpiece by one of the greatest masters in history the artistic superiority of this painting was established 400 years ago and is no longer open to judgment it is not the painting but your taste that is open to judgment and has not been found lacking

[18:24] Jesus himself does not need your or my attestation but what we make of Jesus means a great deal for us because it's a matter of eternal life or eternal death in hell Jesus was attested to by God and he was delivered up by God this Jesus Peter continues in verse 23 delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men in his description of Jesus trial in Luke 22 to 23 Luke who is also the author of the book of Acts which we were just reading paints the Jewish leadership as being the driving force of Jesus condemnation and crucifixion and here since he is speaking to the

Jews who were in Jerusalem at the time he holds them responsible for Jesus death and he says you crucified and killed him it's possible that some of the people who were in the crowd at the time of Peter's preaching were part of the very mob that weeks earlier were yelling crucify Jesus crucify him but the Jews are not solely responsible for Jesus death Peter says you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men the phrase lawless men does not merely mean immoral men or law breaking men it's referring to those who are outside the law in other words from a Jewish perspective the Gentiles the Jews at that time were under Roman rule and did not have the authority therefore to execute capital punishment so they relied on Pontius Pilate the Roman governor and he authorized Jesus execution and the Roman soldiers carried!

it out and even though both Jews and Gentiles are the approximate or immediate cause of Jesus death they are not the ultimate cause we see this in verse 23 this Jesus delivered up according to whose plan the definite plan and foreknowledge of God himself there's a wonderful interplay here between human responsibility and divine sovereignty on the one hand the Bible repeatedly puts the blame for the unjust execution of Jesus on wicked sinful men in Acts 5 30 Peter and the apostles say to Jewish council you killed him by hanging him on a tree but on the other hand the Bible also repeatedly says that Jesus death on the cross was precisely according to God's definite! plan Romans 3 25 says God put Jesus forward as a propitiation by his blood Romans 8 32 says God did not spare!

Isaiah 53 10 prophesied that it was the will of the Lord to crush his son Jesus and put him to grief these dual realities offer wonderful comforts to us if we understand it if the greatest injustice in human history the most heinous evil the worst abuse ever perpetrated by mankind the crucifixion of the innocent blameless perfectly righteous son of God if that turns out for our salvation and redemption and the glory of God then even the most acute suffering in your life and even the deepest disappointments of your life and even the hardest losses that you experienced in this life can turn out for good that is in fact what

[22:31] God promises in Romans 8 32 as Lauren shared earlier for those who love God all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose no matter the injustices and sufferings that you

endure at the hands of sinful men in this broken world we can rest assured that all that is happening according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God and that what wicked people intend for evil against you God himself intends for good for the good of all those who love him but let's not move past the shock of this truth too quickly why why would God deliver up to be killed the very man that he has attested to himself why would God plan to have his only son Jesus Christ crushed and put to grief why would the loving father the loving heavenly father do that the answer to answer the question we must understand two attributes of

God first God is holy and just and therefore must punish sin and evil Romans 3 21 to 26 says that it would be unjust and unrighteous of God to pass over sins without punishing them we make light of mercy and clemency until we're the victims of grave injustice and then we all cry out for justice only a corrupt judge turns a blind eye to evil so Nahum 1 2 says the Lord is avenging and wrathful the Lord takes vengeance on his adversary and keeps wrath for his enemies Habakkuk 1 13 says of God you are a pure eyes God bent to see evil and cannot look at wrong Ecclesiastes 12 14 says God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing whether good or evil what despicable thing have you done in secret maybe you've stolen something that doesn't belong to you maybe you've shoplifted or you've been less than honest fully honest in your taxes maybe you've pirated movies maybe you've cheated on your partner if not in physical adultery by viewing porn on the internet in your private window or staring lustfully at passerbys your entire life is completely open to God and not only for what you have done Jesus says in Matthew 12 36 I tell you on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak you will be judged for every careless word you speak how many times have you said something mean and harsh and said oh

I didn't mean that I take it back you'll be judged for that careless word because words are like paint you can't unsay your words any more than you can unspill paint and clean up is messy in both cases how many times have you angrily berated someone or sarcastically mocked them putting them down a notch so you could elevate yourself a notch how many times have you uncharitably gossiped about someone else you will be judged for every careless word you speak and not only for what you have said Hebrews 4 12 says that God discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart maybe you did some good thing or said some nice thing to somebody but really in your heart of hearts you had selfish motives you were doing it to impress other people to make it seem like you are a better person than you actually are you were doing it to elevate your social standing before others by flattery

God sees peers into all of that all the ugly hidden thoughts of your heart the secret lustful fantasies the bitterness and resentment that you harbor in your heart toward others the arrogant self absorbed way that you think yourself better than others smarter than others nicer than others better looking than others cooler than others more spiritual than others God sees all of it it's a fearful thought when you look at me on Easter Sunday you see my Sunday best clothes and it seems like oh he's the pastor he's so holy righteous but if you could see all the sins of my past the sinful deeds of my hands the sinful words of my mouth the sinful thoughts of my heart you would be repulsed by me

[28:27] I am repulsed by me and if my sins repulse even other fellow sinners no disrespect but you are no better than me how much more than the perfect holy God the thought of all my secret sins lying fully exposed before the searching eyes of our holy God makes me want to crawl under a rock like a writhing dirty worm God is a pure eyes than to see evil he cannot stand to look at me in all my sinful squalor God is holy and just but that is not the only attribute of God we must understand if God were merely holy and just then the solution would be quite simple he could crush all of us ruined miserable sinners under his fiery just holy wrath and it would all be over but

God doesn't do that because of a second divine attribute that's God's love and mercy the Bible everywhere declares that God is love and that his steadfast love and patience towards sinners restrains his righteous anger towards sinners God says to his sinful people in Hosea 11 8 to 9 that even as his righteous wrath burns against them because of their idolatry and sin he says to them

my heart recoils within me my compassion grows warm and tender I will not execute my burning anger Ephesians 2:4 says that God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ the greatness of God's love and the richness of his mercy move God to intervene on behalf of sinners his love propels him to send his son to be the propitiation for our sins as it said in 1 John 4:10 to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins so then on the one hand God is just and must punish sinners for their sin but on the other hand God loves sinners and desires to show them mercy and these twin realities intention produce a consequent necessity the wages of sin is death it says in Romans 6:23 it is the blood that makes atonement by the life says in Leviticus 17:11 for this reason without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins Hebrews 9:22 once we have sinned and we all have and we have inherited Adam's original sin the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross becomes an absolute consequent necessity because God is righteous and just and cannot therefore grant sinners pardon like nothing ever happened and because God is loving and merciful and he will not abandon sinners to perdition and it is at the cross of Jesus Christ that the proverbial immovable object of God's justice collides with the unstoppable force of God's love and Jesus because of his unique person being both truly God and truly man in the one person he's the only one who can secure the forgiveness of sins for all humanity Jesus is the only one who can die as the substitutionary sacrifice for our sins and in his death the immovable requirement of God's righteousness and justice is fully satisfied and the inexorable love of God that he's willing to pay the highest cost of giving up his own son his beloved!

Son is fully displayed on that cross with remarkable specificity Isaiah 53 prophesied about how Jesus the Christ the Messiah would die as the substitutionary sacrifice for our sins this was written 700 years before Christ but he was pierced for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities upon him was a chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed all we like sheep have gone astray we have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all at the cross the judge takes the place of the accused at the cross the master takes the place of the slave the holy one takes the place of sinners the healer takes the place of the sick the

[34:10] Lord of life takes the place of those who are dead in their sins and this is why Jesus was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God to be crucified and killed but Jesus did not stay dead verse 24 says God raised him up losing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it the words losing and held teach us that death is a form of captivity it binds people it holds people like a supermax prison the gates of Hades which is a metaphor for death the gates of Hades the realm of the dead the gates of Hades clamp down upon its captives like a great white shark's teeth upon its prey and once it has taken hold of you it never lets go over the many millennia of human history death has kept over 100 billion people in its captivity and no one who has ever died has escaped its chains permanently even the few who had been miraculously raised by

God from the dead eventually succumbed to death again because that is our human destiny as people who have sinned and rebelled against our God but God raised Jesus up losing the pangs of death the word pangs is literally pains of childbirth that's what that word means it's a Greek word that means that birth pains it's the word that Jesus used to describe the birth pains that precede the consummation of the messianic kingdom throughout his gospels it's an ironic mixed metaphor the tomb of death in the case like the womb of life like a womb that goes into labor cannot hold back the baby the tomb of

Jesus could not hold Jesus down and why did this happen because it says in verse 24 it was not possible for Jesus to be held by death why was it impossible for death to hold him Peter explains by citing psalm 16:8 to 11 which if you're reading following along in the church bible reading plan that we're doing you read just this past week he says in verses 25 to 28 for David says concerning him I saw the Lord always before me for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced my flesh also will dwell in hope for you will not abandon my soul to Hades or let your holy one see corruption you have made known to me the paths of life you will make me full of gladness with your presence this is a psalm where King David in about 1000 BC

asks God for protection from mortal threats that he's facing and he ends up expressing his confidence in

God's deliverance by saying for you will not abandon my soul to Hades or let your holy one see corruption but Peter as well as the apostle Paul apostle Peter and Paul later writing in Acts 13 35 interpret this psalm to be about Jesus is the antitype or David is the type or the foreshadowing or a prefigurement of Jesus the messianic king Peter explains his reasoning further in verses 19 to 31 brothers I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried and his tomb is with us to this day being therefore a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ that he was not abandoned to Hades nor did his flesh see corruption so David in his context was delivered from the mortal threats that he was facing but his deliverance was only temporary because later he died of old age like the rest of us 1

Kings 2 10 tells us clearly he was buried in the city of David and you could actually go visit it in Jerusalem his body is by now thoroughly decomposed and for this reason Peter argues that David could not have been the ultimate referent of that prophecy in Psalm 16 rather David himself was speaking prophetically of a messianic king who would come from his dynastic line who will overcome death once and for all Jesus descended to the dead as the apostles creed says he went down to Hades however his soul was not abandoned there not abandoned to Sheol not abandoned to Hades nor did his flesh see corruption death could not hold him why because he was the prophesied son of

[39:58] David the messianic king to whom God had given his promise the unbreakable word you will not abandon my soul to Hades or let your holy one see corruption death could not hold him because Jesus is the author of life he is the son of God the second person of the trinity and our God is not God of the dead but of the living death could not hold him because Jesus was the sinless and blameless lamb of God and death is the consequence and wage of sin so then what right and power and authority does death have to hold Jesus down who knew no sin in C.S.

Lewis famous novel The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe Aslan the Lion hands himself over to the white witch to die in the stead of Edmund Pevensy his name lives on in infamy the traitor who betrayed all of Narnia and the children of Adam the glorious majestic king Aslan sacrifices himself and is brutally killed and humiliated atop the ancient stone table I remember all of my girls the youngest one hasn't read it yet but all of my older two girls when they read this they all cried in that chapter and they asked me desperately is he really dead but how how can Aslan die but the white witch was not aware of the deeper magic from before the dawn of time

C.S. Lewis writes when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead the stone table would crack and death itself would start working backward when the sinless son of the high king of heaven descended to the dead death itself stared at him aghast the heart of death filled with horror and its face became ashen with fear and the gates of Hades fled before him and flung open it had finally met a champion that he could not hold down as Hebrews 2 14 to 15 says Jesus died that through death he might destroy the one who has a power of death that is the devil and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery in the death of Christ death itself is dealt a mortal blow and death itself starts working backward when the sinless one died the death that he did not deserve in the place of sinners like you and me he crashed the system and the law of slavery and sin and death started becoming undone the sting of death is sin and the power sin is the law but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ Romans 5 25 says that Jesus was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification dens as Christians died for our sins but if Jesus had stayed dead it would mean that him substituting himself for us for sinners it didn't work.

It would mean that his sacrifice was not accepted by God the Father, the judge. It would mean that we could not be justified. It would mean that death swallowed him up like all the other people that swallowed up before him and that no man and no woman can ever escape from the teeth of its iron gates.

[44:33] But praise be to God that death could not hold him. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again.

Death no longer has dominion over him. Dear saints of God, this morning do you feel disheartened by your struggles with sin?

Does it seem to you that your sin continually gets the better of you, mastery over you? Fear not. Our champion has wrestled and won. Christ is risen. His righteousness is counted as ours for all those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ.

The risen Lord Jesus Christ declares in Revelation 1, 17 to 18, fear not. I am the first and the last and the living one. I died. And behold, I am alive forevermore and I have the keys of death and Hades.

[45:51] Haven't we all wrestled with the pain of death? Some of you have suffered the heartbreak of miscarriages, the loss of grandparents and uncles and aunts, even parents and siblings.

But beloved, death is not the final word. When our risen Lord returns in glory and raises the dead, we will join him in song and taunt death with the words that we read earlier.

Death is swallowed up in victory. Oh death, where is your victory? Oh death, where is your sting? And then we shall live forever with God, body and soul made whole in the fullness of resurrection glory.

And this wonderful promise is held out for every single one of you today. For you to receive and grab hold of. A few verses after our passage, Peter says in verses 38 to 39, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.

That includes you. The phrase for your children indicates generational extent. This promise was not merely for Peter's audience in the first century but intended for every subsequent generation.

[47:25] The phrase for all who are far off indicates geographical extent. This salvation is not only for those who were in Jerusalem at the time but to all those and it will reach to the ends of the earth.

And Peter caps it off with an allusion to Joel 2.32 in verse 39, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself will be saved. Only those whom the Lord our God calls to himself can receive this promise and be saved but who are those people that God calls to himself?

Peter told us earlier in verse 21, everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Once again, there's a beautiful interplay between divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

It is not our place to know whom God has called to himself. It is our place and it is our responsibility to call upon his name.

And if you speak the name of Jesus Christ into the void and the despair and the night of your life, he will answer and you will be saved. So will you call upon the name of Jesus Christ and be saved today?

[48:38] Today. If you're visiting us this morning and you are not yet a follower of Christ, we all, as a church, collectively bear witness to you this morning. As it says in verse 32, this Jesus God raised up and of that we all are witnesses.

Do you know that the New Testament contains numerous accounts of people doubting the resurrection of Jesus Christ? It makes you wonder, right? I mean, if you're a Christian writing this, why would you include that in the Gospels?

When Jesus, when the Jesus' disciples meet him after his resurrection on mountain in Galilee, it says that some doubted in Matthew 20, 17. Upon hearing the woman's report of an empty tomb and the angelic vision that Jesus has risen from the dead, the disciples, the apostles, dismiss it as an idle tale in Luke 24, 11.

When Jesus first appears to them in Luke 24, they think they're startled, they think that they're seeing a ghost. In John 20, 24 to 29, famously, Thomas doubts, he's one of the 12 apostles, doubts that Jesus was raised from the dead and says, unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.

Why does the Bible include these accounts of doubt? One, it tells us that the Bible is a truthful account. It's not trying to put one over you. It's telling you what really happened.

[50:09] And two, this tells us that people back then did not believe that people rose from the dead any more than you and I do today. So don't get into this false idea that, oh, people back then knew nothing and so

they're foolish and gullible and so they believe in the resurrection like crazy stories like this, but we nowadays know better.

Absolutely not. People 2,000 years ago knew very, very, very well that people don't rise from the dead. That's why some of them doubt. And Jesus' resurrection is not a myth or a metaphor.

It's the fact of history as real as his death on the cross. And this is a distinguishing mark of Christianity compared to other major religions in the world.

Islam began with private visions that Muhammad had in a cave. Can anybody historically verify that he had that?

No. It's a private vision. Siddhartha Gautama, Buddha, developed his teachings from his internal philosophical meditations and musings.

[51:24] Can anybody objectively verify the truth of his claims? No. But Christianity makes historical claims.

This Jesus God raised up and of that we all are witnesses. This is a historical claim that is either true or false. And the entirety of Christianity depends upon it.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15, 14, if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are those who have staked our lives on the truth that Jesus was raised from the dead.

And generation after generation Christian sins have been bearing witness to the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus. According to third century pastor and theologian Origen as well as church historian Eusebius and many others all twelve apostles except for John were martyred while bearing witness to this risen Lord.

Peter, the first apostle bore witness to Jesus from Jerusalem all the way to modern day Turkey and then he was crucified by Emperor Nero after bearing witness in Rome.

[52:52] James bore witness to Christ throughout Judea and was killed by King Herod Agrippa the first. He was the first apostle to be killed. John bore witness to Jesus throughout Asia until he was exiled to Patmos under the persecutions of Emperor Domitian.

If he hadn't been out of sight out of mind in the island of Patmos he probably would have been killed too but he died in exile. Andrew bore witness to Jesus as far as modern day Ukraine southern Russia and Kazakhstan and then was crucified in Patras Greece.

Bartholomew bore witness to Jesus as far as modern day India and Armenia where he was flayed to death for his faith. James the son of Alphaeus bore witness to Jesus as far as Egypt where he was crucified for his faith.

Judas the son of James also known as Jude or Thaddeus bore witness to Jesus in Iran Syria and Lebanon where he was beheaded for his faith. Matthew bore witness to Jesus as far as modern day Sudan and church tradition holds that he too was martyred.

Philip bore witness to Jesus as far as modern day Greece Syria and Turkey where he was beheaded for his faith. Simon the zealot bore witness to Jesus as far as Mauritania Libya and Britain where he was crucified.

[54:10] Thomas the doubting Thomas that I mentioned earlier bore witness to Jesus as far east as India where he too was martyred. Matthias the last apostle to be appointed to replace Judas Iscariot bore witness to Jesus in modern day Azerbaijan and Armenia and Georgia where he was stoned to death.

Generation after generation people have died claiming that Jesus rose from the dead and to that we are all witnesses.

Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father please grant the gift of saving faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ to all those here who do not know you.

And Lord please refresh and rejoice your saints in the hope of the resurrection this morning and embolden us to be witnesses of our lizard Lord Jesus Christ wherever you have placed us in this life.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you.