

Lesson Sixty-six

**PETER'S TESTIMONY ABOUT JESUS
OF NAZARETH (Concluded)**

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:22-36, 10:34-43.

Scriptures to Memorize: "This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses. Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear. For David ascended not into the heavens: but he sayeth himself, the Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet. Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2:32-36).

1. Q. Where especially, in the New Testament writings, do we find Peter's testimony respecting Jesus of Nazareth?

A. We find Peter's testimony respecting Jesus of Nazareth, especially in the first Gospel sermon addressed to Jews, and in the first Gospel sermon addressed to Gentiles; both of which are recorded by Luke in the book of Acts.

2. Q. What was the first Gospel sermon addressed to Jews?

A. It was the sermon delivered by the Apostle Peter, to a great multitude of Jews, in Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, A.D. 30.

(1) This sermon is recorded by Luke, in Acts 2:14-40. (2) It was not only the first Gospel sermon ever addressed to Jews—it was the first Gospel sermon ever preached to men, and it resulted in the conversion of some three thousand souls (Acts 2:37-42). (3) Moreover, it was not Peter's sermon, literally speaking, except in the sense that Peter was the human instrumentality through whom it was delivered. It was, rather, a sermon of the Holy Spirit, delivered through the Apostle Peter; for, as the scriptures

expressly assert, all the Apostles were "filled with the Holy Spirit" on that memorable occasion, and "spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4). Cf. the words of Jesus in John 15:26, 27, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, *he shall bear witness of me; and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.*" The witness of the Apostles is, therefore, the witness of the Holy Spirit.

3. Q. In what form did the Apostle Peter present the essential facts about Jesus, in the first Gospel sermon addressed to Jews?

A. In the following form: 1. that Jesus lived; 2. that Jesus died; 3. that God raised Him from the dead; 4. that God made Him both Lord and Christ.

(1) *That Jesus lived.* Acts 2:22—"Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know." (2) *That Jesus died.* Acts 2:23—"him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay." (3) *That God raised Him from the dead.* Acts 2:24—"whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death" (*i. e.*, the bonds which hold the victim of death in confinement until loosed); "because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (*i. e.*, literally impossible that such a being as He, the Son of the living God, should have been confined permanently in the grave). (4) *That God made Him both Lord and Christ.* Acts 2:33—"Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted," etc. Acts 2:36—"Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." That is, after raising Him from the dead, God made Him both Lord and Christ.

4. Q. What is the signification of the titles "Lord" and "Christ," ascribed to Jesus in this first Gospel sermon?

A. This: The title "Lord" is ascribed to Him by virtue of His elevation to God's throne, which is The Throne of the universe; the title "Christ" is ascribed to Him by virtue of His elevation to David's throne, which is now the throne of the Kingdom of Heaven.

(1) As Lord, He is the Sovereign of the universe, of all created things. As Christ (*i.e.*, The Anointed One), He is Absolute Monarch of the Kingdom of Heaven. (2) God "made Him Lord by causing Him to sit on God's throne, to rule over angels and men; and He made Him Christ by causing Him to sit on the throne of David according to the promise. It was God's throne, because it was the throne of universal dominion; and it was David's throne, because it was the lineal descent from David which made Jesus the rightful king. From this conclusion the Jewish hearers of Peter learned, that, contrary to their previous conception, the promised Christ was to sit, not on an earthly throne, however glorious, but on the throne of the universe" (McGarvey, *Commentary on Acts*, p. 36). (3) Further, it is manifest that the One whom we know as Jesus, came into these sovereign offices, titles, powers and prerogatives, when God raised Him from the dead. Acts 2:32, 33—"This Jesus did God raise up . . . being therefore by the right hand of God exalted," etc. Cf. Eph. 1:19-23, "what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (4) Hav-

ing been raised from the dead, exalted to the right hand of the Father, and been crowned King of kings and Lord of lords in heaven (1 Tim. 6:15); He was now for the first time proclaimed Lord and Christ upon the earth, and sinners were called upon to yield themselves in loving obedience to His will (Acts 2:37-42). It will thus be noted that the climax of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, was reached in his proclamation of the resurrection, exaltation and sovereignty of Jesus, The Anointed One of God. "Never did mortal lips announce in so brief a space so many facts of import so terrific to the hearers. We might challenge the world to find a parallel to it in the speeches of her orators, or the songs of her poets. There is not such a thunderbolt in all the burdens of the prophets of Israel, or among the voices which echo through the Apocalypse. It is the first public announcement to the world of a risen and glorified Redeemer" (McGarvey, *ibid.*, p. 30).

5. Q. What was the purport of this first Gospel sermon addressed to the Jews?

A. It was essentially a challenge to the whole Jewish nation to either produce the body of Jesus which had been buried in Joseph's tomb, or, failing to do so, to admit the fact of His resurrection from the dead.

Acts 2:22, 23. Note the Apostles' direct mode of address, using the second person: "a man approved of God *unto you . . . even as ye yourselves know,*" etc. That is, an actual Person whom the people, to whom these words were addressed, knew personally; the Teacher to whom many of them had listened; the Miracle-Worker who had wrought many works and wonders and signs which they had seen with their own eyes. No doubt the great majority of that vast assembly had been present at, and had participated in, the Crucifixion tragedy. Cf. v. 23—"ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay,"—an indictment of the whole nation, by the way. Yet those people now had the evidence of the *empty tomb* before their eyes. They knew

that the body of Jesus had been taken down from the Cross, anointed for burial, and interred in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea: *and now that tomb was empty!* How was its emptiness to be accounted for? What was there for honest men and women to do, but to accept as a fact the express declaration of the Apostle that *God had raised Him from the dead!* We are safe in saying that, could the enemies of Jesus have produced His body on that occasion or accounted for its disappearance from the tomb, the Christian religion would never have been born! So, Peter's challenge to the Jewish nation on that first Pentecost of the Christian era has become a challenge to the whole world, to the skeptics and unbelievers and materialists of all ages—a challenge before which infidelity remains utterly silent even to this day!

6. Q. What was the first Gospel sermon addressed to Gentiles?

A. It was the sermon delivered by the Apostle Peter, to Cornelius and his household, in Caesarea, some ten years after Pentecost.

(1) This sermon is recorded by Luke, in Acts 10:33-43.

(2) Note that the Apostle, on this occasion, also, was guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:19-20, 11:12-18, 15:7-11).

7. Q. In what form did the Apostle Peter present the essential facts about Jesus, in this first sermon addressed to Gentiles?

A. In the following form: 1. that Jesus lived; 2. that Jesus died; 3. that God raised Him from the dead; 4. that remission of sins is granted through His name to every true believer in Him.

(1) *That Jesus lived.* Acts 10:38, 39—"Even Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem." (2) *That Jesus died.* Acts 10:39—"whom also they slew, hanging

him on a tree." (3) *That God raised Him from the dead.* Acts 10:40, 41—"Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead." (4) *That remission of sins is granted through His name to every true believer in Him.* Acts 10:42, 43—"And he charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he who was ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead. To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins." It will be noted that the content of this message was substantially the same as that of the sermon delivered on Pentecost.

8. Q. What does Peter himself say with regard to the trustworthiness of his own testimony?

A. He emphatically declares that his testimony is that of an eyewitness, and therefore trustworthy.

Acts 2:32—"This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses." Acts 10:39—"And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem." ("We" and "us" in these scriptures allude, of course, to the Apostles). Acts 10:40, 41, 42—"Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead" (cf. Luke 24:36-43): "and he charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he who was ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead." Cf. 2 Pet. 1:16—"For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but *we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*" How could language be more emphatic?

9. Q. For what is the Apostle Peter especially remembered?

A. The Apostle Peter is especially remembered for hav-

ing been the first person to voice the Christian Confession of Faith. See Matt. 16:16.

(Is there any Scripture evidence that Jesus conferred special authority—primacy over the Apostolic College—in his words addressed to the Apostle, in Matt. 16:16-19? None whatever. The same authority was bestowed on the entire apostolic group, according to John 20:19-23. A key is for the opening of a door; hence, the “keys of the kingdom” are the terms of admission into the New Covenant, of naturalization in the Kingdom of Heaven, of membership in the Body of Christ. The passage in Matthew means simply that the Lord granted to Peter the special privilege of “opening the door of the church,” and this Peter did on Pentecost to the Jews, and in the case of Cornelius and house later to the Gentiles. (See Acts 2:22-42, 10:34-48.) For a full discussion of this matter, see my Special Study “On the Primacy of Peter,” at the end of Volume II of my Survey Course in Christian Doctrine.

REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON SIXTY-SIX

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2. What was the first Gospel sermon addressed to Jews?
3. In what form did the Apostle Peter present the essential facts about Jesus, in the first Gospel sermon addressed to Jews?
4. What is the signification of the titles “Lord” and “Christ,” ascribed to Jesus in this first Gospel sermon?
5. What was the purport of this first Gospel sermon addressed to the Jews?
6. What was the first Gospel sermon addressed to Gentiles?
7. In what form did the Apostle Peter present the essen-

tial facts about Jesus, in this first sermon addressed to Gentiles?

8. What does Peter himself say with regard to the trustworthiness of his own testimony?
9. For what is the Apostle Peter especially remembered?