

Acts Chapter 2:22-23

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—

Men of Israel, hear these words- Peter is not narrowing down his focus to only those who are men or only to those who are a part of Israel. As he stated just a few verses earlier, this message is for all who dwell in Jerusalem and that has not changed. Although only those in Jerusalem could hear him speaking right then, Peter’s message even goes beyond the city walls of Jerusalem, being intended for the whole world. Men of Israel is a therefore a religious way of addressing people, similar to how we might say “brothers and sisters in Christ.” We also talk about the Church being the New Israel, because the promise of a Savior now resides with us and has been fulfilled.

Jesus of Nazareth- Jesus of Nazareth is how Jesus would have been known to the people throughout His earthly ministry. Since there were many Jesuses or Joshuas, He would have been identified by the place where He came from. Notice that He is not identified by the place He was born (Jesus of Bethlehem) or by the place that He spent most of early years of His life (Jesus of Egypt). He would have been known by the place where He spent the most time. In other cases, people are also identified by their parents. In certain places, Jesus is identified as “the carpenter’s son,” although it could also be translated craftsmen or builder’s son. Justin Martyr, an early Church Father, said that Joseph and Jesus were skilled in making ploughs and yokes.

A man- This phrasing may strike us as being wrong, because we know that Jesus is true God. However, it is correct to also talk about Jesus as being true man. Jesus was hungry, Jesus cried, Jesus was tempted, Jesus was weary, and Jesus died. It was necessary for Him to have two natures, so that we could be saved. If He were not human, He could not have died. If He were not divine, He could not rise from the dead. Many people attack the Church by saying that Jesus is only a man, but we believe that He is the Son of God incarnate.

Attested to you by God- To attest to something means to give clear evidence of truth. In this case, it is the truth of who Jesus is. Unbelievers often say that Christians have no proof of what they claim and believers sometimes let them have that as a win. However, there are many times where there is proof and that proof can strengthen our faith. For example, there are accounts of eyewitnesses to the resurrection from outside the Scriptures. Others go too far on the other end of the spectrum, saying that we have proof for everything that God says. There are certain things that we need to take on faith.

With mighty works and wonders and signs- The point of all three of these things is that people would know that Jesus is the Messiah. With this trio of words, it was not necessarily about healing or some other kind of miracle, but rather a message. In the Gospel of John, there are numerous signs that point to Jesus throughout the entire book. Here the mighty works, along with wonders and signs, are attributed to Jesus, rather than the disciples. This was always the intent of miracles: showing that the power came from Jesus Himself. When Jesus performed miracles, the effects were instantaneous, showing that the very source of that power was extremely near to them. When Paul or one of the disciples healed, it sometimes took longer and sometimes it failed for reasons unknown.

That God did through him- Again, this phrasing might make us a little bit nervous. Jesus is God and God is one, so why would God do something through Him? We must remember that Peter is emphasizing Jesus' humility and obedience to His Father's will, in order to later emphasize Jesus' triumph over death, but there are many other things like this that puzzle us. For instance, why would Jesus pray to His Father, since Jesus is God (other than setting an example)? How could the Father turn away from Jesus on the cross? These questions fall under the discussion of theological terms like the Immanent Trinity vs. the Economic Trinity. When talking about the Economic Trinity, we are talking about the Trinity in terms of the economy of salvation (ie Father is creator, Son is redeemer, Spirit is sanctifier). When talking about the immanent Trinity, we are talking about Who God is at a fundamental level, His very being. As you can imagine, discussions get very complicated and we can never fully gaze into all aspects of the inner workings of the Godhead.

In your midst- This emphasizes that Jesus' ministry was a public one. It would not have done much good to continue healing people in private, because eventually, people needed to see these things and know that there was no earthly explanation. Whenever God visits His people, there are going to be reminders that He is wholly other. Later, people would not have the benefits of personally witnessing these works, wonders, and signs, but they would hear testimonies from those who had.

As you yourselves know- Jesus' works, wonders, and signs were well known by the people at this time. They had not forgotten about them, even after they had seen Jesus crucified. However, they were waiting for further confirmation about what these works, wonders, and signs meant.

23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

This Jesus- May seem like an insignificant two word clarification, but there are those who suggest that Jesus was never actually crucified. Some claim that it may have been a body double or that Jesus merely fainted from the pain, but never actually died. In the Qu'ran, it says that the crucifixion "was made to look like that to them." In Islam, Jesus is a prophet and Allah always vindicates his prophets in Islam. Additionally, the cross was seen to be a curse and therefore unbecoming of one of God's prophets.

Delivered up- This refers to Jesus' betrayal with the assistance of Judas Iscariot. Jesus was essentially treated like property, rather than a person, in that moment. He did not fight or draw the sword, although Peter did. He willingly said "I am He," when they were seeking to arrest Him. He became a prisoner, like a captive or POW Who was part of the surrendering army.

According to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God- We must always remember that God is all-knowing and knew everything that was going to happen to Jesus. Although there were many evil actions and people involved, God is able to harness anything for His purposes. There is nothing that escapes God's notice and in the end, we would find His plan to be incredibly detailed, specific, and good. This plan is for the eternal benefit of humanity.

You crucified and killed- A harsh Law proclamation. On Good Friday, we often sing "I crucified You." We may see crucified and killed as rather redundant, because people often assume that every person who was crucified died. Of course, the vast majority did, but Josephus records one who survived it. Jesus died very quickly in crucifixion terms, after only 6 hours. He was exhausted from being before the Sanhedrin the night before, as well as being flogged severely prior to His crucifixion. Other victims of crucifixion stayed on their crosses for days, which was why they broke their legs to speed up the process. Peter pins the blame on sinners, of whom we are a part.

By the hands of lawless men- Ironically, Pharisees, scribes, and religious leaders were supposed to be the best of the people. They held themselves to a higher standard of keeping the Law and yet, they participated in such wickedness. The Romans too prided themselves on Law and Order, being a republic governed by a Caesar and Senate. Yet, they crucified a completely innocent man.