

Forgiveness For The Greatest Sinners **Acts 2:22-40 (February 9, 2025)**



In the last 100 years which nation was the most evil?

That is not an easy answer.

Some might say – Nazi Germany. Responsible for a world war and the Holocaust.

Others would say – no it has to be Imperial Japan. Launching brutal wars against innocent nations simply to take their resources. Add in their treatment of women in China and Korea – as well as prisoners of war – their actions were atrocious.

What about Russia? Soviet Russia and Putin's Russia. Stalin had 20,000,000 of his own people killed. They terrified and destroyed Eastern Europe. Not to mention Ukraine today.

Or the Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot – Or China under Mao – Or North Korea under the Kim's – Or any of the Middle East or African dictators.

Truth is no nation ever comes out smelling of roses.

But, when a nation has committed unadulterated evil – and later been freed of the voice of propaganda and nationalism – there is often collective guilt.

Today, many in Germany and Japan are still horrified and feel guilt over World War II even though they weren't even born then and their nations today are nothing like those regimes.

So, what if you lived through those times?

What if you simply failed to oppose Nazi evil? You kept your head down and mouth shut while atrocities happened.

Is there forgiveness for those who have committed crimes like that?

Yes there is.

But, what if you bought into the propaganda and joined the Hitler Youth and betrayed neighbour Jews to the gas chamber and volunteered to invade Poland?

Is there forgiveness for such crimes?

Yes there is.

I can say that because this morning we are going to see that there is forgiveness available even for those who committed **the** most abominable and morally evil crime in all of history.

Our passage tells us:



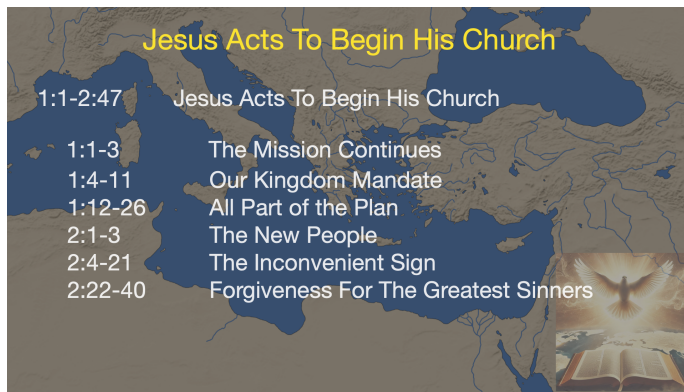
There is no sin the blood of Jesus cannot wash away.

We are in the book of Acts and we have seen that its message for us is:



We must strive to see His kingdom come, through the empowering of His Spirit, by witnessing to the nations, until He comes again.

But what is the message of hope for the nations? There is:



2:22-40 Forgiveness For The Greatest Sinners

My understanding is that the nation that committed the greatest sin in history is not any of those I just listed nor any of those further back in history that might come to mind like the Mongol Hordes or the Assyrian Barbarians.

That dubious record goes to the nation of Israel in the days of Jesus.

The chosen people of God committed **the** greatest atrocity possible because **they crucified the Son of God.**

But here is the good news – the blood of Jesus can atone **even** for sin this reprehensible.

In our passage, Peter begins by making it clear:



Israel was a corrupt generation who were guilty.

Acts 2:22:

Fellow Israelites, listen to these words.

Fellow Israelites – **not** You wicked Jews.

Peter is about to make the case that those standing before Him are guilty – complicit in the murder of the Son of God.

- Verse 23 – **you** used lawless people to nail Him to a cross.

- Verse 36 – this Jesus whom **you** crucified.
- Verse 40 – **you** are a corrupt generation.

But that raises a question. In what way were those particular Jews standing before Peter responsible for Jesus' death?

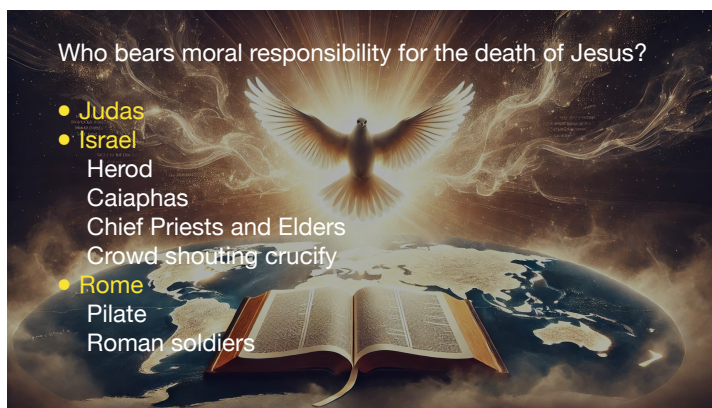
The Hellenistic Jews – weren't even in the land.

The Hebraic Jews – it is probable that none of those there at Pentecost were directly involved in His death.

They didn't betray Him or nail Him to the cross.

So, why does Peter say – **you** killed Him?

The question: **Who bears moral responsibility for the death of Jesus?** Is a complex one. There is a number of answers – all valid:



Judas betrayed Him.

Israel was complicit. Herod, Caiaphas the chief priest, the Priests and Elders, the crowd who yelled – crucify him.

Rome was complicit. Pilate gave the order and washed his hands. Roman soldiers actually nailed Him to the cross.

It is true that the Jews standing there did not bear responsibility in the same way as Judas, Herod or Pilate, or the Jewish leaders or even those who nailed Him to the tree.

Perhaps some shouted crucify Him – but not all.

However, there is a sense in which they **do** bear responsibility and guilt – as Israelites.

When a nation sins – its citizens **do** bear some collective guilt.

The leaders of Israel acted for the nation.

Maybe the majority of those there at Pentecost weren't in the crowd chanting crucify Him – but if they had been there – almost certainly they would have. They were in tacit agreement with the actions of the leaders.

And it was the citizens of Israel who had refused to acknowledge Jesus as King and had failed to oppose the evil intentions of their leaders.

The fact that they were part of Israel meant they were guilty of the actions of the nation in sending Him to the cross.

Now – crucially these very verses have a dark history. Some have used them to justify anti-Semitism. Jews killed Jesus – Jews are evil – we should persecute and even kill Jews.

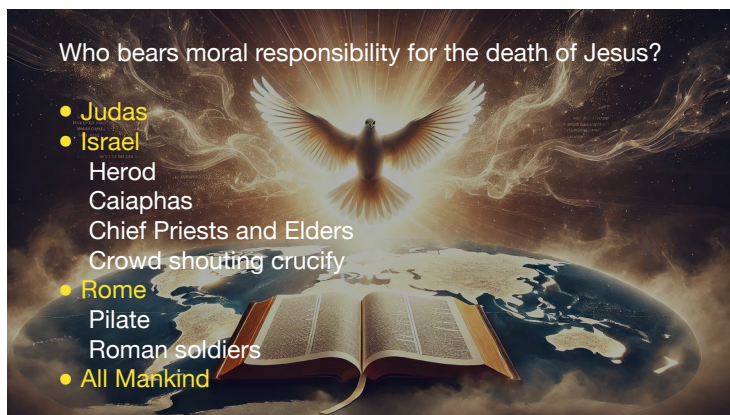
Luther made this error. Hitler used this error.

No. You might as well throw in all Italians because Rome was to blame.

I can't tell you how wrong this understanding of this passage is.

You want to point a finger – then we also need to look in the mirror.

Is there a sense in which we are all guilty of crucifying Jesus?



Absolutely.

We are not Jews or Romans and Jesus died 2000 years ago and not one of us was there – **but** – we are members of the race of Adam who refused to acknowledge Him as King and nailed Him to the cross.

And our sin sent Him to the cross.

Romans 5:8 says:

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

So, we **do** bear some collective responsibility for the death of Jesus.

In relation to the crucifixion – there are levels of guilt – Judas, Pilate, the Jewish leaders, the soldiers, the nation – all of us.

But it doesn't matter – without forgiveness I might as well be Judas, Pilate or the one hammering the nails.

I am personally a sinner and I am a member of the race of sinners who crucified Him.

That is why Peter identifies with them. **Fellow Israelites.**

Peter knows he isn't guiltless. He may not have betrayed Jesus or nailed Him to the cross – but he denied Jesus three times. He didn't speak up for Him. He is a part of the nation of Israel. He is part of Adam's fallen race.

I doubt many there were feeling any guilt about Jesus before Peter spoke.

Jesus had died nearly 50 days ago.

They probably viewed Jesus as a flash in the pan. The nation got worked up – maybe He is Messiah – maybe not – then they decided – no He isn't.

But:

I didn't betray Jesus.

I didn't nail Him to the cross.

I didn't kill Him.

Look, maybe some of the leaders of our nation pushed things to the cross – but let's be clear – I wasn't directly involved.

But I am glad Rome took care of the Jesus problem.

In verses 32-36 Peter is going to show – as a nation – they had rejected their Messiah and crucified Him – and each one there is a sinner who shares in the guilt of the worst crime imaginable.

What were they guilty of? Two things:



First – Rejecting God’s attestation of Messiah 22-35

God did everything possible to identify Jesus as the Messiah.

He sent glowing, flashing neon signs – **this One is Messiah** – and they rejected them.



First – Through His miraculous life.

Verse 22:

This Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through him, just as you yourselves know.

The previous verse – verse 21 said – **everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**

What name? **Jesus of Nazareth.**

Peter starts by saying that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed a **man**. You know His family – His mother His brothers.

He was born and lived among you. He ate and drank and bled and died.

He was fully man.

But, He was **attested** by God as **more** than a man – He was attested as the Messiah.

From the moment He was born miracles, wonders and signs declared very loudly – **This One is the Messiah.**

This is important.

Miracles were not an everyday occurrence. Why did God do them?

Scripturally there are two reasons and often they are related.

1. **As a sign.** We saw that last week with the gift of tongues.
2. **As an attestation.** This is actually the more common reason in Scripture.

God used miracles to attest **two groups**.

- a. *God Himself* – Think of the burning bush.
- b. *His messengers* – Think of His Prophets and Apostles.

This is why when you hear Christians say God has enabled them to work miracles – healing bad backs or migraines – even something like praying in an unknown prayer language – you have to ask – what about you needs God to attest to how special you are?

But Jesus **was** special – He **was** the Messiah. His life was attested by the greatest collection of miracles in history.

Miracles – *dunamis* – power – mighty works – like healing and raising the dead.

He did the miracles of Messiah – healing the blind and lame – raising the dead.

Crowds flocked to Him and He healed every last one.

Thousands – more like tens of thousands – saw His miracles.

There was no shortage of the most incredible undeniable evidence that Jesus is the Messiah.

If you add up the miracles in the Gospels – Jesus did at least 38 verifiable miracles.

These were not Benny Hinn healing bad backs or headache miracles. He healed the blind, raised the dead, fed the 5000 and walked on water.

These are miracles that no one can doubt bears the stamp of the divine.

Nor are these miracles anecdotal. I heard a whisper from a friend's friend of a miracle done in some remote Zambian tribe.

These were done publicly before huge crowds – over and over again.

In that very crowd there at Pentecost – almost certainly there would have been many who had seen a miracle of Jesus firsthand, and every last one would have heard of the miracles of Jesus or known someone who saw a miracle.

And they knew they were real miracles.

No one stepped forward to say – hold on – that walking on water – I checked it out – there was a hidden sandbar.

That healing the lame – I hung around and what do you know – it was the just Thaddeus pretending to be healed.

Everyone there had to acknowledge – these were genuine, divine, authenticating miracles.

The issue was **not** proof – it **was** faith.

The miracles of Jesus did not lead to faith. They pointed to the One we should have faith in.

Wonders – the word for amazing events – like the angels declaring the birth of Jesus or God speaking from heaven.

At His baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration the very heavens parted and God Himself said – **this is My beloved Son.**

Signs – fulfilments of prophecy and types.

He was born of the house of David. He fulfilled so many explicit prophecies and types.

These are all glaring, bright neon signs – **this One is the Messiah.**

It is not that Jesus lived in anonymity and they just missed the signs and wonders.

Time and again we read that all Israel heard about Jesus, all went out to see Him, all were amazed by Him.

Let me ask you a question – what more could God have done to say – this One – Jesus of Nazareth – is My Son – Your King – the Messiah?

It is hard to imagine what else could attest to this truth.

Maybe constantly surrounded by genuflecting angels crying – Blessed be the King.

I have often wondered – if I lived in the first century and saw these miracles – would I have had faith that Jesus is the Messiah?

If I saw a lame man walk with my own eyes, would I fall on my knees?

I would like to think so – but truth is – I don't think so.

When you are so locked into an expectation – even spectacular miracles won't convince you otherwise.

If I looked at Jesus – poor, no army – He does not look like Messiah – He is not setting up a national kingdom – surrounded by ordinary people and sinners – it doesn't matter that He raises the dead – He can't be Messiah.

Satan or some other deception must be behind these miracles.

But now Peter is saying – it's been nearly 50 days – lets step back and consider the evidence. **He did the miracles of Messiah.**

When John the Baptist was struggling, He sent disciples to Jesus.

Matthew 11:3–6:

They asked him, "Are you the one who is to come" ...Jesus replied to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised."

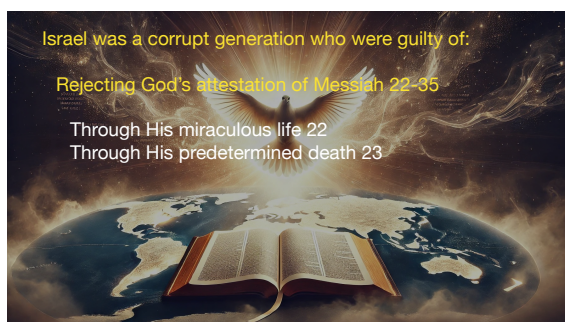
Jesus says – read your Bible – try Isaiah 35 and 61 – I am doing the very miracles prophesied that Messiah would do.

It doesn't matter that Jesus isn't the kind of Messiah they were hoping for – He has the credentials, the undeniable proof.

You can't just ignore them.

These very Jews had either seen or known of these attesting miracles – they just ignore them – and they rejected Him.

Second: He was attested:



Through His predetermined death 23

Acts 2:23:

Though he was delivered up according to God's determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail him to a cross and kill him.

OK Peter. Maybe the miracles do point to Jesus as Messiah – but if He was – how could God ever have allowed Him to die?

Because His death was always the plan and this plan was revealed in Scripture – so when He died in the way Scripture said – you should have said – **Messiah!**

Notice Peter does not say – Jesus was delivered up because of a colossal mistake, a gross error of judgment, a mistaken identity.

No – it was the predetermined plan of God.

Read Psalm 22 or Isaiah 53.

Isaiah 53 description is so accurate – many thought it had to be written after the death of Jesus – until we found the Dead Sea Scrolls dating from before the days of Jesus.

The cross has always stood at the centre of world history.

It is not that the Jews rejected Jesus as King so God pivoted to plan B – the cross.

Judas was always going to betray Jesus.

The Jews were always going to call for His death.

The Romans were always going to succumb and nail Him to the cross.

The Old Testament Scriptures said this must happen.

The Passover and the whole sacrificial system pointed to it.

Jesus' death screamed – Messiah!

And in case they missed the point – His cross bore the sign – This is the King of the Jews and the sky became dark for six hours.

What more do you want!

You can't escape the truth – You killed the Messiah.

But wait there is more.

Third: He was attested:



Through His confirming resurrection 24-32

In Scripture – it is the resurrection that is seen as **the** defining proof that Jesus is the Messiah.

You will find this as the main proof throughout Acts. You keep reading – **God raised Him up.**

2:24 – God raised Him up.

2:32 – God has raised this Jesus.

3:26 – God raised up His servant.

4:10 – God raised from the dead.

And so on throughout this book.

Romans 1:2–4:

Jesus Christ our Lord ... was a descendant of David ... and was appointed to be the powerful Son of God ... **by the resurrection of the dead.**

The resurrection of Jesus does two things.

It proves that He has the power to overcome death. So, because we are united with Him – we too will rise from the dead.

But, it *also* is **the** defining proof that He is the Messiah – the Son of God.

If you have to find one miracle, one sign, one proof that Jesus is the Messiah – look to the resurrection.

In verses 24-32 Peter makes his argument.

Jesus died and death could not hold Him. You know this is true because we and many of you saw Jesus risen from the dead.

And the Scriptures prophesied that when you see the One death could not hold – you know that One is the Messiah.

Acts 2:24:

God raised him up, ending the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by death.

Death has pains. The word here is the one used of labour pains.

There are pains as you die – and these pains result in death – the grave.

But Peter chose the word for labour pains because those pains result in life – a new child.

The pains that led to Jesus' death – did not lead to Him staying dead – it led to life.

Jesus **had** to rise – because death could **not** hold Him. How awesome is that!

The image is death is trying to hold Him – but it is like a baby trying to restrain a grown man from leaving.

Or as a woman in labour can't hold that baby back – it is coming out – death can't hold Messiah back – He **has** to come out of the grave.

Why could death not hold Him? Death only has the power to hold someone because of sin.

The Messiah is sinless so it is not possible for death to hold him.

We all sin – so we all die.

But – there were hints that One will come with power over death – Prophets could raise the dead – Jesus raised Lazarus. But they died again.

But now this One came – He died on that cross – was placed in that tomb – and death tried to ensnare Him – but it was **impossible**.

He is like a cork the waters try to hold down – He is coming up. He rose to never die again.

The most powerful enemy was shrugged off like brushing aside a spider web.

Now Peter makes his point – there is only **one person** this can point to – because Scripture told us that when we saw this happen we know – **that One is Messiah**.

Acts 2:25–31:

For David says of him: **I saw the Lord ever before me; because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue**

rejoices. Moreover, my flesh will rest in hope, because you will not abandon me in Hades or allow your holy one to see decay. You have revealed the paths of life to me; you will fill me with gladness in your presence. Brothers and sisters, I can confidently speak to you about the patriarch David: He is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn an oath to him to seat one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was to come, he spoke concerning the resurrection of the Messiah: **He was not abandoned in Hades, and his flesh did not experience decay.**

Peter quotes Psalm 16.

It is a Psalm where David talks about the beauty of a life lived in the care of God.

But clearly this Psalm goes beyond David.

The key verse is this one – **You will not abandon me in Hades or allow your holy one to see decay.**

Who is this One?

Peter says – well it can't be David.

His tomb is right here in Jerusalem and his decayed body is still inside.

Today you can go to Jerusalem and you can visit the supposed site of the tomb of David – I have – and two for one – they will tell you that above it is the Upper Room where Jesus had the last Supper. You can get souvenirs and stickers.

Most likely it is not actually David's tomb – the Muslims and Crusaders messed things up and no one is sure where it is.

But in Peter's day – everyone knew exactly where it was.

The point is – his tomb was right there – his body was still in it.

So, whoever David was speaking of it couldn't be himself.

And David **knew** it wasn't him.

God had told David that one of His descendants would sit on his throne. But the key thing is that this descendant will rule on the throne **forever**.

2 Samuel 7:16:

Your throne will be established **forever**.

A forever throne. How does that happen?

Maybe his son, grandson, great-grandson on forever will sit on the throne.

But, God said that would only happen if each descendant perfectly kept the covenant.

Psalm 132:11–12:

The LORD swore an oath to David, a promise he will not abandon: “I will set one of your offspring on your throne. *If your sons keep my covenant ... their sons will also sit on your throne forever.*”

If they perfectly keep My covenant – no sin.

But even in 2 Samuel 7 itself – God made it clear David’s human sons will sin.

2 Samuel 7:14:

When he does wrong, I will discipline him.

OK – so David’s human sons will sin. Solomon messed up – his sons messed up. David knew they would not be the ones on the forever throne.

How is this promise fulfilled? You need a **forever King**?

David prophetically saw that a descendant would come – who would **not** sin – who would keep the covenant perfectly – which meant death could not hold Him – and He would rise from the dead **to live and rule forever**.

One who will not be abandoned in Hades and His flesh won’t decay.

Peter says – when we see that One we can say – He is Messiah.

Oh wait we **have** seen that One. **Jesus!**

Verse 32:

God has raised this Jesus; we are all witnesses of this.

Back in chapter 1 verse 22 – we are told that every one of the twelve were witnesses of the resurrection.

Peter is emphatic – we are telling you – Jesus rose from the dead.

And there are others here among the 120 who saw Him.

And very likely there are others in this crowd who saw Him. 40 days of appearances sometimes as many as 500 witnesses.

You know He rose.

After Julius Caesar was assassinated – his body was publicly burned. Emperor worship was beginning to develop and a dead god is not good.

So, an eagle was released and it was declared that this eagle was taking his soul to the heavens where he would live forever.

None of that with Jesus. He was raised **bodily** – they saw Him, touched Him and ate with Him. **He was raised.**

HE IS THE PROMISED MESSIAH.

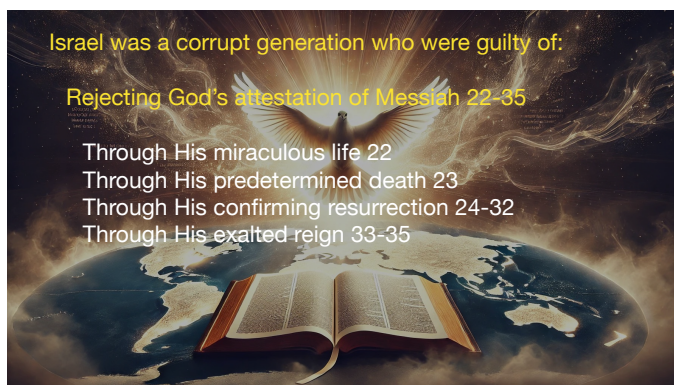
Even to this very day – the resurrection is **the** most significant proof of who Jesus is.

The witnesses, the empty tomb, the lack of a body. Even 2000 years later the evidence is undeniable.

If you are not a Christian – you need to account for the evidence for the resurrection.

The facts are there – please talk with me.

Fourth: He was attested:



Through His exalted reign 33-35

Here is the argument.

The Scriptures say God would raise Messiah to reign at His right hand over the kingdom.

And from on high He will pour out the Spirit.

You just saw Jesus ascend and the Spirit poured out.

No one can deny – **Jesus is the Messiah.**

Acts 2:33–35:

Therefore, since he has been exalted to the right hand of God and has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, he has poured out what you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into the heavens, but he himself

says: **The Lord declared to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.’**

In Psalm 110 David gives us a glimpse of Messiah’s heavenly rule.

If you go back to Psalm 110 – you will find it says – The Lord (Yahweh) says to my Lord (Adonai).

These are two different words for Lord.

Yahweh speaks to David’s Lord.

The point Jesus made and Peter makes is that this One God is speaking to can’t be David – because He is David’s Lord.

This Lord is the One who ascended to the heavens and sits at the right hand.

Only the sovereign Lord, the Son of God Himself would dare to take His place at the right hand of the Father and receive the Spirit to pour out.

Oh wait – Jesus did that.

Jesus ascended, received the Spirit from the Father and poured out the Spirit on His people.

The miracle of tongues these Jews just witnessed was proof that Jesus of Nazareth – the risen One – is the Messiah.

What more proof could Israel or anyone want?

- His miraculous life
- His predetermined death
- His confirming resurrection
- His exalted reign

God had attested Jesus through Scripture, miracles, heavenly proclamations – the resurrection – the miracle of Pentecost – the ascension – **that Jesus is the Messiah.**

It is not that there is no evidence – it is overwhelming.

Even today – it is just head in the sand stuff to deny that Jesus is the Messiah.

If you doubt it – speak with me or someone you know and we will go over the evidence.

So, you cannot deny – Israel was a corrupt generation who were guilty of:



Crucifying their Lord and Messiah 36

Acts 2:36:

Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.

God attested Him – or here Peter says God **made** Him – the idea is the same. God showed Israel who Jesus of Nazareth was – He is **both Lord and Messiah**.

Lord is a title of the sovereign ruler. The One sitting at the right hand of the Father pouring out the Spirit and ruling the kingdom. He is the Lord of Psalm 110.

Christ is the Greek word for – *Messiah*. It refers to the anointed One – the long-awaited Saviour. The King who came to save His people. He is the Messiah of Psalm 16.

There is no wriggle room – Jesus is their Lord **and** their Messiah ... **and** they crucified Him.

Coming to grips with this would have crushed them.

Just this week we read about a dad who thought he had dropped his daughter at daycare – he didn't.

She died in his boiling car.

The neighbours said his screams were pitiable and palpable.

When he realised his mistake, he would give anything to take it back – but he can't.

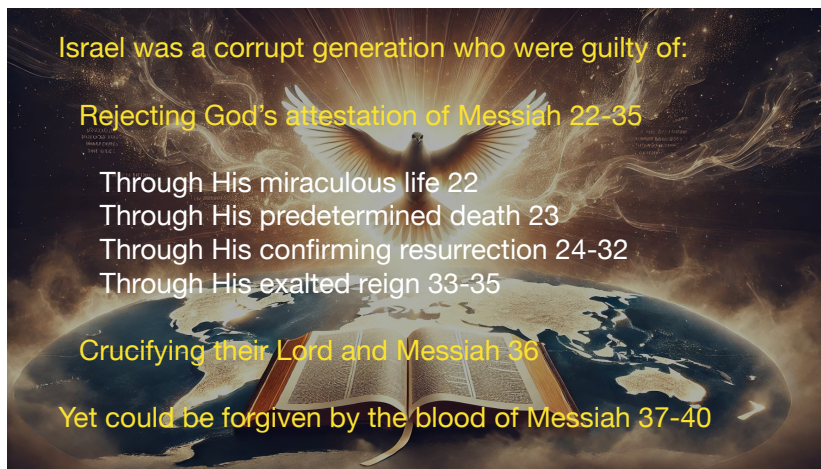
That is these Jews.

We killed Jesus – our Messiah.

And when you kill God's Son – there is nowhere to hide.

Or is there?

Israel was a corrupt generation who were guilty of crucifying their Lord and Messiah:



Yet they could be forgiven by the blood of Messiah 37-40

The very blood they shed can forgive them.

This is the gospel. Even the worst sin in history is not beyond forgiveness.

Verse 37:

When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart.

All these Jews turned up on Pentecost for a festival day. The feast of Harvest.

They came for a good time – some food, some wine, thanking God for the harvest.

Now the realization of what they had done crushed them.

They had killed the Son of God – their Messiah.

They must face the judgment of God for this.

They were pierced through.

They said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”

Is there any hope or are we just lost?

What could possibly cover sin of such magnitude?

I suspect they are thinking – I am lost – nothing can possibly wash away killing the Son of God.

I think their faint hope might be that these men – these Apostles who were with Jesus and were filled with the Spirit might know a way.

Perhaps – repent and have the nation sacrifice 10,000 bulls.

Repent and remove every last leader who conspired against Jesus.

Repent and commit to doing deeds that honour Messiah.

Verse 38:

Peter replied, “**Repent and be baptized**, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

This was not what they were expecting.

Don’t misunderstand this.

Repent and be baptized ... **for** the forgiveness of sins.

He is not saying that baptism in water is necessary in order to have forgiveness of sins.

Prepositions like this one have a range of meanings.

When you see a poster.

Jesse James: Wanted For Murder.

It doesn’t mean that they want him **to** commit a murder.

He is wanted **because** he **has** committed a murder.

You don’t get baptised **to be forgiven**.

You get baptised *because* you **have been forgiven**.

Repent.

Repentance they understood. The call for Israel to repent to turn from sin to God was common in the prophets.

Repentance involves a turning from sin to God – but in Acts – this turning involves turning to accept who Jesus is.

For example, Acts 20:21:

I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God **and** faith in our Lord Jesus.

Repentance for these Jews involves confessing their guilt in rejecting Jesus as Lord and Messiah but **also** choosing to accept the risen Jesus as their Lord and Messiah.

They must change their mind about who Jesus is and act on it – accept Him as Lord – live the way He calls us to live.

As well as repent – he says **be baptised**.

The word for baptise most commonly means *immerse*.

There are a couple of passages in the Old Testament that speak of being covered in blood from a sacrifice or ritual washings in which the Greek Old Testament used the word – *baptizo*.

But that clearly wasn't the connection Peter meant or any Jew there would have formed.

Baptism – immersion in water – was a practice that developed in the intertestamental period and was very familiar to each of those Jews.

It involved full immersion in water – and the significance was threefold.

1. **It was a public declaration of faith in Israel's God.**
2. **It is a public declaration of joining with the people of God. It was a rite of initiation or identification.**
3. **It is a public declaration of the hope of salvation. Our faith leads to the washing away of sin and a new life.**

The Jews practiced this.

They built *mikveh* – baptismal pools – but it was strictly only for Gentiles who wished to become part of Israel.

Then about 100 years before Jesus – one group of Jews – Essenes began baptising.

They were ascetics who lived in the desert.

They were outcasts because they mainly baptised *Jews* not just Gentiles. You can go to Qumran and their baptistries are there. Huge swimming pool-like – for immersion.

They said to turn from sin and await the Teacher of Righteousness – Messiah – who they thought would be an Essene.

But, it is hard to know if this group were even known by regular Jews – they were a small sect and are not mentioned in Scripture and barely mentioned in ancient writings. We really only know of them because we found the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Regardless, the baptism Peter's words **would** bring to mind was John the Baptist's.

John was a sensation – all Israel was going out to him in the wilderness.

And his message – **Repent and be baptised for the forgiveness of sins.** Sound familiar?

Turn from your sin – be immersed – picturing the death of the old you and the washing away of sin – and wait for Messiah the One who will baptise you in the Holy Spirit.

And each of these baptisms involved a proclamation of personal faith.

Here – Peter says that the proclamation of faith is calling on the name of Jesus – the only name that saves.

Acts 4:12:

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.

Every Jew there understood the hope Peter offered.

If you repent of killing Messiah and are baptised calling on the name of Jesus – choose Jesus as Lord and King – **then** you will receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit – you will become a part of this new people of God – the church.

The baptism in water doesn't save you – it pictures the salvation and is a public declaration of faith.

Who is this for? Verse 39:

For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call.

For you and your children – this is covenantal language that means **all Jews**.

Genesis 17:7:

I will confirm my covenant that is between me and you **and your future offspring throughout their generations.**

This is a promise for you – for your children – for your grandchildren – for every generation after you. **It is a promise for Jews.**

All who are far off – this is the language of Isaiah 57:19 – referring to **Gentiles**. Those who were once far off – but now are part of the blessing.

The promise is for **Jew and Gentile** – as many as the Lord will call – **throughout the generations** – until He returns.

The promise is that **if** your children come to faith and call on the Lord they will be saved. This is how your children are included in the covenant.

Verse 40:

With many other words he testified and strongly urged them, saying, “Be saved from this corrupt generation!”

Some people have asked – why don’t you preach short sermons like those in the Bible.

Peter’s sermon at Pentecost – you can read it in 4 minutes.

Sorry – these are just summaries of *much* longer messages. Later, Paul preached so long poor Eutychus fell asleep and out the window.

Be saved from this corrupt generation! This sounds to us like the old crazy guy on the street corner with a sign yelling at you the world is about to end.

But that is not what the Jews heard.

This phrase – **corrupt generation** – it originally described the wilderness generation who turned from God and sinned – but then it came to refer to every generation of Israel who turned from God – those who will not enter God’s rest. (Deut 32:5, 20; Ps. 78:8; 95:10).

But that generation there at Pentecost – they turned from God in the worst possible way – **they killed their Messiah.**

Yet – here is our gospel – the blood of Christ is greater even than this foulest of sins.

There **is** salvation in His blood.

And that promise is for Jews, for Gentiles – for all who call on His name.

You and I may not have personally betrayed Jesus or hammered the nails – but as sinners – we are part of the race of Adam who killed Him and every sin – every lust, greedy thought, lie – affirms our guilty.

And without the blood of Jesus we will be lined up right next to Judas and Pilate on the day of judgment.

Here is what this passage tells us.

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. All will receive the wages of our sin – death.

We are a corrupt generation.

But there **is** hope even for the worst of sinners. If the Centurion who actually killed Jesus can find forgiveness – so can you.

Whatever your sin – whatever you have done – the blood of Christ avails.

I urge you examine the evidence for who Jesus is – there is so much proof – no one can say – look it wasn't clear.

It screams – Jesus is the Christ – our Lord.

His life, death, resurrection and ascension prove it. But they also provide the means of salvation.

We can die with Him and have our sins forgiven.

We will rise with Him and overcome death.

We will reign with Him over the new heavens.

And all it takes is to repent – acknowledge Jesus is Lord and Messiah – turn from sin to obey Him and acknowledge this publicly by being baptised calling on the name of Jesus.

When Mel Gibson made his movie – **The Passion Of The Christ** – he not only directed it – he acted in it.

But, you wouldn't recognize him because all you saw was his hands.

It was his hands in the movie that nailed Jesus to the cross.

It was his way of identifying himself as a sinner bearing guilt for the death of Jesus.

Personally, I don't think in quite those terms. I don't picture myself actually nailing Christ to the cross – maybe you do.

But I do accept my sin makes me absolutely guilty and I bear moral responsibility for the death of Jesus.

I know if I was a Roman soldier stationed in Palestine and Pilate said – crucify this prisoner – I would have said yes sir and done it.

I am part of the corrupt generation.

But I only hope I would have also joined with the Centurion who oversaw the crucifixion in saying, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

Whatever you have done – there is no sin beyond forgiving – trust that He is the Son of God – crucified for you – and live.

Forgiveness For The Greatest Sinners Acts 2:22-40 (February 9, 2025)

Main Point: There is no sin the blood of Jesus cannot wash away.

General Questions:

1. Why did Peter say to these particular Jews – you crucified Jesus?
2. Who is morally responsible for the death of Jesus? What is our responsibility?
3. In what way did the miracles attest to who Jesus is?
4. In what way did His death attest to who Jesus is?
5. In what way did His resurrection attest to who Jesus is?
6. In what way did His ascension attest to who Jesus is?
7. Considering the weight of evidence – why did the Jews reject Him and crucify Him?
8. How can such a horrendous sin be forgiven?
9. What does repentance entail?
10. What does baptism entail?
11. Who is this promise for?

Application Questions:

1. How would you answer someone who justifies anti-Semitism based on this passage?
2. How would you answer someone who says this passage says baptism in water is essential for salvation?
3. How would you summarise the evidence for the resurrection?
4. How can you use this passage for someone struggling to believe their sins can be forgiven?

What convicted me in the message?

What moved me in the message?

What will I do in light of the message?