



## Acts – Can I get a Witness? Wk. 32 Keeping Christ the Main Thing By Pastor Jody May 05/04/2023

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### Acts 10:23-48 ESV

#### Peter's Vision

The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. <sup>24</sup> And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. <sup>25</sup> When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. <sup>26</sup> But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man." <sup>27</sup> And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. <sup>28</sup> And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. <sup>29</sup> So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me."

<sup>30</sup> And Cornelius said, "Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing <sup>31</sup> and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. <sup>32</sup> Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' <sup>33</sup> So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

#### Gentiles Hear the Good News

<sup>34</sup> So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, <sup>35</sup> but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. <sup>36</sup> As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), <sup>37</sup> you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: <sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. <sup>39</sup> And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, <sup>40</sup> but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, <sup>41</sup> not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

#### The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles

<sup>44</sup> While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. <sup>45</sup> And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. <sup>46</sup> For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, <sup>47</sup> "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" <sup>48</sup> And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

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**[INTRODUCTION]**

This past Thursday I was invited to attend the National Day of Prayer Breakfast in Rome, where the guest speaker for the day was Lee Strobel. Many of you have heard that name as he wrote a very popular book back in 1998 called the *Case for Christ* wherein Mr. Strobel recounted his experiences as an Atheist (**what was he like**) that went searching for proof that Jesus was not real, or at least He was not God. At the end of his search, he concluded that not only was Jesus real but He was truly alive! When confronted with the facts of his investigation Mr. Strobel felt he had no other choice but to accept the Truth, pray for forgiveness, and pursue Jesus with everything he had. Since then, he has written several other books employing his methodology of *answer-searching* journalism.

Just to highlight what he found in his case for Christ, there are 4 things that every person should be made aware of.

- That Jesus really died on the Cross.
  - There has never been any recorded history, myth, or legend of anyone surviving crucifixion.
  - Even the Journal of American Medical Association published a study of the facts of the crucifixion and believed there was no way He could survive.
  - Even atheist scholars believed He died.
- Early eye-witness accounts of the resurrection were dated back to mere months after the resurrection.
  - There was no time to develop myths nor legends. Historically that takes generations.
  - The earliest creeds of Christianity record the resurrection.
  - <sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup> Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. <sup>8</sup> Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me - **1 Cor 15:3-8**.



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- That there is indeed an empty tomb.
  - Even the opponents of Christ agree to this.
  - None of the opponents wanted this.
- There are no fewer than 9 different resources on the account of Jesus' resurrection in and out of the NT.
  - In the Bible we have mentioned the numerous witness in all the gospels, and Acts = over 500.
  - Each different author in the NT scripture is a different eyewitness.
  - Historical researchers and historians outside the Bible.
  - As well as the Jewish Talmud.

All of this evidence points not just to a man named Jesus but yes indeed He was seen alive and kicking, and that makes Him who He said He was, the Son of God.

**This claim** is at the **center** of the **book of Acts**. Acts calls for a witness to the world and here is the **TRUTH** that the Apostles built their testimony on:

### Acts 2:32 ESV

<sup>32</sup>This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

This is what the **HS wants to highlight**, this truth is what the Spirit is waiting on for you and me to get out of our mouths, for without this fact being declared, that there is a **RISEN LORD**, people cannot be saved, things don't get better, and there is no eternal life to be had!

That got me thinking about some of the issues we are having in culture right now. There are a lot of forces on both the left and the right, that claim they want to change what they see in society for the better, but neither side seems to want to mention the name '**Jesus**' in their answer. There is no cry for a savior, there is no lament over sin, there is no need for His peace.

And this raises some problems for Christians, especially those here in the west, because we are carrying a lot of fear right now about losing a '**way**' of life, that is a way where our **culture respected our beliefs** even if they didn't want them. So, now we want to preserve the way we have lived for the last 50 years so we are spending a lot of energy on trying to figure out where do we go from here.



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**[3 CHALLENGES]**

**1<sup>st</sup> we spend a lot of time worrying** about the future instead of building one right now.

We just like everyone else are having less kids, and Christians are stepping more and more out of leadership positions in the community, in politics, in academia, and in legislative positions, we are **choosing not to fight**. But for those of us that love Christ we should want to see Him high and lifted up, and we all should want to hear His name again in the school board meetings, in our city councils, in our courts, and in our schools, but that won't happen if we take our families out of public life.

**2<sup>nd</sup> we spend a lot of energy** trying to **preserve** our comforts, instead of asking which ones can be sacrificed for Jesus.

We spend more time and resources procuring our retirement, our vacations, our toys, our homes, because one half of the world says that's what makes you happy and the other half says give it up for redistribution. Maybe the answer is to pursue a **joyous life for Christ**, not fretting over worldly treasures. All your wealth cannot make you happy, and the more you have the more you can lose, but putting wealth into play for the Kingdom releases you from worry about self.

**3<sup>rd</sup> then some spend a lot of effort following & fighting** for our favorite ideological champions instead of proclaiming right Christology.

While theological debates on all things will continue until Jesus' return, and that does have a place, perhaps we can spend less time reading books, listening to podcasts, and bad-mouthing people of other denominational preferences and focus more on sharing Jesus with our neighbor.

Our religious heroes don't have the answer and can't save you, but Jesus can.

Family today if one of those descriptions sticks to you, then you may have a **problem of fear of losing your way of life**. Let us pray about that today, let's cast off fear, and let us pursue Jesus together today for that's what is best for your soul AND the soul of your neighbor.



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**And if we don't FACE OUR FEARS, we are also contributing to more Ricky Bobbys in the world, and their versions of Jesus...**

Today we are going to see what Peter wants to focus in on and that is CHRIST. When he goes to share the good news with the Gentiles, he doesn't practice being political, he's not promising an answer to all their problems, he is not worried about being winsome, he gives them the **only thing** that **will save** them, the **TRUTH** about **Jesus**. You and I will do well to learn from his example for I believe it will give us some handles on the fear we have, while it will be the most helpful thing we can do for friends and family. So, Peter has 6 things he is going to tell Cornelius about Jesus today, we are going to talk on each one, and I believe they will be things that can help you for the rest of your life.

1. Jesus is **'LORD** 'of all.

**Gentiles Hear the Good News**

<sup>34</sup> So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, <sup>35</sup> but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

As we get started, we need to mention something that is very helpful. **God recognizes those that fear Him** or at least are trying to adhere to His statutes. It doesn't make them righteous, they are not saved yet, but God will honor those that honor Him. Cornelius and all his family are sitting there waiting for Peter to give them the Gospel, and they have done nothing to earn this, there is no good within them, but in Cornelius' calling he has been obedient to the draw of the Spirit. He has pursued God the best he can while still under the rule of this world. It's the sign of **humility**, it's the sign of someone not afraid to let this world know they don't have it all figured out. It's the sign of a person that is reaching out to the heavens the best way they can saying, "*God I don't know if you are there, or if you care, but if you are, do something.*" This is Cornelius, and that testimony is probably something that many of us in this room share.



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Before we go one more step this morning, if you do not know the Lord, let me just encourage you with one thing, **cry out to Him He is listening.** He honors those that **SEEK** Him, He shows grace to the humble.

**Jeremiah 29:13 ESV**

<sup>13</sup> You will seek me and find me, **when** you seek me with all your heart.

Seek Him today with all your heart and you will find Him.

Now Peter recognizes this and along with his latest vision he gets it, Jesus has torn down discrimination between his people and the rest of the world. So, Peter offers them what he has and looking back at Peter's first healing encounter as an Apostle in Acts 3:6, *all I have is Jesus and that's what I will give to you.*

<sup>36</sup> As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all),

Jesus is Lord of all, [κύριος (*kyrios*). n. masc. **lord, master, Lord.** *The noun conveys the idea of someone who is in a position of authority.*<sup>1</sup>] first up, all of your prior loyalties, all of your patriotic allegiances, all your ties to family traditions and loved ones, there is only one Lord, one authority, one person you need to **worry about pleasing.** Some people fear this but one of the **greatest freedoms a Christian gets** to enjoy is that they live for the **audience of one.** We are not here trying to figure out all the time how to make someone happy, I have one person I do that for, and He has different ideas than this world on what is best for people. I seek to understand His will on how to love others best. Jesus as Lord of all, is also helpful to remember when we seek to battle that fear that comes upon us when we get so worried about losing our comforts, our way of life.

**Matthew 6:24, 32-33 ESV**

<sup>24</sup> “No one can serve **two masters**, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

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<sup>1</sup> Lo, J. (2014). [Deity](#). D. Mangum, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, & R. Hurst (Eds.), *Lexham Theological Wordbook*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.



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<sup>32</sup> For the **Gentiles** seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. <sup>33</sup> But **seek** first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Jesus knows we have tendencies to rely on our money and our ability to make it, to find peace. But the desire of Jesus is to seek God first, in all things, and all these things will be added to you, that means **you will be cared for**. Friends have you started out with the simple fact that He is your Lord, let go of that fear.

2. Jesus is **empowered** to **defeat** the enemy.

<sup>37</sup> you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: <sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with **power**. He went about **doing good** and **healing** all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

Peter is like, **you know** Cornelius, you as a part of the Italian Cohort, you know what's been happening over the last 4 years. You have seen it, you heard the stories, you helped keep the peace in our towns, and whatever you thought about it, God used it to call you to seek Him. You heard the reports, you know you seen the sick healed, you heard about the dead brought back, and the demon possessed people, (a common occurrence back then) were set free. You know about the Sanhedrin and how they feared Jesus, you saw their sin in getting your boss Pilate to kill him, you witnessed a battle between the devil and Jesus Himself. This all speaks to Jesus' power over the enemies of God as John relates.

**1 John 3:8 ESV**

<sup>8</sup> Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was **to destroy the works of the devil**.

Right now, family some of us sit in here under the curse of sin and the devil and the schemes of Hell for there are things you can't kick, like a sin, sickness, and/or sorrow all because you were never taught that Jesus has the power to free you from the enemy. Would you believe that, *"He who is in you is greater than he*



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*who is in the world” (1 Jn 4:4). In Jesus’ name start fighting again for your faith, and believe that with Jesus, *all things are possible* (Mat. 19:16)!*

3. Jesus was put to **death** as a **curse** for us.

<sup>39</sup> And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to **death** by **hanging him on a tree**,

Crucifixion is the cruelest of deaths, where a man is lifted up on a cross whereby his death is meant to be a spectacle and a corporate deterrence. It is meant to display a sign of disgrace for the crime that was committed to deserve such a death. The Romans hang a man for treason, the Jews would put a man on a tree as a sign of blasphemy. The meaning is the one on a tree is made to bear the shame and guilt of sin to show he was cursed, and in Jewish custom, **under God’s wrath**.

**Deuteronomy 21:22-23 ESV**

<sup>22</sup> “And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, <sup>23</sup> his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God.

The way Peter states what happens is a declaration of the sin on those that hung Jesus. <sup>39</sup> And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to **death** by **hanging him on a tree**,

The apostles witnessed the righteousness of the Christ, and they witnessed the unjust death of the Christ, thus condemning those that hung the Christ. Everyone else could and should have been hung on that tree and no one could have ever said it was unjust. Jesus became the curse of God for sinners that deserved the treatment He got.

This is one of the biggest areas that the church is missing on today. It is not meant to let people know that 1<sup>st</sup> their problem is sin, 2<sup>nd</sup> their sin is a treason to God, 3<sup>rd</sup> we all deserve death, and 4<sup>th</sup> Jesus paid that penalty for His people. Instead of that today we have a weakened church telling people they are loved by Christ, and that He overlooks their treason, their rejection of holiness and righteousness, and that they don’t need His sacrifice. That’s not a Messiah, that’s not a Savior,





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that's a man-made Ricky Bobby Jesus all 8.6 lbs. of cuteness dependent on us to take care of Him. Listen Jesus is a King, and He is glorified, and on Him lies the title, *King of Kings and Lord of Lords* (Rev. 19:16) He doesn't need you, but you need Him, because if you don't have Him as King of your life you don't have Him at all!

If we take Jesus we take our condemnation for sin, we take that we owe a debt for it, and we thank Him for His eternal payment!

4. Jesus was **raised** from the **dead** by God.

<sup>40</sup> but God **raised him** on the **third day** and made him to appear, <sup>41</sup> not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as **witnesses**, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

Peter gets to his punch line finally as in **Acts 2:32. He is Risen and we have seen Him!** Here's what is happening in all of that one statement.

1<sup>st</sup> this proves that all other gods are false and powerless. For Cornelius if he had any allegiances to the old Roman gods those are gone now. None of them could raise the dead, and not only that all other gods that his government allowed to be worshipped by other people in their own lands would need to be considered false (**no more universal tolerance**). The resurrection is not a request to follow God it is a demand for our allegiance! This also calls us to speak out against those that put their faith in false idols, for allegiance is demanded of us as well.

2<sup>nd</sup> this proves that all the OT prophecies about the Jesus as the Christ were true and correct. It calls Cornelius to abandon and confront those he had known in the synagogue that taught him about God. The resurrection does that for all of us, it is such a strong working of God and His power and love you have to tell the people who you were once like why you are now different. And it demands that if you believe it, then if you really love someone, then you have to tell them.

3<sup>rd</sup> it validates all the OT law, every stitch of it, for Jesus to come back from the dead means He could not have broken any of it, not one letter, and according to



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His own sermon, He couldn't have even thought about breaking it, or He is still condemned.

4<sup>th</sup> lastly, if you don't accept this, then there's no point going any further, for you are still dead in your sins.

**1 Corinthians 15:14, 17-18 ESV**

<sup>14</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

<sup>17</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

<sup>18</sup> Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

As Lee Strobel pointed out earlier, the evidence has been given, the witnesses have been provided, what are you going to do with it? Will you live as if this has any bearing on your soul or just ignore this? I hope you accept this because the next truth is scary to hear.

5. Jesus will **judge** everyone.

<sup>42</sup> And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be **judge** of the **living** and the **dead**.

Peter is like I just got to tell your upfront because I have to, it's the job of an Apostle, which Paul agrees with.

**2 Corinthians 5:10 ESV**

<sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Jesus will judge all who have ever lived for their deeds. No one gets away with anything. Not even that, even upon his 2<sup>nd</sup> coming when people fail to bend a knee, He will bring them to their end.

**Revelation 19:11 ESV**

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he **judges** and **makes war**.



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Friends, the reality is there is no way around this fact, all will answer to Jesus. You cannot hide behind the faith of your parents, nor can you blame your actions on environment, upbringing, or the theories of CRT. It also assures the believer that for those that need justice, justice will be given, God will avenge His people.

**6. Jesus alone can forgive sin.**

**<sup>43</sup>To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”**

So, Peter has saved the best for last. With all that has come before, He is Lord and God of all, He has power over the enemy, He died as a curse for us, He was raised from the dead by God, He will judge over all people, while those are all truths and impactful, the last statement about Jesus bears the weight of the Gospel, He **FORGIVES SIN!**

As I said in the beginning you and I are suffering from a lot of fears about losing our way of life but let me tell you what scripture has to say about worry.

**Matthew 10:28 ESV**

**<sup>28</sup>And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. - Jesus**

Fear, that is to respect, take it as Truth, what God has declared to you today, for it will all come about. But there is more, and an older Peter here, years later, gives the same truth about Jesus with some Grace.

**2 Peter 3:9 ESV**

**<sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.**

By the time of his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter Peter has seen a lot, he has seen a lot of people saved by God's grace, by God's election alone. You know, Peter in his first sermon at Pentecost condemns his country-men about their sin until they cry out for him to



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tell them what to do. His next sermon a short time later then builds on it and calls for their repentance before they ask and both sermons are followed up with public baptism, a sign of that repentance. Well after sharing the truths about Jesus, not even in a sermon context, watch what happens, watch what the resurrected Jesus can do.

<sup>44</sup> While Peter was **still saying** these things, the **Holy Spirit fell** on all who heard the word. <sup>45</sup> And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. <sup>46</sup> For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, <sup>47</sup> “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” <sup>48</sup> And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

The Gentiles didn't cry out, they didn't need to be told what to do as in repent, they were saved by the Grace of God in the blink of an eye! Jesus claimed them as His own, He forgave them, and demonstrated to them He loved them, sent them the Spirit, didn't withhold that gift, and those who were once not a people were now a people!

**Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV**

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

And Peter, all he can do is just turn around it almost seems jokingly, and asks can anyone withhold water for Baptism now? Then, as a sign of his office he commands them to be baptized of which I believe they were happy to oblige.

**[CHALLENGE]**

- **Seek God with all your heart.** (The Lord loves a humble person, as James 1:5 says pray for Wisdom and it shall be given to you!)
- **Seek to tell others about Jesus.** (First things is first and don't hold back telling others the truth about Him!)



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- **Seek to be Baptized.** (Be obedient to the command of Jesus and the Apostles, and display your loyalty to Him.)
- **Seek heavenly treasures instead of earthly ones.** (Put up treasures where neither moth nor rust can destroy and we do that by obedience to share Jesus with others)
- **Seek to learn more Christology in your pursuits of Theology.** (The best things I have ever learned in seminary is to learn more about how Jesus has saved me)

Let me leave you with this admonition from our Lord Himself.

**Matthew 7:7-8 ESV**

<sup>7</sup>“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup>For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

**[PRAYER]**

**[COMMUNION]**

**[BENEDICTION]**

Go in the name of the Father, that has given His one and only begotten Son that whoever would believe in Him would have eternal life.

Go in the name of the Son, that gave His life as a ransom for many.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that rewards us with faith when we seek Him diligently, and empowers our testimony when we make it about Jesus.