

Pentecost: Proof That He is The Son of God

Acts 2:14-41 (text)

23 May 2021, Reformed Church of Wainuiomata 16:30

(Sermon put together by Pieter van Huyssteen with due acknowledgement)

Intro

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

I know of people in my country of birth who have left the Reformed (Biblical) faith, and have become so enamoured with modern Israel, with the Jewish nation and with the Hebrew language, that they have ended up almost worshiping Judaism!

Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not against admiring the Jews! After all, was it not through them that God gave us His Word and our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ!?

However, the way some of those folks rave on about Jewishness and Jewish religious practices, seems as if they almost say you cannot be right with God unless you first become a Jew!

And here is the sad thing: I know that one of them – one who grew up in the church – has gone so far that he no longer believes that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah/Christ, the only One through whom man can be right with God!

So, here's the question: Who was/is Jesus of Nazareth?

Was He just an ordinary, gifted man with lots of initiative and courage – yes, even a great measure of foolhardiness to go against Jewish and Roman authorities!?

You see, this is very important!

If Jesus is/was not really who He said He was, then what happens to you and me after our life on earth?

Not just that! If Jesus Christ is/was not really the Son of God, what meaning does your and my life then have even now?

What anchor would we have in life?

What comfort in pain!? What hope for the future!?

See? At times, you and I who have been Christian for a long time, must go through the basics again – must have another scrutinising look again at Jesus – to make sure for ourselves that we indeed believe Him!

You ask, "But where does one get a good overview of who Jesus was/is?"

Well, look at Pentecost Day! More precisely, listen to Peter's speech on Pentecost Day!

You see, Pentecost Day (which we remember today) is indeed about the Holy Spirit. But you know what? When you listen closely to Peter's sermon, what do you see? Pentecost has all to do with Jesus – powerful Jesus; Jesus the promised Messiah; Jesus the very Son of God!¹

My brother and sister, Peter's sermon gives four arguments/points to show that Jesus is indeed the Son of God - Messiah.

Here is the first point....

Miraculous Signs (to show that Jesus is God)

¹ Acts 2:36 reveals this to be the main point of Peter's sermon (and of mine)!

You see, for all practical purposes, Peter told the crowd of more than 3,000, “Fellow Jews, look what our Scriptures foretold about Messiah!”

And, what did the Scriptures foretell?

Well, they prophesied about the “last days”!²

My brother and sister, what do *you and I* think when we hear the words “last days”?

We think of the end of time, when Jesus returns!

But what did the ancient Jews understand by the words “last days”?

They simply thought of Messiah’s coming – His first & only coming!

You see, they did not know what we now know – that Messiah has two comings: 1) when He came to save 2000 yrs ago, and 2) when He will return, at the end of time.

Well, what did the Jewish Scriptures say about the last days – about Messiah’s coming?

Among other, they said that in the last days God would *show wonders in heaven above and signs on the earth below*...³ (Joel 2:30 quoted in v.19 of our text).⁴

So, on Pentecost Day, Peter points out to the crowd: “regarding these *wonders and signs* (spoken of 800 years ago by the prophet Joel) – well, that’s exactly what Jesus of Nazareth did all the time He was on earth!”

My brother and sister, have you ever heard of any other Jewish prophet (or even scribe) around the time of Jesus who performed miraculous signs?

No! Even liberal scholars who don’t believe in Jesus have admitted: Jesus of Nazareth was the only Jewish prophet (rabbi) who performed miraculous signs!⁵

There was no other!

But *He* performed signs, because He was the only One to fulfil Joel’s prophecy!

No wonder Peter says (in v.22), “*Jesus of Nazareth was a man openly and publicly given to you⁶ by God...to do miracles, wonders and signs!*”⁷

Why would God allow miracles to happen?

Well, as the Bible says, for the exact purpose that people *should believe that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, people might have life!* (Jn 20:31).

In fact, Jesus Himself once said,

“...*even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.*”⁸

Allow me to ask: Do you believe in Jesus because of His miracles?

Most blessed are you if you do!

² cf. 2:17

³ Acts 2:19 *καὶ δώσω τέρατα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἄνω καὶ σημεῖα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς κάτω, αἶμα καὶ πῦρ καὶ ἀτμίδα καπνοῦ.* (τέρατα neut pl acc of **τέρας, ατος n** wonder, marvel, portent).

⁴ Joel 2:30 = LXX Joel 3:3 *καὶ δώσω τέρατα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, αἶμα καὶ πῦρ καὶ ἀτμίδα καπνοῦ.* Also the MT has Joel 3:3

וַיִּתֵּן מוֹפְתִים בְּשֵׁמַיִם וּבְאָרֶץ דָּם וְאֵשׁ וְתִמְרוֹת עָשָׂן

⁵ cf. Smith, *Jesus the Magician: Charlatan or Son of God?* (Berkeley: Seastone, 1998), 21. (apud Morais, D. and Gleghorn, M. 2006. Did Jesus really perform miracles?

http://www.probe.org/site/c.fdKEIMNsEoG/b.4227257/k.3E6C/Did_Jesus_Really_Perform_Miracles.htm)

⁶ ἀποδεικνύμενον perf pass part m sing acc of **ἀποδείκνυμι** “ show publicly, demonstrate, show to be true” (Louw and Nida, LOGOS 4); “show forth; display; attest (Bauer, 1979:89)

⁷ Emphasis mine

⁸ *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. 1984 (Jn 10:38). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Remember: Nicodemus is one clear example of someone who was drawn to faith⁹ in Christ by the miracles he saw...

Look, that's what Nicodemus himself said: "***Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.***"¹⁰

My brother and sister, critics and liberal theologians have always denied the miracles of Jesus!

Some even want to discard all the Gospels and the whole New Testament, saying these are all just fantasies!

But never forget the following:

At the time when the Gospels and Acts and most of the New Testament were written, eyewitnesses were still alive and could easily go check out if what the Bible authors said were true or false. In fact, this is exactly what Peter in v. 22 of our text does: he openly reminds his listeners saying... This was what ***God did among you through Him (Jesus).***¹¹

Then Peter even adds (v.22): ***you yourselves know it***, because you have seen this Jesus performing these signs in your midst!

Would Bible authors tell lies if they knew they could be proven wrong by eyewitnesses?

No!

My brother and sister, there's too much evidence that Christ's miracles really did happen!!

He performed them, and openly and before eyewitnesses!

Is that not why the Apostle Paul, at one place, reminded even the governor and the king of Palestine, "these things were not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26).¹²

Signs – *witnessed* miraculous signs!!! The first proof that Jesus must be who He said He is!

Well, here's the second point to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Son of God...

His Resurrection

My brother and sister,

Peter told the crowd the shocking news: "this Jesus died – in fact, partly because of your uproar!"

But look! Just because He died, does that mean He lost the game – does that mean He is a loser?

No! Not at all!

⁹ Remember the rest of Nicodemus' responses to Jesus: when he came up for Jesus (Jn 7:50-52a) and when, against all Pharisaic laws, he went with Joseph of Arimathea to embalm and bury Christ's body (Jn 19:39-40)

¹⁰ *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. 1984 (Jn 3:2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

¹¹ Emphasis mine

¹² ***Indeed the king knows about these things, and to him I speak freely; for I am certain that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in a corner*** (ἐπίσταται γὰρ περὶ τούτων ὁ βασιλεὺς πρὸς ὃν καὶ παρρησιαζόμενος λαλῶ, λανθάνειν γὰρ αὐτόν [τι] τούτων οὐ πείθομαι οὐθέν· οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἐν γωνίᾳ πεπραγμένον τοῦτο.)

You see, this death/killing (although performed by men) was part of the Almighty God's plan to show you the greatest miracle ever – the miracle of bringing this Jesus back from the dead!!!

You gasp!?

“A dead man came back to life!?”

Yes, indeed! God freed this Jesus from the agony¹³ of death!

What agony?

Well, the long and lasting separation of body and soul;¹⁴ when the body, without the soul in it, is as it were “unclothed”¹⁵ and decays in the grave!

God freed this Jesus from that!

You see, this Jesus was special – extraordinary! It was impossible for death to keep its hold on him; to overpower Him; to restrain Him.¹⁶

You ask why!?

Well, remember that death came into this world as punishment for man's sin!

Now, here's the point: in/of Himself, this Jesus was sinless! So, there was no reason for Him to remain dead! Indeed, death cannot (it's impossible for death to) restrain Him!

Look, is that not why we often sing, “Death *cannot* (repeat) keep its prey – Jesus my Saviour!”¹⁷

So, God raised this Jesus from the dead!

Well, on this resurrection note, Peter reminds the crowd of another quite significant point: This resurrection was prophesied by our ancestor, King David!

You see, David was not only *king* but also *prophet* in that he stood firmly on the promises God had made to him – that from his own body God would send an eternal Ruler¹⁸ – i.e., a Ruler that would be stronger than the restraining power of death!

You see, that's why David in Ps 16 (v.10) said, “... ***You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will You let Your Holy One see decay.***”

Well, who's this “Holy One” about whom David prophesied!?

The crowd might have wanted to answer, “It's David himself!”

But, says Peter, “No!”

¹³ cf. Acts 2:24a literally: “***whom God rose having loosed the birth pains (agony) of death***” (ὃν ὁ θεὸς ἀνέστησεν λύσας τὰς ὠδῖνας τοῦ θανάτου,); τὰς ὠδῖνας “birth pains” = fem plural accusative of ὠδῖν, ἴνος “birth pains; great suffering.” cf. also Hendriksen (ibid:95) for a short comment on Ps 18:6 (LXX 17:6) and Ps 116:3 (LXX 114:3), which the LXX reads as “the birth pains (ὠδῖνες) of Hades have encircled me...” The MT, however has, “The ropes of Sheol encircled me...” (רֶבְבֵי שְׂאוֹל יִבְלְּוּנִי), i.e. “ropes/cord” from בְּלָהָ not בְּלָהָ (pain/pang). Hendriksen (ibid) comments reminding that vowel pointing was added to the Masoretic Text at a very late stage. Hendriksen (ibid) prefers the LXX's reading seeing that it is much older than that of the MT.

¹⁴ On this, cf. *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition*. 1994 (D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer and G. J. Wenham, Ed.) (4th ed.) (Ac 2:1–47). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press. “Peter did not mean that Jesus didn't feel pain during the crucifixion by saying that God freed him *from the agony of death*. Instead, Jews commonly thought that the state of being dead, separation into a ghost and a corpse, was itself an agony. We see a reflection of this in 2 Corinthians, where Paul argues against the interpretation of death as being ‘unclothed’ (2 Cor. 5:1–8).”

¹⁵ cf. 2 Cor 5:1-8 esp. v.4 ***For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.***

¹⁶ cf. v. 24b literally: “...***for not He was able to be overpowered – He by it***” (...καθότι οὐκ ἦν δυνατὸν κρατεῖσθαι αὐτὸν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ.) κρατεῖσθαι pres inf pass of κρατέω “hold back; restrain; to have control/power over”

¹⁷ Sing to the Lord, no. 307 stanza 3

¹⁸ cf. 2 Sm 7:12-16; also Ps 132:11-12; also Ps 89:3-4, 35-36

You see, congregation, at the time of the Apostles, David's tomb was still in Jerusalem – it was a building with several rooms and vaults for the burial of kings!¹⁹

So, what could Peter say to the crowd?

He was able to assure them that “the Holy One” who would not see his body decay in the grave, was not *David*, for everyone knew David's decayed remains were still lying in that very city – Jerusalem!

No!

That Holy One, who would not see decay, was *Jesus of Nazareth*!

And, hear what Peter tells the crowd next: “We – we disciples of Jesus – are among those who witnessed this resurrection fact!”²⁰

My brother and sister,

Was the disciples' witnessing accurate?

Can you and I believe them?

We certainly can!

You see, before Christ's resurrection, these very same disciples did not grasp that He would be raised from the dead!

They themselves needed to be convinced!²¹

Besides, what could the disciples gain by preaching a lie – especially in the light of persecution and death!?

Lies can only be promoted for a time! Then, it's over!

But here, on Pentecost Day, the apostles are boldly and publicly proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus! And they even do it in the very *same* city where the very *same* authorities still are who only seven weeks before killed the very One whom Peter is now proclaiming as Messiah!!

Does this sound to you like a false witness?

Not at all!

Crowd at Pentecost – congregation in Wainuiomata – *know for sure*: Jesus of Nazareth *did* rise from the dead!

Death could not hold Him back!

By the way, is this not good news for you and me and every mortal human being!?! For how can we now view our own death?

Well, it's like a bee without a sting!

What's the sting of death?

It's your and my sin now taken away by Jesus!

So, your and my death is now disarmed of its hopelessness; of its finality, for, when Jesus returns, even our bodies will be upraised anew and glorified!

Resurrection of Jesus – the second argument raised by Peter to prove that Jesus is ***both Lord and Messiah*** (v.36)!²²

¹⁹ cf. Hendriksen (2004:98 n.46) who refers to Josephus' Antiquities 13.8.4 [249]; 16.7.1 [179]; War 1.2.5 [61], and adds that “the tomb remained untouched during the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and was still mentioned in the time of Hadrian (A.D. 117-38).”

²⁰ cf. Hendriksen (ibid:100) for reasoning in favour of the fact that, in using the word “we,” Peter does not include the crowd as witnesses of Jesus' resurrection.

²¹ cf. Mk 16:9-14; Acts 1:3

²² Literally: “***Beyond any doubt, therefore, let every house in Israel know that both Lord Him and Christ God has made – this Jesus whom you have crucified.***” (ἀσφαλῶς οὖν γινωσκέτω πᾶς οἶκος Ἰσραὴλ ὅτι καὶ κύριον αὐτὸν καὶ χριστὸν ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός, τοῦτον τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν ὑμεῖς ἐσταυρώσατε.)

Here's the third...

Ascension

The same Jesus of Nazareth ascended into heaven!

And Peter's sermon to the crowd came across like this:

With our own eyes we, His disciples, saw Him go up and then disappear in a cloud of God's presence!!²³

Indeed! This same Jesus has now been exalted to God's right hand! (32).

Do you remember what our father David said in Ps 110?

This: "***The LORD said to my Lord, 'Come sit at My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet!'***"

Think for yourselves! Whom was David talking about?

Himself?

No!

David did not ascend to heaven (v.34a)! As said before, his decayed remains are still here in his tomb in Jerusalem!

No! In Ps 110, David was prophesying about this same Jesus of Nazareth!

My brother and sister, much has been written about the meaning of Christ's ascension – what it means for *us*!²⁴

But what did the ascension of Jesus (Peter's words) mean for that crowd on Pentecost Day?

One thing: that Jesus of Nazareth must indeed have been that ***Lord and Messiah***²⁵ - that eternal King whom God had promised to King David of old!

Well, talk of eternal! What can be more eternal than ruling from heaven!?

But also: who can have more authority than the One ruling from the right hand of God?

See? Christ's ascension – the third point Peter mentions to prove to the crowd that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed Lord and Messiah!

But here is a fourth (and last) proof that Jesus is Lord and Messiah...

Tongues (to prophesy)

Congregation, Peter turns to the event which, only a few minutes earlier, had amazed and perplexed²⁶ the crowd – the fact that a group of unlearned Galileans²⁷ were speaking languages they had never learned!

Our text lists at least fifteen languages – a mere *sample* from nations of the whole known world at that time.

Well, Peter explained to the crowd that...

the same Jesus who had performed signs in front of their very eyes,

yes, the same Jesus who rose from the dead, and

yes, the very same Jesus who also ascended to the right hand of God in heaven,

is the same One who did what the crowd now saw and heard!

²³ If 2:32 does not cover this point, then at least Lk 24:50-53 and Acts 1:9-11.

²⁴ One only has to look at the HC LD 18 for a starter!

²⁵ cf. Acts 2:36b literally: "...both Lord Him and Christ has made God..." (...καὶ κύριον αὐτὸν καὶ χριστὸν ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός...)

²⁶ cf. v.12

²⁷ cf. v.7. Now, how many exactly these Spirit-filled speakers were, is unsure. Hendriksen (ibid:91) asserts they were 120 all together: the apostles, the women and Mary, the brothers of Jesus, and others. Hendriksen (ibid) refers to Acts 1:12-15 and 2:4, 7.

In all authority, from the right hand of God, this very same Jesus has poured out the Holy Spirit on His disciples (followers).

So, Jesus fulfilled yet another Messianic prophecy – another part of the 800-year old prophecy of Joel – that said:

*‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh (i.e., upon people of all languages), and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...’*²⁸

Why did Jesus pour out the Holy Spirit?

He did that in faithfulness to God’s plan and promise!

He did that to empower the church and the apostles for the task of evangelising the world!²⁹

But He also did that to give the sign of speaking in tongues – known languages³⁰ to, in a vivid (poignant) way, make clear that, through Jesus Christ, God has brought salvation to people from every language on earth!³¹

My brother and sister,

It’s as if Peter is saying through our text,

Hear this, Pentecost crowd – hear this, church family of Wainuiomata: you have just heard four arguments to prove that Jesus is Lord and Messiah; that He is indeed who He said He is:

- signs
- resurrection
- ascension
- authoritative outpouring of the Holy Spirit!

My brother and sister, as said in the introduction, some people have left the true faith, because, instead of focusing on Christ, they have focused too much on what the unbelieving world has to say!

I wonder how many inside our churches might be doing the same!

Answer for yourself: Who do you really think Jesus is?

Based upon our text, I proclaim to you that He is who He said He is: The Son of God; your/my only eternal Saviour; the only One who gives direction and full meaning to your/my life!

So, I plead with you, again, this afternoon: turn to Jesus and hold onto Him!

AMEN (2,501 words excluding footnotes)

²⁸ *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Ac 2:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

²⁹ cf. His promises to them (Lk 24:49 and Acts 1:8, but also Jn 14:15ff; 16:4bff)

³⁰ For a neat summary of the “Meaning of Pentecost,” cf. Reymond (1998:285-287). Also for doctrinal snippets on Pentecost, cf. Hendriksen (2004:78, 84, 91, 97, 102)

³¹ This is, in a way, the reverse of the Tower-of-Babel event.