

# Acts Chapter 2:24-26

<sup>24</sup> God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

**God raised him up-** "Him" refers to Jesus. We might wonder about the correct way to talk about the resurrection, because it involves the convoluted concepts of the Trinity. After Jesus' body was removed from the cross and laid in the tomb, how was it that He was raised to life again? As the Son of God, was Jesus responsible for raising Himself? Did the Father raise Him? Was the Spirit involved? Should we just say God raised Him? The answer is yes. Since Jesus is God, many variations of these statements can all be correct at the same time.

**Loosing the pangs of death-** In the Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT), this phrase "pangs of death" is rendered "cords of Sheol." Sheol is a Hebrew word that is associated with the grave and the place that souls go when a person dies. Sometimes, in the New Testament, it is translated Hades, since Hades or the underworld was a well-known Greek concept. This is not the same as hell. Hell is a place of eternal torment, while Sheol is a place where the souls of people wait for the judgment. We are told that the souls of those who die go to be with the Lord. Some think that the soul sleeps in this state and others think the soul is aware, but either way, the interim state will not be unpleasant. This is also not purgatory, since there is no purging or shining going on. In the "interim state," everything is already set in stone and cannot be changed.

The word "pangs" is often associated with the pain of giving birth, but it can also refer to the signs of an inevitable upcoming event, in this case death. The process of dying ("pangs of death") is often painful, but unlike giving birth, they result in something permanent. Yes, Jesus did really die and give up His Spirit, but He is also the only one to be able to overcome the inevitable effects of death and the grave by rising again. This means that the very nature of death and what comes after has been changed for Christians.

**Because it was not possible for him to be held by it-** "It" refers to "death" or "the cords of Sheol" like we have mentioned. This is where the two natures of Christ come into play. The Son of God took on human flesh so that He could die and be the sacrifice for sin. If Jesus were only true God and not true man, He could not die. Nevertheless, Jesus still retained His divine nature so that He could rise from the dead. Since death and the grave were counter to His divine nature, Jesus burst forth from the tomb. No mere man could do this, only the God-man.

<sup>25</sup> 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;

**For David says-** David is best known as the co-author of many Psalms, but his writings were not only praise, they were also prophetic at times. Although David did not technically hold the office of prophet, God did allow him to see certain things, since David was a man after God's own heart. In Chapter 1, Peter cites David's words about Judas and now, Peter cites David's words about Jesus.

**Concerning him-** The way that Psalm 16 is written, it sounds like David is talking only about himself, but as it turns out, David is actually writing about Jesus, his spiritual descendant. Although Jesus did not have Joseph's DNA, He was adopted by Joseph as an earthly father. Therefore, Jesus could claim lineage to David.

**I saw the Lord always before me-** If we see this as David talking about himself, it still fits, since God is omnipresent, but as we have said, this is talking about Jesus. Jesus, as the Son of God, begotten of the Father from eternity, has always seen God. Not only has Jesus always seen God, Jesus is God. Both are true at the same time.

**For He is at my right hand-** The idea of sitting at someone's right hand had great significance in these times, especially in the context of a king and his court. For servants of the king, the right hand place was seen as the favored place, the privileged place, and a place of authority or strength. This is where we get the phrase "right-hand man." These people often helped the king make crucial decisions and played a key role, which is why some of the disciples and their families wanted the privilege of sitting at Jesus' right hand. The left-hand man was seen as the next-best position in a king's court, which is why it was also desired by the disciples. However, the left hand was also sometimes seen as deceptive and evil, which is where we get the word "sinister" from. Over the years, many teachers have prevented their students from writing left-handed for this reason. In the Book of Judges, Ehud was able to slay the king of Moab because he was left-handed.

**That I may not be shaken-** "Shaken" refers not so much to a physical motion of being tossed back and forth, but more to a state of mind or spirit. When someone goes through trauma, we sometimes say that they are "shaken up," because their normal way of life and rhythm has been disturbed or agitated. It's easier to have our world rocked when we are on our own, but with God, we have an advocate. Since this is referring to Christ, we remember that Christ prayed to the Father constantly as He was carrying out His Will in saving us. Though He suffered, Jesus never lost sight of His purpose.

<sup>26</sup> therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope.

**Therefore my heart was glad-** Different cultures have different views on where the “seat” of emotions, will, and passions are on a human body. Today, we say that our brain is the seat of reason, wisdom, and decision-making. In addition, we say that our heart and our gut are the centers of emotion and feeling. Lastly, we would say that our loins are the center of passion and desire. In Scripture, the heart is the center of both emotions and decision-making. The gut (including intestines, kidneys, etc.) was seen as the center of passions, conscience, and the innermost core of a person. The brain was not appreciated as much as it is today, as evidenced by the Egyptian mummification of Pharaohs by first removing the brain.

**And my tongue rejoiced-** In Scripture, there is a very closely-linked association between rejoicing and singing. If you were happy and you knew it, you would sing. David was a very accomplished musician, so it makes sense that he would be saying this. David played the harp for Saul as a young man and many of the Psalms were originally intended to be set to music. Jesus, as a good Jewish man, would have sang the Psalms or known them by heart. Some speculate that Jesus occupied Himself on the cross by reciting Psalms. We have a pretty good idea that Psalm 22 was used.

**My flesh also will dwell in hope-** The word for “dwell” here is the same word as the word for tabernacle, except in verb form. In the Old Testament, the Tabernacle was a temporary, moveable structure that was also called the “Tent of Meeting.” Despite the fact that it was moveable, the Tabernacle was quite sturdy and setting it up meant you were staying for a while. Before settling, they would have made sure that the location was reliable for all the things they needed. In the same way, David writes about metaphorically “pitching a tent” in hope, because God has shown Himself to be reliably at his right hand.

In addition, when flesh is used, it is sometimes used as a stand in for body, but sometimes there is a negative association. We often hear the word “flesh” along with the word “sinful” and David would have been fully aware of his sinfulness. However, since this is talking about Jesus, it seems to be a synonym for body. In upcoming verses, we will see the importance of Christ’s physical body in the account of the resurrection.