

# ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

## NOTES 8

### ACTS 2:32–36

FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP BIBLE STUDY

As Peter continues his sermon to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost, he explains that Jesus, whose signs and wonders they had all observed, was killed and risen from the dead. Now he explains that the risen Jesus has ascended to the right hand of the Father and has been given authority to pour out the Holy Spirit on all who believe, having been exalted as Lord and Christ.

In verse 32 Peter states that “we all are witnesses” of the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead. The “we” Peter speaks of includes all His apostles who were witnessing of Him that day and possibly included at least some of those who had received the tongues of fire in the initial outpouring of Pentecost.

Before Jesus ascended he has said to His “apostles whom he had chosen” (Acts 1:2), “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

We also know Jesus appeared at least to 500 “brothers at one time” (1 Cor. 15:6), and quite likely some of them were among those waiting for the Holy Spirit in the upper room (Acts 1:13) before the Day of Pentecost. Further, during the days of waiting, the apostles selected a replacement for Judas from among those who were waiting. The criteria for a replacement were that he had to be “one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection” (Acts 1:21-23).

Acts 4:32-33 further identifies the apostles as those who had witnessed Jesus’ resurrection: “Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.”

Peter speaks boldly of the apostles’ witness of the resurrection again in Acts 5:30-32. The apostles had been arrested and imprisoned when the Saducees became jealous of the miracles they were doing in Jerusalem. An angel released them during the night, and when they were discovered teaching again in the temple, they were brought before the council where the high priest questioned them. Peter responded that they had to obey God rather than man and concluded, “The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

Their witness of the resurrection gave the apostles their authority to speak boldly about Jesus. They had first-hand knowledge that He

was not merely a charismatic man who was put to death, but He was the Son of God who had power over death and rose from the grave—not to die again, but to ascend to heaven. Their baptism with the Holy Spirit was the confirmation, the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to them that proved He was seated at the powerful right hand of God. After leaving them and going where they could not see Him, He confirmed His arrival and position with the Father by granting them a gift no human had ever had since Adam sinned: the literal presence of God indwelling those who believed.

The apostles had complete confidence that what they preached was true because they had received what Jesus promised they would receive: power from the Holy Spirit. This power gave them spiritual understanding and authority to preach and teach Jesus. They had the personal qualifications to state that Jesus rose from the dead because they had witnessed the risen Christ, and they had the indwelling Holy Spirit to teach them how to preach that what the Jews were seeing was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies God had given their fathers centuries earlier.

## RIGHT HAND OF GOD

Peter’s declaration that Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God is a powerful phrase that had deep roots in Old Testament symbolism. The Jews hearing this would understand the implications of this assertion because of their knowledge of God’s word from Moses onward.

Acts 2:33 is not the only place the New Testament declares Jesus sat at the right hand of God. Mark 16:19 also states this fact clearly. (The Gospel of Mark is thought to be Peter’s gospel scribed by Mark who acted as Peter’s amanuensis.) In this verse he writes, “So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.”

Again in Acts 5:30-32 we find not only Peter’s assertion that God had raised Jesus from the dead but also the declaration that “God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins,”

This passage begins to explain the significance of Jesus’ sitting at God’s right hand when Peter says this exaltation was for the purpose of giving “repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.” In other words, this exaltation of Jesus to the position of being at God’s right hand gave Him the authority to give both repentance and forgiveness to sinful people.

The words “right hand” in reference to God throughout the Old Testament always represented the power and authority of God. Exodus 15, for example, records the Song of Moses which he wrote

after the Children of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. Verse 6 says, "Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power, your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy."

In this song, Moses is celebrating the sovereign, unmatched power of God which destroys the overpowering enemy and is glorious. God's "right hand" is the symbol of His overarching, unstoppable power and His merciful deliverance of His people from their oppressive enemies.

David also wrote of God's right hand. In Psalm 98:1 he says, "Oh sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him."

In this psalm David describes God's "right hand" as being "holy"—part of God's "holy arm" that brings about salvation.

In the Old Testament, the figure of speech "God's right hand" always referred to His sovereign power and deliverance. Israel was dependent upon and trusted God's right hand to save them, deliver them, destroy their enemies, and protect them. This figure of speech represented the personal care God gave His people and the unavoidable, irresistible power of God which His enemies could not escape.

Now, in the New Testament, the apostles are associating the risen, ascended Lord Jesus with God's right hand. It is Jesus who is at God's right hand and who has the authority and power to give repentance to His people and to forgive their sins—to deliver His people from their ultimate bondage—sin—and from their ultimate enemy—death.

In Ephesians 1:18-21 Paul echoes this same declaration of Jesus' exaltation and authority as the executer of God's "right hand power": "...having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come."

Paul explains that Jesus' position at God's right hand places him "far above" all other power, authority, or rule. All spiritual powers are under His authority, and all human and other created positions are at His command and by His permission. The Lord Jesus has no rivals. Because He offered the perfect sacrifice for sin and conquered death, he has the full power and authority of God to rescue humanity from sin and death, and all creation is under His rule. No angels or demons or anything in all creation can claim rivalry with the Lord Jesus. There is no ongoing struggle between Christ and Satan. Satan is in rebellion, but the Lord Jesus is sovereign over him.

Hebrews 10:11-14 also refers to Jesus position at God's right hand. The writer points out that earthly levitical priests stand every day in their service, offering sacrifices repeatedly—but these can never take away sin. "But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for His feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

1 Corinthians 15:26 explains that the last enemy to be put under Jesus' feet is death. That stomping out of death is a certain promise; meanwhile, the Lord Jesus has absolute authority and power—the power of God's right hand—to rule and reign over all creation, to rescue His people from the bondage of sin, to forgive their sin, and to destroy their enemies which includes far more than difficult people. The enemies of God's people are spiritual powers, and Jesus has earned the right, by His death on the cross, to disarm spiritual authorities and to rescue His people from them (Col 2:14; Eph. 2:14).

## THE SON'S FOOTSTOOL

Peter quotes Psalm 110:1 in verses 34-35 and states that David was not talking about himself: "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'"

This psalm could not have meant that David was talking about himself. God never told David to sit at His right hand. Moreover, David was not calling himself "Lord".

Peter, however, was not interpreting this text "on his own". Jesus had used this same text during His ministry when He spoke with the Pharisees in Matthew 22:41-46: "Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, 'What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?' They said to him, 'The son of David.' He said to them, 'How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, "'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet"'? If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?' And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions."

Jesus Himself drew the Pharisees attention to David's Psalm about sitting on the right hand of God with his enemies under his footstool. Jesus' point was to cause the Pharisees to acknowledge, based on their own knowledge of Scripture, that the Christ, whom they knew would be the Son of David, was also more than a man. The Jews expected the Messiah, but they had no clear understanding that He would be God. In this passage Jesus deliberately points out that the person David refers to as "Lord" is more than a man—is actually God. He asks how this person can be David's "son" if David himself calls Him "Lord". The Pharisees, realizing this acknowledgment would lead them down a path that would shatter their paradigms, refuse to answer.

Jesus is making them face the facts they already know about Him, that he does miracles they know only God can do, that He explains Scripture and calls people to honor God and give up their pride in repentance and accept Him. They refuse, however, to acknowledge Him.

In Ephesians 1:22-23 Paul also says that God "put all things under [Jesus'] feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." Again the picture is one of sovereign rule. Jesus is in charge of everything that relates to His own body the church. Since the church is Christ's own body, all things, seen and unseen affect it. Jesus has been given all authority, His enemies are already defeated, either in fact or in promise. His foot suppresses all that opposes Him and His body the church.

Colossians 2:13-15 give identify some of those enemies. By His death on the cross, Jesus has cancelled the power of the law over His church, releasing us from its curse and condemnation. He has forgiven us all our trespasses which qualified us for eternal death. He nailed the law and its legal demands to the cross. He "disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."

God has put human sin under Jesus' feet. He has put the law with its legal curses and demands under His feet. Moreover, He has put evil powers under His feet; He has publicly humiliated them by His death and has broken their claim and power over humanity. He released humanity from bondage to evil and Satan, and He has claimed authority over all believers, transferring them from the domain of darkness to His kingdom (Col 1:13).

Paul again identifies some of the enemies which God has put under Jesus' feet in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28. He begins this passage by explaining that Jesus has been raised from the dead and is the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep in death. Death came by a man,

Paul say, and a man also brings humanity the resurrection. We all die in Adam, but all will be made alive in Christ.

Then Paul says an interesting thing. When the end comes, Jesus “delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ‘For God has put all things in subjection under his feet’” (1 Cor. 15:24-27).

Death itself is the last enemy to be subjected under Jesus’ feet, and Jesus reigns until He has put all His enemies under His feet. Interestingly, after all things have been subjected to the Lord Jesus, being stripped of their power over mankind, Jesus hands the kingdom over the Father, and “the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28).

Death also will be put under Jesus’ feet; God will restore eternity to mankind; the separation of body and spirit will cease.

Revelation 20:13-15 describes the time that death is finally put completely under Jesus’ feet. At the end of the millennium, the wicked dead are raised for judgment, and if their names are not found in the book of life, they will be thrown into the lake of fire, and “Death and Hades” are also thrown into the lake of fire. Death is destroyed, and Jesus will have reigned until all His enemies have been put under His feet.

## PETER’S ARGUMENT

In summary, as Peter is preaching Christ to the Jews in Jerusalem, he uses a particularly compelling argument for Jews who knew the Old Testament Scriptures. He appeals to their national hero, David, and to His Psalms which were part of every Israelite’s worship.

Prior to appealing to David, Peter recounted the events of the immediate past which everyone present had seen and heard surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus. Then he turns to the Psalms and uses the songs they all know and shows that David himself prophesied the coming Jesus, the Messiah who would be more than the human son of David.

He reminds them that David died and was buried, and he appeals to their common knowledge of the place of David’s tomb. Then Peter says David was a prophet who knew God had promised that a king descended from his own body would sit on David’s throne over Israel. Because he was a prophet, he “foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ.” Peter identifies the words of David’s prophecies as being not about himself but about his promised Heir. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit David prophesied that his descendant would not be abandoned to the grave to decay. He would rise from death.

Then Peter reminds them that Jesus did rise from the grave, and he says all the apostles there that day were witnesses of His resurrection. Then, he further argues that this resurrected Christ who was the promised Son of David has ascended to the right hand of God where He has the full power of God. The proof that He has ascended is that He has poured out the Holy Spirit because He received the authority from the Father to give the Spirit to His believers.

It was not David, Peter says, who ascended to heaven; rather, it was David who said that God said to David’s Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” Peter argues that the words they all knew, the words of David which had been part of their worship for generations, were words with which their own hero and national hope had written about Jesus—the man the nation had dis-

The Son of David, Peter explained, was the Son of God. It was God who came to earth, took humanity, and died, rose, and ascended back to the Father. All power and authority is His; He reigns over all things until all His enemies have been put under His footstool. David did not write about a merely human descendant; David wrote about the Son of God! The enigmatic Psalms which they had sung for years suddenly made sense: they were not sing mere rhapsodies written by an expressive musician; they had been singing prophecies of their Messiah—but they had largely missed their significance. Only after the Holy Spirit was poured out on the fledgling church in power did the reality of David’s Psalms make sense.

## MEDITATE

As you realize how specifically Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, ascension, and sovereign power were foretold by the Old Testament prophets and Psalms, ask yourself if the Jesus you know is the sovereign Lord of Lords who reigns over all creation, even over evil. Ask God to reveal the truth about Himself to you and to make His word come alive.

Ask God to show you what you need to know, to reveal the ways He wants you to change, and ask Him to make you willing to hold loosely all that you believe ad love. Ask Him to replace your deception with truth and to plant you deeply in reality.

The Lord Jesus is almighty God, and He is our King! He is the Son of David, and all God’s promises about Him are true and will be fulfilled.

He is Lord.

## STUDY

Peter continues his sermon to the Jews in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. He has told them that Jesus, whose signs and wonders they themselves had observed, was killed and has risen from the dead. He now explains that this risen Jesus has ascended to the Father and had been given authority pour out the Holy Spirit on all who believe. He exalts Jesus as Lord and Christ.

- 1. Peter declares in verse 32 that God raised Jesus from the dead, and then he emphasizes this fact by saying, “and of that we all are witnesses.” Who are those included in the word “we”, and how is Peter’s statement related to Jesus’ instructions to them before He ascended?**

Acts 1:7-8 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor 15:6 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 1:21-23 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 4:32-33 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 5:30-32 \_\_\_\_\_

- 2. In verse 33 Peter states that Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God. Where else does Scripture declare this fact, and what are its implications for Christ’s work of atonement?**

Mark 16:19 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 5:30-31 \_\_\_\_\_

Exodus 15:6 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 98:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 1:18-21 \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 10:11-14 \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Peter quotes Psalm 110:1 in verses 34-35. How do we know David was not referring to himself in this Psalm, and what enemies have or will become the Son’s “footstool”?**

Psalm 110:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 22:41-46 \_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 1:22-23 \_\_\_\_\_

Colossians 2:13-15 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Corinthians 15:20-28 \_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 20:13-15 \_\_\_\_\_

**4. In verse 36 Peter drives home his point: the Man they crucified is the Lord Jesus Christ. Summarize the arguments he used to develop and prove this point between verses 29 and 35.**

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## MEDITATE

Are you convinced that Jesus is the Messiah, the Lord and Ruler over all, having authority over life and death, good and evil? Is the Jesus you know a down payment on your salvation, or is He all you need? When you hear the words “Jesus is Lord”, do you understand that He is the sovereign God who is eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent? Ask Him to reveal Himself to you as He really is and to give you the confidence in Him to believe He is your sovereign God.

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“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” 1 Peter 2:24-25, NIV