

SESSION 2

UNSTOPPABLE MESSAGE

▶ **The Point**

Jesus died for our sins, rose again, and reigns as Lord.

▶ **The Passage**

Acts 2:22-24,32-33,36-38

▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

Do you know the original mission statement of Harvard University? “Let every student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3) and . . . seeing the Lord only giveth wisdom, let every one seriously set himself by prayer in secret to seek it of him (Prov. 2:3).”

Surprised? When the school was founded in 1636, the administration hired only Christian professors, the formation of Christian character was a top priority for students, and ministers were trained and equipped to share the gospel. Today, Harvard maintains a legacy of academic excellence, but has lost its original mission—a phenomenon often described as “mission drift.” The university lost sight of its original purpose.⁶ Unfortunately, mission drift happens in the church, as well. As we’ll see in Acts 2, there is a clear, unstoppable message that drives our mission. It’s up to us to stay the course.

▶ **The Setting**

After Jesus’ ascension, the disciples followed His command to return to Jerusalem and await the coming of the Holy Spirit. Gathered together on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon them with the sound of a violent rushing wind and the appearance of flames like tongues of fire. The disciples began to speak in different languages, which the Jews gathered for Pentecost from the various nations could comprehend in their own languages (see Acts 2:1-6). The crowd was amazed, and Peter took the opportunity to tell them about Jesus and the good news of the gospel.

What does the Bible say?

Miracles, wonders, and signs (v. 22)—“Miracles” show the power of God. “Wonders” emphasize the response of the people who witness those miracles. “Signs” are intended to point attention back to God.

Repent (v. 38)—In the New Testament, “repent” means to change one’s mind in the sense of turning away from sin and self, and turning toward God (Jesus) in a way that makes God (Jesus) the center of one’s life.

Acts 2:22-24,32-33,36-38

²² **“Men of Israel, listen to these words: This Jesus the Nazarene was a man pointed out to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through Him, just as you yourselves know.**

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.**

²⁴ **God raised Him up, ending the pains of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it.”**

.....
³² **“God has resurrected this Jesus. We are all witnesses of this.**

³³ **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.”**

.....
³⁶ **“Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah!”**

³⁷ **When they heard this, they came under deep conviction and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles: “Brothers, what must we do?”**

³⁸ **“Repent,” Peter said to them, “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.”**

Acts 2:22-24 Commentary

[Verse 22] On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came in power. The believers in Jerusalem who were empowered by the Spirit spoke in many languages and drew the attention of a crowd. Peter spoke to the crowd to help them correctly interpret these events (see Acts 2:1-21). Peter initially quoted words from the prophet Joel that explained and confirmed what they had seen and heard (see Joel 2:28-32). He boldly directed the men to **listen** to him. Peter started by calling attention to **Jesus the Nazarene**. Rather than immediately jumping to the reality that Jesus is the Messiah, Peter emphasized that Jesus **was a man**. Thousands of people had encountered Jesus in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria during the previous three years. So while any skeptic could have questioned Jesus' deity, there was no question of His humanity.

Peter noted that Jesus was **pointed out ... by God**. God chose Him for a unique position—a role that no one else could fill. God worked in and through Jesus' humanity to prove who He really was. Peter reminded the people of the **miracles, wonders, and signs** done by Jesus, all of which were intended to reveal the power of God and point attention back to Him.

[Verse 23] Peter emphasized that the Jews played a role in Jesus' death. The Jewish religious leaders arrested Jesus and **delivered up** Jesus to those who could carry out their ultimate desire. The Jews **used lawless people** (the Romans) to kill Jesus. While the Jewish leaders plotted to put Jesus to death and the Romans carried out the sentence, the Jewish people also bore the responsibility for what had happened. They should have recognized who Jesus was, God's Messiah.

Though most people who knew Jesus did not anticipate His death, God was not caught off guard. The sacrificial death of Jesus was part of God's **determined plan** for His creation. God had not only decreed that Jesus would die (see 1 Pet. 1:20), but had also set the appointed time for it to happen (see Gal. 4:4-5). It was part of God's purpose to make atonement for the sins of humanity. God planned for the death of His Son because there was no other way for sinful people—those who were His enemies—to be in a right relationship with Him.

[Verse 24] Peter stressed that **God raised Him up**—restored Jesus to life again. This was also part of God's plan for the salvation of humanity. Why was it **not possible** for death to hold Jesus in its grip? Because His death and resurrection were a part of God's unstoppable plan! God had chosen Jesus for His unique position as Messiah to make salvation possible for all humanity, which was a truth Peter soon clarified. Nothing, not even death itself, could hinder God's purpose.

Acts 2:32-33,36 Commentary

[Verse 32] The resurrection of Jesus was the primary focus of the apostles' preaching after Pentecost. That's because the resurrection is the foundational truth of the Christian faith. It provides assurance that Jesus' sacrificial death brought victory over sin and death for all who believe. Paul later noted that if the resurrection did not happen, then our faith is "worthless" (1 Cor. 15:17) and all humanity is still held captive by the guilt and power of sin.

Peter added that he and the other apostles were **witnesses** of what happened. They had not only seen Jesus die and be buried; they also saw Him restored to life after being dead for three days. Interestingly, the term *witnesses* could have included many of the 120 people gathered in the upper room when the Holy Spirit came upon them (see Acts 1:15), since Scripture confirms that Jesus appeared to over 500 people after His resurrection (see 1 Cor. 15:6).

[Verse 33] Jesus ascended into heaven where He is living still and where He has been **exalted to the right hand of God**. The person seated at the right hand of a king was in a position associated with great power and authority. On the morning of His crucifixion, as He endured the pretense of a trial before the Jewish religious leaders, Jesus prophesied that He would soon sit "at the right hand of the Power of God" (Luke 22:69). In this powerful position, Jesus **received the Holy Spirit** and the authority to distribute the Spirit to others in accordance with God's promise. Thus, like water is **poured out** from above and floods whatever is below, God's Spirit was poured out from heaven and engulfed the believers who had gathered together in Jerusalem. Peter went on to emphasize that what the people of Israel had seen and heard that day—the Spirit's powerful activity that enabled the believers "to speak in different languages" (see Acts 2:4)—was further evidence of Jesus' identity and authority.

[Verse 36] In a powerful summation, Peter emphasized a point he did not want **the house of Israel** to miss. **All** of them needed to **know with certainty** the truth about Jesus. Peter contrasted the difference between how the Jewish people responded to Jesus and how God responded to Him. God has exalted Jesus as **both Lord and Messiah**. The people, however, had **crucified** Jesus as a common criminal.

In referring to Jesus as *Lord*, Peter reached the climax of his message. More than simply a designation of respect, the word *Lord* here indicated Jesus' divine nature. When Jesus had earlier claimed equality with God, the Jews tried to stone Him (see John 10:30-33). In the Greek, verse 36 ends with the words translated **whom you crucified**. Perhaps Peter ordered his words intentionally, wanting the people to bear the weight of guilt and responsibility for their actions: they had actually killed the Lord.



10 minutes

STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Acts 2:37-38

***37** When they heard this, they came under deep conviction and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles: “Brothers, what must we do?” **38** “Repent,” Peter said to them, “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.”*

DO: Direct group members to complete the activity “Jesus Is Lord” on page 81 of the PSG. If time permits, encourage volunteers to share their responses.



Use the space below to record words, phrases, or images that come to mind when you think of the word “Lord.”

What are some practical steps you take to approach Jesus as Lord in your own life?

READ: Acts 2:37-38 on page 80 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Highlight the definitions of condemnation and conviction on page 80 of the PSG:

- ▶ **“Condemnation** brings a general feeling of worthlessness, like a wet blanket. Condemnation leaves you feeling powerless and immobilized, totally discouraged from changing.”
- ▶ **“Conviction** brings awareness of specific sins, attitudes, and habits in your life that need to be changed. It’s a specific spotlight on areas in need of care. When the Holy Spirit convicts you, He does so with the loving desire that you turn from sin and turn to Christ.”

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 80 of the PSG: **“As we share the gospel, how can we work toward the goal of conviction rather than condemnation?”**

GUIDE: Refer back to “The Point” of this session: **“Jesus died for our sins, rose again, and reigns as Lord.”**

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

How did you initially respond when you heard the gospel?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Acts 2:37-38 Commentary

[Verse 37] On the night before His death, Jesus told His disciples about the Holy Spirit's ministry. Jesus promised that the Spirit would "convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment" (John 16:8). Now on the day of Pentecost, with thousands of Jews from around the world gathered in Jerusalem, the Spirit carried out His assignment as He brought a **deep conviction** on the people who had heard Peter's message. A more literal translation of *deep conviction* would be "cut to the heart." Peter's words, like a figurative dagger driven deep into their hearts, brought intense emotional pain as the Jewish people realized the enormity of their sin. It was natural that they wanted a solution to their problem. So they asked **Peter** and the other **apostles**: "**Brothers, what must we do?**"

[Verse 38] The solution to their problem was to **repent**. They needed to change their thinking, especially about Jesus, sin, and salvation. To repent in their thinking about Jesus, they needed to acknowledge Him as Lord and Messiah. To repent in their thinking about sin, they needed to understand how sin separates us from God and how Jesus provided the perfect, final sacrifice for our sin. To repent in their thinking about salvation, they needed to know that faith in Jesus is the only way to come into a right relationship with the Father and experience eternal life.

The biblical usage of *repent* also refers to a change of action—not only thinking differently about something, but also acting on this new belief. Thus, Peter added that **each** of them needed to **be baptized**. Baptism is an outward picture of an inward change. After the people changed their thinking about Jesus, sin, and salvation, they were to give evidence of that change by being baptized. To be baptized **in the name of Jesus Christ** means acknowledging His identity and accepting His authority. For them to be baptized in Jesus' name would reflect their newfound commitment to Christ.

This is the only place in the Book of Acts where there is any question about the relationship of baptism, repentance, and **forgiveness of ... sins**. Some have incorrectly interpreted this verse to teach that baptism is necessary for the forgiveness of sins. But this is not taught anywhere else in Scripture. Not long after Pentecost on a different occasion, Peter specifically charged people to "repent . . . so that your sins may be wiped out" (Acts 3:19) without a mention of baptism. At other times belief (see 10:43) or faith (see 26:18) are mentioned as the basis for forgiveness. Thus, the phrase in 2:38 should be understood as forgiveness of sins as a result of repentance, and baptism is the outward demonstration of the changed mind and life. To those who experienced salvation, Peter noted they would **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**. This *gift* does not refer to special manifestations of the Spirit (which are His gifts), but instead to His indwelling presence in believers' lives.



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 82 of the PSG. Encourage them to consider the following options for allowing the unstoppable message of the gospel to impact their lives this week:



Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

- ▶ **Praise Him.** Jesus is worthy of our worship; therefore, set aside a time this week to praise Him in a way that is meaningful to you.
- ▶ **Share.** The message of salvation is for all Christians to share. Pray for opportunities to share the message of Jesus in your everyday conversations. Plan to tell someone this week about the difference Jesus has made in your life.
- ▶ **Invite others.** As you worship Jesus and share the truth of the gospel this week, invite others to join you. Find someone who needs a spiritually mature example and encourage him or her to join with you in following Jesus.

Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the conclusion from page 82 of the PSG:

Let's avoid the dangers of "mission drift," both in our lives and in our churches. Let's not forget that the message of Jesus Christ and His salvation is the reason for everything we do.

PRAY: Conclude by praising Jesus for His sacrifice on your behalf. Verbally proclaim your desire to follow Him as Lord, and ask for strength and wisdom for both you and your group members in striving toward that goal.

**GROUPS
MATTER.**

Grow with other group leaders at the [Groups Ministry blog](#).

LifeWay.com/GroupMinistry