

Acts Chapter 2:29-30

²⁹ "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

Brothers- Reminds us again that Peter is addressing a large group of people on the day of Pentecost. Among this group were devout men from every nation under heaven, but there would have been faithful women among this group as well. We know that Jesus had followers who were women and followers that continued to believe in Him after He ascended into heaven.

By using the word "brothers," Peter is reminding the crowd that he is one of them and trying to appeal to them as one of their own who now believes in Christ as Savior. Finding common ground with people is still a technique used in Gospel proclamation and preaching.

I may say to you with confidence- This appears to be part of a rhetorical strategy that Peter was using, as he was carried along by the Holy Spirit. Rhetoric is the art of being persuasive in speech or writing. One way to build up and convince people of larger statements of fact is by building up to it with smaller statements that no one could dispute. Once you get them to agree to smaller statements, the audience permits you to continue along your train of logic. In spiritual discussions, these logical arguments can be used in addition to the things that we can only receive by faith. Of course, in the end, you are not going to argue anyone into heaven, because belief is not an intellectual exercise. However, logic and reason may play a secondary role and assist us in our faith lives. For example, writer C.S. Lewis eventually became a Christian in part because of his experiences with logic. Although he was an ardent atheist before, he could not disprove God logically.

About the patriarch David- David was so highly revered that his name became synonymous with the Jewish people. We see this in the "star of David" becoming a symbol for them and the numerous references to David when talk of restoring the kingdom came up. David was so highly regarded that his name was put into a separate category along with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses as the patriarchs of Israel. The word patriarch is associated with fatherhood and also the dynasties of kings. With Abraham, the idea is that many people came from his line. With David, it was that many kings came from his line. David was the first king of his dynasty, which lasted for 422 years. It was the most prosperous time in his people's history.

That he both died- Despite slaying the giant Goliath and reigning in Jerusalem for 40 years, David was only human. He was a sinful, flawed human being, as evidenced by his terrible treatment of Uriah and Bathsheba. At the end of his days, David was frail and cold, needing a young woman in his bed to keep him warm. After passing the throne to his son Solomon, David rested with his fathers.

And was buried- Right after saying that David rested with his fathers, the text in 1 Kings 2 says that David was buried in "the city of David." This refers to Jerusalem, the city that David had conquered and seized from the Jebusites. Although it was not permitted for a regular individual to be buried within city limits, there was an exception for kings being buried in their capitol city and many kings after him followed suit. Jewish tradition required that a person be buried on the same day that they died. Following this, there would have been a period of national mourning. A standard length for this was 7 days, but for really important, prominent people, it seems to have been as much as 30 days. Jacob was mourned 7 days, while Moses and Aaron were mourned for 30 days. Other customs for mourning included tearing your garments, shaving your head, or putting ashes on your head. This was to make it as obvious as possible that you were mourning. Mourners remained with the bereaved throughout the week, offering prayers, readings, and memorial candles. Professional mourners would sing what were called dirges along with at least two flute players. Certain normal activities like grooming, studying, entertainment, and marital relations also stopped.

And his tomb is with us to this day- Although the location of David's tomb seems to have been well-known to everybody at this time, its location is now disputed. Although there is still a location that is billed as David's tomb, not everybody agrees. Medieval tradition says that David's tomb is on Mount Zion, on the Western hill. The story goes that a traveler to Jerusalem heard the location from a Rabbi and went to discover a tomb laid with silver and gold and marble pillars, containing the crown and scepters of David, Solomon, and other kings from that dynasty. In modern times, archaeology has narrowed it down to an 11 acre area in the old city of Jerusalem. In the book of Nehemiah, it references repairs being made to the city, including repairs made to the "King's garden" near the pool of Siloam and a point opposite the "tombs of David." Most tombs were family tombs, but an archaeologist named Raymond Weil discovered, in the area described, a tomb designed for one individual. It's possible this was the original tomb of King David.

³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,

Being therefore a prophet- This is another rhetorical device being used by Peter, as the Spirit inspired him. He is establishing David's credibility as someone who would be able to speak about the Messiah. Although kings were revered, even they had to bow to God's Word being spoken to them by the prophets. David himself was reprimanded by the prophet Nathan for committing adultery with Bathsheba. Elijah spoke of a great drought to King Ahab. Many other kings trembled when they heard the Word of the Lord. Kings like Hezekiah were told that they would die or that they would be overthrown, knowing that there was nothing they could do, because it was God's will. Although David was a king, he also acted as a mouthpiece of the Lord.

Knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him- Oaths are an interesting subject in the Old Testament. There is much that has been made about the difference between an oath, a vow, and a promise. God's people are told that they should not swear an oath, because by invoking God's name, they seem to be making him a liar when what they say doesn't come true. In the Catechism, this is all covered under the 2nd commandment. However, it is a different thing when God swears an oath, because God always keeps His oaths. In 2 Samuel 7:12-16, God swears an oath that will have a double fulfillment in Solomon and Jesus. This oath would have taken on new meaning after God took the life of David's first son with Bathsheba, because God still kept His promise.

That he would set one of his descendants on his throne- It's interesting to think about God's oath in light of after one of David's sons Absalom rebelled against him and tried to take his throne. Surely, David was hoping for a peaceful transition and not violent upheaval. He probably thought that Absalom was not worthy to sit on his throne. Yet, God chose to keep His oath through Solomon instead. Eventually, the Davidic dynasty fell, but the oath was also kept by Jesus, the Son of David, Who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.