

Acts Chapter 2

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[0 : 0 0] through to verse 18. I'm going to read and then make just a few comments before we come to sing together, reminding ourselves who it is that we're coming to worship, who it is that we come and stand before. So here's John, he's writing to the brethren, to the Christians, to the believers, and he tells them this in verse 10. On the Lord's day I was in the Spirit. I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said, write on a scroll what you see, and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. I turned round to see the voice that was speaking to me. When I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet, with a golden sash round his chest. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace. His voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun, shining in its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet, as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me, and said, do not be afraid. I am the first and the last. I am the living one. I was dead, and now look, I am alive forever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and Hades. We don't know how many years it was since John had seen the Lord Jesus in his resurrection glory. Certainly he saw him for those 40 days after Easter, leading up to Pentecost, but not since then. We believe that probably the revelation was written around about AD 80, 80. So we're talking about nearly 50 years later, he sees Jesus again in his glory, in his splendor, in his majesty. All that time he had been preaching, speaking about, declaring that Jesus was alive, and now he saw again the reality, the appearing of the Son of God. But notice what Jesus says about himself, how he describes himself, first of all, as the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega.

Those are the names that belong to God. But particularly, I am the living one. I was dead, and now look, I am alive forever and ever. John was able to discern and understand that he served a living Savior, and he had a living Lord. And so our first hymn reminds us that, I know that my Redeemer lives. And we come to worship a living God and a living Savior. We come to worship him who was dead, but is alive, raised forevermore. 270, I know that my Redeemer lives.

Let's stand and sing. That strains the vocal cords, doesn't it? Turn back to Acts in chapter 2, if you will. We're not jumping ahead to Pentecost, so don't worry. I haven't sort of jumped from Easter Sunday last week to Pentecost Sunday this week. We're not going to be concerned necessarily with what happened on the day of Pentecost, but really continuing our theme and thoughts following on from Easter, as we did a little bit this morning when we thought of the sayings of Christ from the cross. I don't know whether you like watching quiz shows on telly.

There seem to be a multitude of them. Mastermind, of course, is the great, the original sort of quiz show, and there seems to be a lot of those with celebrities at the moment with various specialist subjects. I don't know. I wonder what your specialist subject would be if you were asked to answer questions for Mastermind. I'm not all that good on specialist subjects. I quite like general knowledge, and of course, I'm sure it happens to you. They give a question, a general knowledge question, and immediately you think you know the answer. It seems to be an easy answer, but then suddenly you realize, oh, you're wrong. That's not the answer, that you took it for granted.

[4 : 39] You knew the answer, but actually it wasn't as easy as you thought it was. Well, I want to ask and answer a question that appears on the surface perhaps to be very easy for us as believers.

It's this question. Why did God raise Jesus from the dead? Why did God raise Jesus from the dead? Now, we rarely ask why questions in life today. People don't often ask why. They ask how. They ask when.

They ask what for, where, and so on. But why questions are more difficult when it comes to the things of life. Why are we here? Why did God create us? And so on. We can, of course, ask and answer questions.

Did God raise Jesus from the dead? Yes, he did. We can answer when did God raise Jesus from the dead? And yes, we know that was on Easter Sunday, but why? Why did God have to raise Jesus at all from the dead?

Why is it so important? Why does it matter? Now, when we looked at the seven sayings of Jesus on the cross, we know that when he, that penultimate, that last but one saying of his was that cry, finished.

[5 : 56] We looked at that a little bit on Good Friday, and we understood, of course, that Jesus was declaring that everything necessary for our forgiveness, everything necessary for our salvation, our being right with God, had been done.

The law had been fulfilled. Righteousness had been fulfilled. The sins had been taken, and so on. So if Jesus says finished, why then, three days later, did God raise him physically from the dead to live for another 40 days on the earth while he was seen and spoken to before being taken up, raised from the earth to heaven at his ascension, to sit at the right hand of God?

God could have quite easily taken Jesus directly to heaven without the resurrection, couldn't he? When Jesus said, into your hands I commit my spirit, he could have just gone there and then, body, soul and all.

After all, God took Enoch in that way, just took him up, we're told. Elijah as well didn't die, but they were taken up. So why? Well, there's several reasons, of course, that can come to mind immediately.

Several, in one sense we might say easy answers to that, why God raised Jesus from the dead. The first, of course, is simply because God said he would. This is exactly what Peter's talking about here in his preaching to the Jews on that day, on the day of Pentecost.

[7 : 22] He says to him in verse 30, of David, he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the dead.

And he's quoting there, there's a section quoted from Psalm 16, talking about the fact that you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor let my sea decay, but you will make known to me the path of life and fill me with your joy.

There's a promise there, one of many promises, that God would bring resurrection to the Lord Jesus Christ, to his son, to the Messiah. And so Peter's reasoning is, of course, David can't have been talking about himself, because he died and was buried.

He must be speaking about the Messiah, who died but rose again. Now we know that this is true of God. He is a God who always keeps his promises. If he said the Messiah must rise again from the dead, then the Messiah must rise again from the dead.

Immediately there's an encouragement for us, isn't there, in this simple truth. God keeps his word. What God says he will do, what God has said he will do, he's done. God said it, it is true, and it shall be so.

[8 : 36] We can take God at his word. The resurrection is an encouragement to us for that. What God has said he will do, even if it's raising someone from the dead, it's not a problem. The second answer we can give is, why did God raise him from the dead?

Because we know that in raising Jesus from the dead, God was confirming or demonstrating to everybody that Jesus was and is the son of God, that he was and is the Messiah, the savior of the world.

Again, this is what Peter says here. Seeing verse 31, what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay.

God has raised this Jesus to life. So there's the demonstration. God said the Messiah would be raised to life. Jesus was raised to life. Ergo, Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus is the son of God. Work it out. It's simple, isn't it? What God did for Jesus was to prove without a shadow of doubt that he was uniquely the Messiah sent by God, his special agent to bring salvation to the world.

[9 : 44] Paul writes the same thing in Romans chapter 4. Very outset of his letter, he speaks of Jesus, who through the spirit of God, sorry, who through the spirit of holiness was appointed or declared, demonstrated the son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead.

Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus had said himself, hadn't he, to his disciples over and over again. I will go to Jerusalem.

There I'll be handed over to the Gentiles. I'll be mocked. I'll be abused. I'll be killed. And then on the third day I'll rise again. If Jesus didn't rise again after saying those things to his disciples and then being recorded, in fact, it wasn't just the disciples who knew that Jesus said that.

If you remember in Matthew, at the end of Matthew, the religious leaders were so concerned that they set a guard on the tomb because they said this deceiver said that he would rise again on the third day.

So they knew about it too, that Jesus said it. So if Jesus said it and it didn't happen, then of course Jesus couldn't possibly be the Messiah. He couldn't lie or get things wrong.

[10 : 54] He couldn't possibly be the son of God. So again, there's great encouragement for us. If you've put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as your savior, you've put your faith in someone who is the son of God, who is the Messiah, is the savior.

Your faith is not misplaced. He's not just one among many religious leaders. He is uniquely the son of God, uniquely the way to God.

So he's told his disciples in John 14 and verse 6, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me. So God raised Jesus from the dead to say, here is my son, here is the Messiah, here is the savior in whom you must put your trust.

Another reason why God raised Jesus Christ from the dead was not only to, because God said he would, not only to prove that Jesus was indeed the Messiah and the savior, but he raised Jesus from the dead because of the disciples, for their sake.

They were indeed, as we know, extremely bereft by the loss of Jesus, weren't they? They were distraught. They just didn't know what to do. We have something of a flavor of that when two of them are on this road walking to Emmaus discussing things.

- [12 : 14] This is how they describe their feelings and what they thought about Jesus. He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him.

But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. What's more, it's the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning, but didn't find his body.

They came and told us that he'd seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Then some of the companions went to the tomb, found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.

There's confusion. There's frustration. There's a sense of we put our hope on Jesus. We thought he was the king that God had sent, but now he's died and he's dead and his body disappeared, and these women are sort of rambling on about angels and so on.

We just don't know what to think. We know that they were very frightened men, weren't they? They were those who had lost all hope. Peter and several of them just went back fishing.

- [13 : 20] They just gave up. After three years of not fishing, they went back. They were like scared rabbits locking themselves in the upper room, afraid of the Jews, the religious leaders. But that all changed, didn't it, when Jesus arrived on the scene, when Jesus came and appeared to them on that Easter Sunday evening.

John 20, verse 20. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. They were transformed. Their fears fled. Their doubts disappeared.

They were over the moon. God raised Jesus for the dead because the disciples of Jesus were precious to him. Their feelings mattered. Their fears, their concerns, their anxieties mattered.

But these disciples of Jesus weren't merely pupils of a rabbi or training apostles to do his work. Remember what he said. You're no longer, do I call you servants, I call you friends.

Of course Jesus wanted them to be sure of his presence with them. Of course he wanted them to know that he was with them. He hasn't changed. Dear friend, here again is a wonderful comfort for us.

- [14 : 29] As we go through life day by day, we have this assurance. Because God raised Jesus from his dead, we can sing, I serve a risen Savior, he's in the world today. I know that he is with me.

As you go to work tomorrow or school tomorrow, or as you're on your own, alone in your home, Christ is with you. How do we know? Because God raised him from the dead because he ever lives. Because he's promised never to leave us nor forsake us.

Why did God raise Jesus from the dead? Well, another reason, of course, God raised Jesus from the dead was because it was the assurance that the price had been paid for our sin.

It was the guarantee, in one sense, that the sacrifice of Jesus for our sin had been accomplished everything. That he had done it. Just as he cried, it is finished.

So his resurrection was a way of saying to us, yes, God has received the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins, and he's accepted it. He's pleased with it.

- [15 : 32] He's not rejected it. Here's Paul again in Romans 4, verse 25. Jesus was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

What does he mean? What Paul is saying is this. The resurrection is the guarantee that God has forgiven our sins. The guarantee that we are justified, made right with God.

That there's nothing more to pay. There's nothing more to give. The resurrection is the assurance that there is no condemnation. But all the punishment of God has been placed upon Jesus and it's been dealt with once and for all and forever.

When God raises Jesus from the dead, he's witnessing to the very personal sinlessness of Jesus. Showing that the sin that took him to the cross has been dealt with, finished with.

That's why he could rise again. There was no sin to keep him in death. Apostle Paul argues strongly that if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then we're still lost.

[16 : 39] Jesus wasn't raised from the dead by God when we still are in our sins. He says that in 1 Corinthians 15, if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile.

You're still in your sins. So dear friends, again, when those times come in our lives, and they certainly do, one, when we sin, but also when the devil, our adversary, comes and tells us that we are sinners, reminds us of our failings, and reminds us of our faults, and says, you know, God surely can't accept you because you are such a bad, poor, sinful person.

Then again, the resurrection of Jesus is the assurance that our sins have been paid for. It's the assurance that God says we are justified in his sight. It's the assurance that says there's no more to be paid.

As Paul says in Romans 8, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. So we can tell the devil to get knotted. Tell him to clear off because his condemnations mean nothing because the resurrection of Jesus is the assurance that we are forgiven.

The price has been paid in full. And though we continue to fail, though we continue to get it wrong, the cross has paid once and for all and forever, everything. The resurrection assures us of that.

[17 : 57] God was well pleased. And finally, just in this section, this is the first half, in one sense, though it's more than a half, of our question, why did God raise Jesus from the dead?

We know that God raised Jesus from the dead because by this, God has glorified himself. By the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, God the Father glorifies himself.

Again, Paul writing to the Romans, chapter 6, verse 4, Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father. Through the glory of the Father.

Everything that God does, he does for his own honor and glory. God will not do anything which dishonors himself because that would mean that he wouldn't be God.

God will not do anything which robs him of his glory. And in one sense, there as well, we must see that God will not be involved in anything that robs him of his glory. God will not, he is a jealous God, we're told, which is a good thing about God.

[19 : 00] Jealous means that he is not one who gives and shares his glory with others. He will not have people dishonoring him. Now God doesn't do things for his own glory because he's a show-off, if I can put it that way, in our own vernacular.

It's not that God does things to appear to be something more than he is. You see, there is nothing more than God is. You can't get greater than him. You can't get better than him. When we show off to our friends, boys are particularly good at this, when they just show off to girls or show off to their mates when they've got a car or a motorbike or even a pushbike or whatever, or their new clothes or their new whatever.

We like to show off because we want people to think better of us than we are. But you can't think better of God than he is. So whenever he does nothing for his glory, he's simply being himself.

He's not trying to be something he's not. He's simply being himself. He's just being God. Almighty, amazing, powerful, wonderful, wise, glorious. Glorious. And that brings us really to the second part.

Why did God raise Jesus from the dead? Yes, he did it to show off his glory. He did it for the disciples' sake. He did it because of his word and his promise. He did it to verify the Lord Jesus.

[20 : 19] He did it so that we might be assured that sin, a sacrifice for sin has been paid. But the question really is this, why did God raise Jesus from the dead?

Why didn't Jesus raise himself from the dead? Why didn't Jesus raise himself from the dead? Why did God do it? Now, I think without a shadow of a doubt the Lord Jesus Christ could have done so.

The Lord Jesus Christ had the power within himself since he was truly God to raise himself from the dead on the third day. We know Philippians 2 tells us that he is the one who is in very nature God.

Colossians 1 tells us God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him. He is the one who has life in himself, John says at the very start of his gospel.

In him was life, the life of all men. So the Lord Jesus Christ was someone who didn't, as it were, draw life from others but had life within himself.

[21 : 26] When he spoke about his own death and resurrection, he spoke to the disciples in John 10. He says, I have authority to lay it down, that's my own life, and authority to take it up again.

So in every respect, we look at the very character of Jesus and the authority of Jesus, he has the power to take up life again. We know that he has the power of the resurrection because not only did he say, I am the resurrection, I am the resurrection personified.

It's one of his I am sayings but he'd proven on more than one occasion that he had the power to raise the dead. Jairus' daughter, the widow of Nairn's son and most famously of all, Lazarus, after four days.

So three, on the third day would be no problem, would it? Why couldn't Jesus just simply have raised himself? Wouldn't he have added even more proof to the fact that he is the son of God?

We could look again and again at the miracles of the character and the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and the things of his description and we could say there's ample proof for us to believe that Jesus could have should he wish to raise himself.

[22 : 38] Yet he did not. And whenever we read about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead in the New Testament, again and again those who preached on it, spoke about it, declared it, all spoke about the fact that it was God who raised him from the dead.

So here's Peter on the day of Pentecost. Verse 24, but God raised him from the dead. Verse 32, God has raised this Jesus to life.

So they're very specific, they're very clear that the resurrection of Jesus was the work of God. The question is again, why did God do that?

Is that significant? Does it matter to make any difference if we say that Jesus raised himself from the dead or God raised himself from the dead?

After all, God, Jesus is God? No, I believe it's very significant. I believe it's very significant. Because I believe it is the declaration by God of his true and unequalled love for his son.

[23 : 43] We've already shown that the raising of the Lord Jesus from the dead was God's declaration that this was his son. But more than I believe, this was the declaration of the father's love for his son.

And that's important, you see. The father had said before Jesus' baptism, this is my son whom I love. At his transfiguration, this is my son whom I love.

With him I'm well pleased. Listen to him. The Lord Jesus himself had come to do the father's will, to do God's will. It was God who sent him.

He would often refer to himself as, to the father, the one who sent me is greater than I. His life's work was to do the father's work. I'm always about the father's work.

His words, the words that the father gave him. Throughout his life he was one who lived for God. It was his father's will that he should suffer and should die. Not my will but yours be done, he said.

[24 : 45] But more than that, it was the father who placed upon him our sin. It was the father who caused him ultimately the agony of bearing the punishment for sinners.

Don't need to turn there but Isaiah 53 speaks in this way again and again of how it is God the father who afflicted and caused suffering upon the Messiah, upon his son.

Isaiah 53 verse 4 We considered him, that's Jesus, stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted. Verse 6 The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Verse 10 It was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer. Do you remember when Jesus was on the cross and those around about him, those who were mocking and scoffing, said, aren't you the Messiah?

Well if you're the Messiah come down off the cross. Prove to us, show to us that you're the one who's come to do God's will. You're the one who's come to do God's work because that's who the Messiah is after all.

[25 : 53] And in one sense those scoffing words which are spoken against Jesus, those words of ridicule, those words of challenge, if God had not raised his son from the dead would have been left unanswered.

But God will not allow one word spoken against his son to remain unanswered. Those who mock Christ, those who ridicule him, those who reject him even today, let them not think that somehow God does not hear and God does not record those words.

Jesus made it very clear every word that will be spoken will be given an answer for. Let's be very careful in what we say about Christ. But it would be quite natural in one sense, wouldn't it, to see Jesus suffering, to hear those things that were spoken of as Isaiah, to see him dying in that awful way and come to the conclusion, well God, you really possibly couldn't care for this person.

We think that ourselves sometimes, don't we, when we go through suffering and trial and difficulty, wild cry is, God, don't you care about me? Don't you love me? How would you let this happen to me?

But you see, dear friends, by raising Jesus from the dead by his own hand, God was testifying to the whole universe, here is my beloved son with whom I'm well pleased.

[27 : 17] He was answering those mockers and those who ridiculed and those who questioned Jesus. He was answering the very questions upon people's minds, even the minds of the disciples. Where is God in this?

He was even answering the very cry of Jesus, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? No, I have not, is the answer in that sense. In raising Jesus from the dead, God was declaring his love for his son.

Now, I've got absolutely no doubt that the Lord Jesus knew that. I've got absolutely no doubt that even when he was on the cross, even when that cry was drawn from his lips, we thought very briefly about it this morning, he knew that he was still loved by his father.

Whatever he was going through, nothing could take away his faith in his father, but God the father wanted to show him the reality of his love in the most powerful way. He wanted him to know that he loved him.

Not because Jesus couldn't do it for himself, not because Jesus was somehow insecure in the father's deep love for him, but only because it was the joy and delight of God the father that he should do for him, the one that he loves, the one that he takes the greatest pleasure in, do for him something to prove and to show to everyone that he is the apple of his eye.

[28 : 43] Let me use a simple illustration. Any wife is able to buy herself flowers. They've got loads of money. They're quite able to go to the shops and pick flowers for themselves.

But for some reason or other, wives prefer it if their husbands buy them flowers. Do the husbands buy their wives flowers because they think their wives have no money and can't buy them for themselves?

Do they buy them flowers because they think that their wives are doubting their love for them and are worried that they're going to abandon them? No. The reason that a husband buys flowers for his wife is because he wants to confirm to her what she already knows.

He wants to reassure her of the fact that he loves her. It's not because he doubts that she loves him or that he thinks that she doubts he loves her or that she's unable to buy flowers.

It's an act of love. And so Father God raised his son from the dead in an act of love.

[30 : 04] One last thing just as we close. The Lord God raised Jesus from the dead because of his love for us too. God wants us to be secure and confident that just as he is able and was able to raise his perfect sinless son from the dead so he will do it for all his children.

The very nature of God is to be the giver of life. 2 Corinthians 1.9 Paul talks about being in desperate measures and dangers.

He says we go through these things that we might not rely on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. God gladly gives us resurrection life freely.

Not only to raise us from our sin into spiritual life nor ultimately will he raise us from the dead in the future that we might be with him and enjoy his presence eternally.

But the reality is this that the God who raised Jesus from the dead wants us to know that in every circumstance and situation in our daily lives he is still the God who raises the dead.

[31 : 13] death. When we face times of great trial when we fear for our lives when we think that we are hanging by a thread when we face a circumstance and situation where we feel as if there is no way out God wants us to know that he who raised Jesus from the dead is still the God who raises the dead now.

That whatever we endure whatever we face even if it is that greatest enemy of all death itself we have a heavenly father who raises the dead. There is nothing so terrible that he cannot bring life out of it.

I wanted to read from Ezekiel 38 the wonderful valley of dry bones there is another expression of that Old Testament expression of the reality that God from that which is utterly hopeless dead utterly without any possibility of life in itself with no light with no way out God breaks in and he speaks and he works and the dead are raised to life and you may look inside yourself even this evening and you may say Lord my faith is so small my life is such a mess the circumstances in which I find myself are just chaotic I can't see the way ahead I can't see the light at the end of the tunnel but let me assure you that this that the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead has the power to raise you up in that circumstance and situation and lead you on in life God doesn't want us simply to survive but he wants us to live

God doesn't want us simply to manage through the circumstances but he wants us to rise close with these verses from Paul written at a time of great desperation great sadness great difficulty great troubles he says this therefore we do not lose heart though outwardly everything's going wrong that's my paraphrase he says outwardly we're wasting away yet inwardly we are being renewed revived raised day by day for our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all so we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen not on what is around about us but upon him who is risen and ascended at the father's right hand since what is seen is just temporary for a while and passing but what is unseen the things of God are eternal lasting and true where's your sights fixed dear friends why did

God raise Jesus from the dead ultimately for your sake and for mine now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to his power that is at work within us to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout every generation today and forevermore Amen