

# The First Gospel Message: Who Crucified Jesus? (Acts 2:22-47)



## A. Introduction

1. It was the day of Pentecost around 27AD. It was the longest day in church history. So much happened that day. It was the day the Holy Spirit was poured out on the 120 disciples and took residence in human beings for the first time in history. And the church was birthed in power, accompanied by the mighty rushing wind, blazing fire, and all the languages of the earth being spoken supernaturally by the 120.
2. By the end of the day, the prayer meeting of 120 grew to 3,120 people. I don't think the church has had another climactic event quite like this, but this is the pattern given to the church, especially as we face the last days and the great harvest of souls. Peter points the great signs of the last days in Joel's prophecies:- (i) the universal outpouring of the Holy Spirit; (ii) signs and wonders in the earth and the heavens; (iii) the mankind calling upon the name of the Lord and being saved as the final culmination! (2:21)

## B. Peter's Proclamation – the First Gospel Message (2:22-36)

1. *What is that name* by which man can be saved? It is not YHWH which the Jews had known all through their history. That name is 'Jesus/Yeshua' which means 'salvation' - the only name given unto man that he may be saved. How common was the name in those days? There were 7 people with the same name in New Testament. So, Peter said specifically, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' This is the first gospel message. It was preached by Peter and he tells us how a man is to be saved – i.e., how a man can 'get right with God.'
2. Peter tells us what we need to know and believe to be saved. He says three things: (a) Jesus lived as a real man who performed miracles (v22); (b) His death and resurrection (v23-32); (c) His ascension (v33-35).
  - i. Jesus lived as a real man with flesh and blood. Jesus of Nazareth sent by God lived and dwelt among us. He was a carpenter's son from Nazareth. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit and performed miracles, signs, and wonders. They all knew this Jesus. He healed the sick, He cast out the demons, He raised the dead, and He controlled nature with a word. Amazingly though Jesus was truly a man, *He did what only God could do*. He was 'attested by God to be more than a man.' (2:22) He was truly the Son of God from David's royal bloodline (Matt 12:23).
  - ii. Jesus died on the cross for our sins (2:23). Peter squarely laid the guilt at the feet of the Jews who planned His death, and on the Romans (Gentiles) who carried out the death sentence by crucifixion. It was the greatest miscarriage of justice at every level. They changed Jesus' charge from 'blasphemy' to 'treason' on the way to the court and pressed Pilate to pass the death sentence against his will. Thus, both 'Jews' and 'Gentiles' were held accountable for the crime of murdering Jesus, the holy man attested by God.

Peter speaks of extraordinary truth. The cross was no accident but a part of God's plan all along which began before the world began, '*...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*' (Rev 13:8). The greatest tragedy of man was really the greatest triumph of God. That is why we say Good Friday, not Bad Friday. There is no contradiction between 'God's sovereign mercy' and 'man's responsibility.' Why did the Jews put Jesus to death? When they asked, '*Are you the Christ? Are you the Son of God?*' Jesus said, 'I AM.'

- iii. Jesus is raised from the dead (2:24). The Jewish court condemned Jesus as a 'blasphemer; Herod's court - a circus man; the Roman court - a rebel. They said, '*He is too bad to live.*' But God reversed their sentence by resurrecting Jesus. '*No, He is too good to be dead.*' God released Jesus from the 'pangs of death' (Gr. '*ordinas*' c.f. birth pangs, 2:24) The power of death could not hold Jesus down for long. Peter declares they – the 120 disciples - were the eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection.

He gives scriptural proof from Psalms 16:8-11 written by King David, who was also a prophet of God. David spoke of things to come, '*For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.*' (2:27). (i) The Jews believed that if there ever lived a perfectly holy man, he

would not be subject to a process of degradation and corruption. Death came in because of sin. It is a humiliating process. (ii) They also believed the decay of the body begins on the 4<sup>th</sup> day. Remember when Lazarus in the grave for 4 days, they said, *'Lord, he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.'* (Jn 11:39)? Peter said, *'We all know that David had been in the grave for 1,000 years (he certainly was not the sinless one) and David's tomb is with us to this day,'* (2:29) just outside the temple walls on the south side near the Pool of Siloam.

God has promised that one of David's descendants will sit on the throne forever (c.f. Ps 132:11). If this JESUS is the Promised One, the Messiah to sit on David's throne, the Holy One of God, then it follows that (i) Jesus can't remain inside the tomb for more than 3 days. God will have to raise Him from the dead on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. (ii) This was no accident. Jesus died for our sins. The only way this could happen is because God willed it. The 120 were the witnesses of this event.

3. *'Where is Jesus now?'* Jesus has *ascended* to heaven and full of joy in the presence of God. *'You will make me full of joy in Your presence.'* (2:28 Ps. 16:11).
  - i. This is so important that Peter mentions Jesus' ascension 4 times in his sermon. 'Jesus is coronated as the Messiah King, sitting at the right hand of God' (2:25, 30, 33, 34). No Jew and no Roman could produce the dead body of Jesus. But the disciples could not produce the live body of Jesus either because Jesus was now no longer on earth. So, this is the precise line of demarcation between a 'believer' and 'unbeliever', between 'saved' and 'unsaved'. It is the faith that Christ willingly laid down His life for our sins, and faith in His resurrection and ascension. Peter said, *'The fact that you can see the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the 120 is the evidence of Jesus' resurrection and ascension because that is precisely what He promised to do when He gets back home, thus fulfilling Joel's prophecy of the last days (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26-27).'*
  - ii. Peter again turns to the Scriptures. Ps 110 is the most quoted Old Testament Scripture in New Testament. Peter said, 'King David also prophesied of Jesus' ascension in Ps 110:1.' (Jesus spoke of Ps 110 in Matt 22:43-44; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-42). *'The LORD (YHWH) said to my Lord (Adonai, Master, Messiah), 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'* (2:34). This is the crunch of Peter's message. 'This Jesus, the Son of God and the Messiah whom God sent but whom you have rejected and crucified, God has declared by raising Him from the dead that He is both the 'LORD' ('*kyrios*' – interchangeable word for God) and 'Christ' (Messiah/Anointed King)! From that point, the apostles no longer speak of 'Jesus of Nazareth', but 'the Lord Jesus Christ.' That is the gospel. What an amazing message from an unschooled illiterate fisherman, but Peter was full of the Holy Spirit.
  - iii. Can you imagine what it would do to them to hear Peter's message? 7 weeks ago, they cried out, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him!' as they jeered and spat on Him dying on the cross. Together they colluded and committed an unthinkable crime. Every one of them had blood on their hands. They rejected and murdered God's Messiah. In raising their hands against Jesus, they raised their hands against God. A conviction of sin went right through their heart like a dagger, which was the work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11). But Jesus has already prayed for them when He hung on the cross, *'Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do.'* (Luke 23:34) Jesus' prayer with His final breaths was not they get justice, but they receive the forgiveness of sins, they did not know what they were doing. Indeed, it was not only their sins but also for our sins that He so willingly gave His life.

### C. People's Response and Peter's exhortation (2:37-41)

1. What was the response of the Jews? They said, *'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'* (2:37) - 'How can we be saved? Or How can we get right with God?' It was a *desperate collective* group inquiry, but Peter called for an individual response - *'Let each one of you...'* (2:38).
  - i. Peter told them if they believed, they must do two things. (1) *Repent*; (2) *Be baptised*. Isn't that simple? Peter did not say, 'Do 10 years of penance,' or 'Try to live a decent life,' or 'Bring a lot of money to God's work,' but 'Repent.' Turn away from your sinful past and return to God.' Make a

decisive break with your sins, and come to God acknowledging you have failed to live a life pleasing to Him, that you are a sinner and you have sinned against God. Then make your repentance and commitment to Jesus real by being baptised in water.

This is what Jesus commands. It is the God-ordained way of salvation. *'The idea of unbaptised Christian is simply not entertained in the NT.'* (F.F. Bruce) The Bible does not mention signing a decision card or coming forward to the front of the church altar. What Jesus and the apostles required of people who wanted to get right with God were: repentance from sin, faith in Christ, and water baptism. Why didn't Peter mention here 'faith in Jesus?' They already believed when they said, 'How can we be saved?'

The repentance and water baptism are the total response of a 'believer' who decides to follow Jesus Christ. Two simple steps, yet many people hesitate. Why? The devil hates it. If you believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died for your sins and rose from the dead for you, then you must 'repent' and 'be baptised.' Believing in Jesus means you accept what God has done to save you from sin, that Jesus Christ is the only answer, and He is God's provision for salvation. There is no salvation outside of Jesus Christ. So, you put your trust and confidence in what Jesus has done for you on the cross. Baptism means 'full immersion.' It is not an optional extra. Peter said, 'let each of you repent and be baptised in water.' It is the burial of selfish sinful life. This apostolic conversion requirement never changed.

2. Two Provisions from God - two things God will do for us if we do the above two things toward God.
  - i. God will forgive your sins. Do you know the wonder and power of being forgiven by God? One preacher said, *'Church is filled with nice people who never experienced the wonders of being forgiven by God.'* Jesus said, *'Those who are forgiven much, loves much.'* (Lk 7:47) That is why there is so little love in the church. The good news is that *God is not angry at you or trying to get even with you, but He is ready to forgive all of your past sins if you will come to Him in faith!*
  - ii. But that is not all. There is another gift that God wants to give to you – the Holy Spirit. God will dwell inside of you with His empowering Presence to help you live a successful Christian life. God will match the gift of forgiveness for your past with the gift of the Holy Spirit for your future. What will we do without the Holy Spirit to guide us and empower us from within to live a holy life? Peter emphasises this promise of the Holy Spirit is not only for the Jews of the early church, *'but it is for you and your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.'* (2:39) That includes you.
  - iii. Then Peter urged them, *'Be saved from this perverse generation.'* (2:40) Peter diagnosed this world as full of wickedness and evil. Do you agree with him? You can be saved from this perverse generation with certainty today if you respond to God's call now. Do not put it off to another day. There is no promise of tomorrow. The holy God will judge this perverse and evil world one day. If you get your life right with God today, you do not need to be judged along with the world. Make that decision today.
  - iv. What happened? 3000 Jews were saved in one day. They have repented from their sins and turned to God. All of them were baptised in water. Each of the 120 disciples had to take care of 25 new believers from day one. What a day!

#### D. Early Church's Expansion (2:42-47)

1. Early Church's Devotion: *'continued steadfastly'* (2: 42), 'continually devoting' themselves' (NAS).
  - i. The Apostles' Teaching - The most essential spiritual food is the Word of God. 'Devotion' is more than 'listening'. It speaks of hunger and zeal, not only to 'hear', but to 'practice' the teaching.
  - ii. The Fellowship (Gk. 'te koinonia') - 'the' fellowship, i.e., 'distinctive fellowship.' This is not a group booking for a meal at a restaurant. When each person eats his own lunch at the common table, that is not '*koinonia*'. '*Koinonia*' is when you share your meal with others, and they do the same with you. True Christian fellowship sharing of life at the deepest level.
  - iii. The Breaking of Bread – Usually the sharing of meal led to the breaking of bread and sharing of the cup. They commemorated the Lord's table together.

- iv. The Prayers – They devoted themselves to prayer. i.e., ‘(the) prayer(s)’ (c.f. 1:14). It means corporate prayer and all types of prayer such as ‘petition’, ‘intercession’, ‘fellowship’. What did they pray for? E.g., ‘For the word of God to spread in power and for the church to be strengthened.’ (4:27-31; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:30-31)
2. Seven Portraits of the Early Church: (1 of 7 progress reports. C.f. 6:7; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:30-31)
- i. Reverent Church (2:43) – The fear of God was upon them. It was reverential awe. This was the first mark of the early church, which we need desperately in our day.
  - ii. Holy Spirit-led Church (2:43) – The signs and wonders were occurring in the church by the apostles, and it spread to the whole church (4:31, 6:8, etc).
  - iii. Communal (sharing) Church (2:44-45) – they were willing to share all things. It was not ‘mandatory imposed communism’ or ‘socialism’, but a spontaneous and voluntary response of the ‘many’ in the church toward the poor brothers and sisters among them. What takes the church to this level of giving and sharing? (1) They were far more at home in heaven than on earth. (2) They were a true family of God. The church was full of the real love of God. No club we can belong to on earth can compare.
  - iv. United Church (2:46) – The believers met daily in ‘one accord’, breaking bread from house to house enjoying the unity of the Spirit. They ate meals together and observed the Lord’s Supper together.
  - v. Sincere Church (2:46) – They ate their food with gladness and simplicity, (Lit. ‘sincerity of heart’).
  - vi. Joyful Church (2:47) – The church overflowed with the praises of God, they ate their food with gladness and enjoyed favour with all people.
  - vii. Growing Church (2:47) – ‘The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.’

If we are a reverent church, a Spirit-led church, a sharing church, a united church, a sincere church, and a joyful church, then we shall be a growing church. It was *the Lord who did it*. It is His church. Notice the previous six marks were the qualities that marked the early church. Then the Lord added the numbers to them daily such as those who were being saved.

### 3. Question

Who is responsible for Jesus’ death? If it was God’s preordained plan that Jesus died and is raised to life again, then who did Jesus die for? Do you know that it is ‘our sins’ that nailed Jesus to the cross?

These are the questions every person listening to the gospel message must answer. It was the first gospel message Peter preached, and the church must keep on preaching it until He comes back to take us home. Amen.