

Acts 2:29-39: Are You Living A Lifeless Existence?

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I. Introduction

The Bible tells us that Jesus' death reconciles us to God and saves us from the Lake of Fire. But it also says that His life (not His death but His life) will save us from a miserable existence now. How can Jesus' Spirit breathe new life into our lifeless existence? Can His Spirit really enable us to have a better life?

II. Acts 2:29-39: Jesus Came to Inject Life into Your Lifeless Existence

2:29-32, having quoted Psalm 16:8-11 which was written by king David, Peter now explains to his audience what it means. First, this psalm is not about David because he's dead and buried; the individual in the psalm came back to life. Second, David wrote this as a prophet and it was based on a promise God made to him about Messiah. In 2 Samuel 7:12-16 God promised David that Messiah would be one of his descendants. But it wasn't just that Messiah would come from David's line, it was that He would be an eternal King, who would sit on an eternal throne and have an eternal Kingdom. All this told David that this individual was not just going to be human (i.e., He would be a descendant of David) He was also going to be God. Thus, David knew that his greater son, Messiah, would not stay in the grave. And who is this Messiah? Jesus, the one Peter's been talking about all along. Jesus is the One God raised from the dead and Peter and the rest of the apostles can testify to this fact since they spent 40 days with Jesus after He came back to life.

2:33-35, and as Psalm 16 says, this individual would not just be raised from the dead, He would ascend into heaven and sit at God's right hand. That's exactly what Jesus did (1:9), but there's more. Jesus also received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, which the crowd now sees and hears, i.e., Jesus baptized the 12 apostles with the Holy Spirit and it enabled them to suddenly speak a foreign language. Peter is telling us that resurrection is not just for Jesus but for everyone who receives the Holy Spirit. And Peter again makes the point that this is not about David, i.e., it wasn't David whom God asked to sit at His right hand. That individual was someone David called "Lord." That is, David knew that Messiah would be God. This is something the Pharisees didn't understand when Jesus asked them. That is, they didn't understand why David would call his son, Messiah, "Lord" (Matthew 22:41-46).

2:36-39, what's the point of everything Peter's been saying about Jesus—that He's the one they crucified, that He didn't stay dead, that He rose again, that He's both David's son and God, that He's now sitting at God's right, that He received from the Father the Holy Spirit and poured it out on the 12 apostles—what's the point of all this? Just that, this Jesus is both God and Messiah, the One who enabled 12 uneducated fishermen from Galilee to suddenly speak a foreign language. The crowd listening to Peter believes; they want to know what to do. They must repent and be baptized in Jesus' name in order to have their sins forgiven. If they do this, they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit which is promised to everyone whom the Lord calls. Being baptized in Jesus' name is a dangerous proposition in Jerusalem at this point in time. It would mean that you are identifying yourself with a new movement who saw Jesus as Israel's Messiah, Jesus, the one the Jewish authorities just crucified 50 days ago for claiming to be Messiah and God.

Do you need to be baptized to have your sins forgiven? No, forgiveness of sins is by God's grace through simple faith (Acts 10:43; 13:38-39; 15:11). Then what does "for the remission of sins" mean in 2:38? The sins in question are national sins committed by Israel's leaders, and thus in God's eyes by every Jew. When Jesus healed a man who was demon possessed, Israel's leaders accused Him of casting out demons by the power of Satan, i.e., of being possessed by Satan himself (Matthew 12:22-32). This was blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and God swore that He would punish the generation that did this, including destroying their temple (Matthew 24:2). In A. D. 70, the Romans did just that. Jewish historian Josephus wrote about this devastation, which included death by starvation. This is why every Jewish individual needed to repent and be baptized in order to "be saved from this perverse generation" (Acts 2:40). So if they repented and got baptized in Jesus' name, then they would avoid this judgment.

Why did God raise Jesus from the dead? So that He could raise you from the dead and give your life meaning and purpose. There are two kinds of life in this world, there's human life, life that is animated yet lifeless. It is life lived through your human spirit apart from God. There's life there, but it's dead life (James 2:28; Ephesians 2:1-3). And then there's divine life, life that is lived in and through God's Spirit (Galatians 2:20; 4:6). Jesus came to save us from a dead existence. That's why He talks the way He does in the Gospels (John 5:24; Luke 4:18). That's why God speaks to us the way He does in the epistles: Romans 8:6—there are only two ways to live your life: in death or in life and peace. God tells us that Jesus' death saves us from the Lake of Fire; it covers our sins and brings peace between us and God (3:21-26; 5:1, 8-9a). But He also says that Jesus' life saves us from a miserable existence now (5:9b-10 [cf. 1:18]).

Jesus can promise you abundant life (John 10:10) because He's conquered death (Hebrews 2:14-15; Revelation 1:18). What's all this have to do with Acts 2? Isn't that what He did with 12 uneducated fishermen? When we get to Acts 4, you're going to see 2 of these fishermen take on the most educated class in Israel and win...because they have new life in them.

My wife retires after 30 years, on May 20, 2016 my wife retired from a very successful 30-year career in leasing. People in this industry knew her nationwide. When she retired, someone told her that she'd be back in six months. Why? Because she'd be bored to death. Some can't imagine walking away from this kind of success. Is it possible to have life after retirement? Or is retirement a boring place-holder, the final step before death? How can Jesus' life change retirement? Life with Jesus is different whether you're working or not. You can let go of tremendous success and move on to the next phase of your life because your identity doesn't come from your job, it comes from Jesus and His purpose for your life. Everything Jesus came to give us is life (John 10:10), whether it's work (Colossians 3:22-25), ministry, or fun (Ecclesiastes 2:24). He provides it all and gives it all meaning. My wife didn't do what she did in business because of the money or status; it was because that's what the Lord blessed her with. Retirement will be more of the same, she will serve her Lord wherever He calls and she will find fulfillment in this as she did in business.

III. Conclusion

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."