

Series: Proclaim	Reference: Acts 2:22-36	Title: To Tell His Story!	Date: 04.24.2022
Website Writeup:			
<p>This 7 week series, Proclaim, looks at what the early church proclaimed about Jesus. We'll discover a consistent message of sin, grace & salvation in the name of Jesus, showing the crucifixion & resurrection to be central to faith. If you're a follower of Jesus, the crucifixion & resurrection of Jesus must be central to faith. Testimony of what He's done in power through history according to the Scriptures & in us - the mission of all Christians - to tell His Story!</p>			

COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

This seven week series, Proclaim, looks at what the early church proclaimed about Jesus. We'll discover a consistent message of sin, grace & salvation in the name of Jesus, showing the crucifixion & resurrection to be central to faith. When the pandemic began politicians made daily proclamations; nonessential employees sent home, restaurants & bars closed, schools shut down, parks closed. Each relating to the central idea of protection of affected people. The proclamations in Acts all had in common, the crucifixion & resurrection of Jesus which applied has a profound effect on us & those within our influence.

Today we begin with Peter's famous first sermon found in Acts 2, delivered at Pentecost, also known as the Feast of Weeks/Shavuot, outlined in Leviticus 23. It's '...the second of the three 'solemn feasts' in which all Jewish males were required to travel to Jerusalem to attend (Ex 23:14-17; 34:22-23; Dt 16:16). It gets its name from the fact that it starts 7 full weeks, or exactly 50 days, after the Feast of First-fruits. Since it takes place exactly 50 days later, it's also known as 'Pentecost' (Acts 2:1), which means 'fifty'.¹

The Feast of First Fruits which is Easter Sunday happens during the week of Passover along with the Feast of Unleavened Bread practiced throughout Passover. This was practiced from April 15th-22nd this year. In the Feast of First Fruits Israelites were to give the first gleanings of their harvest, difficult given they had no idea if the rest of the harvest would come in since it's dependent on future rainfall - like giving their all, not knowing if the next meal would come. The Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorated the bread they ate as they'd left Egypt. The Feast of Weeks was the festival of harvest time 7 weeks later which is June 5th this year - it was more lavish & celebratory given the harvest had come in fully celebrating God's full blessing.

So, Passover begins for 8 days & all the while the Feast of Unleavened Bread is practiced. 3 Days after Passover begins, the Feast of First Fruits occurs which is Easter for us. Then 50 days later the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost occurs celebrating the great harvest & God's blessing.

Because The Feast of Weeks was a pilgrimage festival, when Peter spoke, he was addressing people from all over the Roman Empire (Acts 2:5). All the known nations had gathered & were represented. Jesus was smart! He'd called His followers to go &

¹ ("What Is the Feast of Weeks?," *Got Questions?*, <https://www.gotquestions.org/Feast-of-Weeks.html>)

make disciples of all nations in the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:18-20 only 10 days before this feast when He ascended. His last command, our first concern, in which He said, *“All authority in heaven & on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go & make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father & of the Son & of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

In doing this Jesus made it easier for them in the beginning of their ministry by bringing all the known nations to Jerusalem! Jews who'd been living in outlying areas among other nations would come back for this festival having taken on the various languages of their host nations. And there were the disciples having just witnessed Christ's crucifixion, resurrection & ascension with their marching orders from Jesus to go & make disciples of all nations! Brilliant! Those who heard sermons like Peter's & accepted Christ, would take that back to their respective nations sharing the gospel story in their own languages, and we'll see a lot will.

Just prior to Peter's sermon in Acts 2 God had poured out the Holy Spirit in power on the disciples & they'd begun speaking the gospel in all these various languages without knowing them in a gracious jumpstart to the work of kingdom-building! Looking in vv5-11 it says...*“Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes & Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea & Cappadocia, Pontus & Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia & Pamphylia, Egypt & the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹(both Jews & converts to Judaism); Cretans & Arabs - we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”*

We're going to hone in on the last part of Peter's sermon in Acts 2:22-36 where he gives 3 appeals relevant for anyone listening; the power of Jesus, the historicity of Jesus & Scripture. Open with me to p744 of your pew Bibles to Acts 2:22-36 & follow along as I read...*“Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders & signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan & foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.*

Stopping there for a moment...Peter refers to Jesus as 'a man' or 'this man.' It's important to remember, Jesus was both fully God & fully man. A real historical man with power to do miracles, signs & wonders, crucified, dead, buried & raised to life. All this by God's deliberate plan & foreknowledge - and Jesus had clearly said these things would happen throughout His ministry. It continues with Peter appealing to Scripture quoting a prophecy from David in Psalm 16:8-11...

²⁵David said about him: “I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. ²⁶Therefore my heart is glad & my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, ²⁷because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. ²⁸You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.’

²⁹“Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died & was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰But he was a prophet & knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³²God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³³Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit & has poured out what you now see & hear.

Stopping there for a moment we see Peter appeals to fulfilled prophecy of Christ in the Psalms. The fact this happened in recent history of which they’re fully aware - this is only weeks after the crucifixion occurred, they’d all witnessed it! He continues with another appeal from Psalm 110:1...

³⁴For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, “The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand ³⁵until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” ³⁶“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord & Messiah.”

The first appeal Peter makes is to their experience of **the power of Jesus**. Saying Jesus was a man who did mighty works & exhibited power, of which everyone there was well aware (Acts 2:22). Miracles in their midst - they saw them. Peter doesn’t have to prove the power of Jesus, they’d been witnesses to it. We’re not eyewitnesses, but we do have experience & knowledge of our own transformation - the person we were vs the person we’ve become. New creations in Christ, the old’s gone, the new’s come as 2 Corinthians 5:17 says. Our personal testimony to His power in our lives.

This is Peters personal testimony - firsthand experience pointing to the power of Jesus. Personal testimony requires honesty - “I once was ... but now I am...because of Jesus” Not to impress, or give a biography of self - not about us, it’s about Jesus who delivers. We point to Him, not ourselves. Peter does this well.

Modern stories also abound. One is of a young Kenyan muslim who’s father was an Imam & himself the Muezzin at his fathers mosque (one who does the call to prayer). He grew up trained in Islamic schools teaching him to hate & even beat Christians if necessary - Christians were animals, avoid them at all costs. He quickly grew to be a well known apologist/missionary for Islam in his region.

One day as he went to do the Adhan, the call to prayer at the mosque, nothing would come out of his mouth. He told a friend, even showing him how when he approached the microphone he’d lose his voice, but in normal conversation he was fine. The friend took

over. He went home confused & made tea to relax. But, when he poured the water in the cup it came out like blood. He left the house walking the streets in confusion only to find a Christian missionary preaching from the back of a truck...he listened from a distance.

He said, “After the man had finished preaching, I felt compelled to approach him...He shared the gospel with me...right then & there everything felt different. I saw everything that happened that day in a new light. I knew God was the one who wouldn’t let my voice come out...the one who turned my tea blood red, as a symbol of Christ’s blood spilled on the cross for me. The Holy Spirit changed my heart, and I gave my life to Jesus.” He’s spent the rest of his life on the run due to a death sentence his own father placed on his life. Yet he’s preached Jesus from that day forward being jailed & beaten at least 5 times for his faith, counting it all as joy for what Christ has done in him.²

Another story closer to home is the Author of *The Works of His Hands: A Scientist’s Journey from Atheism to Faith*, Sy Garte, a biochemist who’s taught at New York University, University of Pittsburgh & Rutgers University. He writes “Members of my extended family were union organizers & left-wing radicals...my parents had even been members of the American Communist Party. My indoctrination in the dogmas of communism & atheism was deep & long lasting.” He describes how God used his scientific curiosity to begin to question, which eventually led him to explore faith.

He writes, “I was beginning to seriously wonder about the whole religion thing. I met Christians who were smart & scientifically minded, and for the first time I attended a church service. I was surprised...Nobody glared at me with suspicion, and I heard no thundering condemnation of sinners. The pastor spoke about the power of love...people ...shook my hand & wished me peace. It was all quite beautiful...Then I read the Gospels & had another shock: I found them beautiful & inspiring....they carried the ring of truth...the Book of Acts struck me as actual history, not at all like a fictional account concocted to enslave the masses,” as Marxism had taught him.

Soon after he was on the PA turnpike & describes a powerful experience, “I felt a chill up & down my spine & could hear myself speaking in my mind - preaching, in fact. I could see an audience in front of me...I pulled the car over to the right lane & slowed down. It was not a vision exactly, but it was intense. I knew I wasn’t making the words up - I was listening just as much as the audience. I talked about knowing Jesus loves me. With a voice full of passionate emotion, I assured the crowd whatever their sins might be, they were no worse than my own, and because of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross we could all be saved. I explained God’s love is more powerful than any other kind & anyone can have it without deserving it. At some point during this experience, I’d pulled over onto the shoulder...where I sat behind the wheel crying...I’d never considered the things “I” had been saying. Some of the concepts were unfamiliar. The only explanation I could fathom was the Holy Spirit had entered my life in dramatic fashion. “Thank you, Lord...I believe, and I am saved. Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ.””³

² <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/december-web-only/fervent-evangelist-islam-living-out-book-acts-missionary.html>

³ <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/march/sy-garte-science-answers-inconvenient-questions.html>

The good news is Jesus & the book of Acts are history as Sy said. Not a fairy tale, but a real person who came, lived, was crucified & rose from the dead. Which is the next appeal Peter makes: **the historicity of Jesus**, found in vv23-24 & 32-33. He was handed over, killed & raised - and we've seen it, Peter says. Gospel proclamation is rooted in a firm point in history. Not something we vaguely suggest may've occurred at some point in time. It happened outside of Jerusalem, when Pontius Pilate was governor & Rome was in charge of the known world. It happened & Peter makes that point clear.

Josephus, the highly respected Jewish historian, wrote toward the end of the first century AD...“Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for He appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these & ten thousand other wonderful things concerning Him. And the tribe of Christians so named from Him are not extinct at this day.” (Antiquities xviii. 33)⁴

There's a citation from another non-Christian historian, Julius Africanus, who alludes to a reference by Thallus, an early Greek historian, to the darkness which covered the earth from noon to 3:00 p.m. during Jesus' crucifixion. He says, “Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explains away this darkness as an eclipse of the sun - unreasonably, as it seems to me...” ‘Unreasonable’ because a solar eclipse couldn't take place at the time of the full moon, and it was at the season of the Paschal full moon at which Christ died.⁵

Why does it matter that the crucifixion & resurrection are grounded in history? It shows us God cares about our world enough to enter into history choosing a certain time & place. These things actually happened. God loved creation enough to enter into suffering, pay the cost for our rebellion & overcome the effects of death to save!

Finally, Peter makes an appeal **to Scripture** in vv25-35. The point of appealing to Scripture is for people to understand the resurrection of Jesus to be true & from God (v. 32). The point on which everything hangs is that Jesus rose from the dead. It doesn't matter if He merely did mighty works among them. That didn't stop people from crucifying Him. It doesn't matter if they were witnesses to His death. Public executions were common. Jesus wasn't the only criminal executed that day (Luke 23:32). What matters is that it all ended in His resurrection! And because He rose, the apostles now have God's Holy Spirit poured out on them at Pentecost (v. 33), which is why they were able to speak so boldly to the crowd that day.

Finally, Peter gives his audience the good news of the gospel in an interesting way in v36...“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you

⁴ <https://crossexamined.org/is-the-historical-jesus-fact-or-fiction/>

⁵ <https://crossexamined.org/is-the-historical-jesus-fact-or-fiction/>

crucified, both Lord & Messiah.” It’s easy to read here an anti-Semitic message like, “You Jews killed Jesus.” But as Tim Keller points out, “Rather, this is part of the gospel message for every human being. Until we see that our sins cost Jesus His life, that we were the cause of His death - we will not be ‘cut to the heart’.”⁶ Peter wants to make sure all his hearers understand how their sin made them participants in the crucifixion of Jesus. He wants his words to cut to their heart so they’ll repent & commit themselves to the Lord.

And that’s exactly what happened in vv. 38-41 as he said to them, “*Repent & 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. 39The promise is for you & your children & for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call.*” And 3000 were added that day. The goal of gospel proclamation is to tell His story!

Remember, the day Christ rose was the Feast of First Fruits. And, in 1 Corinthians 15:20-25 it says this about Jesus...*But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority & power. 25For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27For he “has put everything under his feet.”* That last part if you remember David said in Psalm 110:1! This use of first fruits is intentional.

Over past weeks we’ve pointed out how important the timing was of these events, and how Jesus was in control of the whole situation - I hope you see this more clearly today.

Christ was sacrificed at Passover which commemorated the blood of the lamb without defect which saved Israel. During Passover, when the Feast of Unleavened Bread was celebrated which speaks of the urgency to take in the message quickly being ready to leave for new life. Then He’s raised three days later as they celebrated the Feast of First Fruits, a time when people had to give the first of their harvest - everything they had since they were never sure what the harvest would bring later! And then, as the Holy Spirit is poured out & Peter preaches, it’s the lavish celebration of the Feast of Weeks which celebrates the bountiful Harvest & 3000 are saved that day!

If you’re a follower of Jesus, you see that everything points to the crucifixion & resurrection of Jesus as central to faith. Everything pregnant with meaning & foreshadowing. That timing was paramount as a result. The proclamations of the early church emphasize over & over the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It’s worth asking: How important is the resurrection of Jesus to us, do we tell His story with such knowledge & passion? The story of which we should be both excited & are called to tell others!

⁶ (Tim Keller, *Evangelism: Studies in the Book of Acts* [New York: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2005], 24)