

Exegetical Analysis — Acts 2:29-36

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29-36 — “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. [30] And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, [31] he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. [32] This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. [33] Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. [34] For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'The LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, [35] UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET."'" [36] Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.” (29. Ἀνδρες ἀδελφοί, ἔξον εἰπεῖν μετὰ παρρησίας πρὸς ὑμᾶς περὶ τοῦ πατριάρχου Δαυὶδ ὅτι καὶ ἐτελεύτησεν καὶ ἐτάφη, καὶ τὸ μνῆμα αὐτοῦ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν ἔχοι τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης. 30. προφήτης οὖν ὑπάρχων καὶ εἰδὼς ὅτι ὄρκω ὥμοσεν αὐτῷ ὁ Θεὸς ἐκ καρποῦ τῆς ὀσφύος αὐτοῦ καθίσαι ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ, 31. προιδὼν ελαλησεν περὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὅτι οὕτε ἐγκατελείφθη εἰς ἄδην οὕτε ἡ σάρξ αὐτοῦ εἶδεν διαφθοράν. 32. τοῦτον τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἀνέστησεν ὁ Θεὸς, οὗ πάντες ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν μάρτυρες. 33. τῇ δεξιᾷ οὖν τοῦ Θεοῦ ὑψωθείς, τὴν τε ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἀγίου λαβών παρὰ τοῦ πατρός, ἔξέχεεν τοῦτο ὁ ὑμεῖς [καὶ] βλέπετε καὶ ἀκούετε. 34. οὐ γάρ Δαυὶδ ἀνέβη εἰς τοὺς οὐρανούς λέγει δὲ αὐτὸς εἶπεν κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου· κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου, 35. ἔως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἔχθρους σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου. 36. ἀσφαλῶς οὖν γινωσκέτω πᾶς οἶκος Ἰσραὴλ ὅτι καὶ κύριον αὐτὸν καὶ χριστὸν ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεὸς τοῦτον τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν ὑμεῖς ἐσταυρώσατε)

Peter's sermon is incredibly important to the establishment of the fact that Jesus was the rightful heir to David's throne, and that Jesus was the promised one that David spoke about so frequently, especially in the Psalms. Peter will attempt to demonstrate to the Jewish people that Jesus is the Messiah using three central tenants. These tenants will be unpacked below and will help to demonstrate the validity of Peter's claim. As a Revisionist/Progressive Dispensationalist, it is my belief here that Peter isn't stating that Jesus is presently ruling as King from David's throne in heaven, but rather that he is 1.) Proving that Jesus is the rightful heir to David's throne, 2.) that Jesus was the one that was exalted to the right hand of the Father, and 3.) and that Jesus was the one who was resurrected. There is no mention of a fulfillment in terms of a present occupation of David's throne (contra Covenant Theologians and Progressive Dispensationalists). Rather, there is a clear linkage to Jesus being the Messiah.

Let's look at the three central tenants:

- #1 - The Messiah's Throne [Acts 2:30]
- #2 - The Messiah's Resurrection [Acts 2:31-32]
- #3 - The Messiah's Exaltation [Acts 2:33-35]

In analyzing the three central tenants Peter is going to draw off the Psalms to demonstrate a direct correlation between Jesus (the one that was murdered by the Jewish people) and David's proclamation of the coming Messiah. In doing so, Peter will draw upon 3 Old Testament passages from the Psalms in Acts 2:29-35 to make a clear case that Jesus is linked to David, and that Jesus is the rightful heir of David's Throne. For the Messiah to reign from the Davidic Throne, he must have met the Prophetic criterion to be the one who would rule from that throne. Jesus demonstrated that he was the rightful heir of the Davidic Throne, when he resurrected from the grave, and was exalted to the right hand of the Father.

“The proposition which Peter argues is that Jesus is the Messiah (Christ) and Lord (vs.36). Three proofs are given to the vast audience which had gathered.”¹

Let's analyze each of the Psalm quotations in this section to see the point that is being made by Peter.

#1 - The Messiah's Throne [Acts 2:30] → Psalm 132:11

Psalm 132:11 NASB

The LORD has sworn to David A truth from which He will not turn back: "Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne.

The first Old Testament passage that Peter draws from is Psalm 132:11. God had promised David that there would be one who would come, who would be the rightful heir to his throne. This was to be the Messianic promise, that was made to David. The full realization of this promise would be fulfilled in the Messiah, Jesus.

Luke 1:31-33 NASB

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. [32] He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; [33] and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."

Peter's audience would have known this prophecy extremely well, that their Messiah would inherit David's Throne. Peter is clearly attempting to link Jesus with this promise.

Acts 2:22-24 NASB

"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know- [23] this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. [24] But God

¹ Homer A. Kent, Jr., *Jerusalem To Rome: Studies in Acts*, 32.

raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

Peter had just finished speaking of Christ in (vv.22-24), and in (vs.25). Peter would use a conjunction [γὰρ] at the beginning of (vs.25), to tie everything back to Jesus.

Acts 2:25 NASB

For David says of Him, 'I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN.

So, the proceeding context is an attempt to tie everything back to the one who was "delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death."

The next point that needs to be addressed here is whether or not Peter is drawing upon this text from Psalms to say that Jesus is *presently* fulfilling the requirements by sitting on his own throne. Covenant Theologians believe these passages in Acts 2 prove that Jesus is presently seated on David's throne. Let's take a moment to debunk that position.

1. Jesus is not presently seated on *his* throne (the throne of David), he is seated on the *Father's* throne at his right hand.

Revelation 3:21 NASB

He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

2. David's throne is an *earthly* throne, not a *heavenly* throne. This is made clear numerous times in the Old Testament. The throne is always situated geographically in Israel. It never moves, or suddenly shifts to heaven. The Father's throne cannot be conflated with David's throne.

2 Samuel 3:10 NASB

to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and to establish the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba."

2 Samuel 5:2-5 NASB

Previously, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and in. And the LORD said to you, 'You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be a ruler over Israel.'" [3] So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them before the LORD at Hebron; then they anointed David king over Israel. [4] David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years. [5] At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah

1 Kings 9:5 NASB

then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I Ipromised to your father David, saying, 'You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'

Jeremiah 13:13 NASB

then say to them, 'Thus says the LORD, "Behold I am about to fill all the inhabitants of this land-the kings that sit for David on his throne, the priests, the prophets and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem-with drunkenness!'

Jeremiah 17:25 NASB

then there will come in through the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and this city will be inhabited forever.

3. Only *earthly* rulers have ruled on David's throne. Not a single ruler has ruled from David's throne from *heaven*.

4. Jesus is not said to be presently subduing his enemies (which occurs at his reign), rather he is "waiting" at the Right-Hand, mediating on behalf of the Church *until* his enemies are made a footstool under his feet.

Hebrews 10:11-13 NASB

Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; [12] but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, [13] waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet.

5. Jesus is not reigning from David's throne and won't until he sits down on his own throne which occurs after his 2nd coming.

Matthew 19:28 NASB

And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Matthew 25:31 NASB

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

There are many more arguments that could be appealed to, but that at least demonstrates that this text cannot be used to make the claim that Jesus is presently seated on his own throne.

In summation, Peter is exposing the "Men of Israel" [Ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται] for their actions, as well as showing God's predetermined plan in the crucifixion of Jesus, to whom Peter links to David, and the Davidic promise of a throne.

#2 - The Messiah's Resurrection [Acts 2:31-32] → Psalm 16:10

Psalm 16:10 NASB

For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

Peter then links Psalm 16:10 directly to Jesus Christ, and his resurrection. Peter says that "he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ". This amazing truth is crucial to our understanding of the passage. Peter is again, attempting to demonstrate the linkage between Jesus and David, and that David was predicting this Messiah, all along. If we bring together and analyze both passages (Psalm 16:10, 132:11), here is the conclusion we come to:

- 1) the Messiah was to be given David's throne, and Jesus was that rightful heir (vs.30), and
- 2) the Messiah was to be resurrected from the dead (vs.31-32), and Jesus resurrected from the dead.

"So, when Peter combines Psalm 132:11 with Psalm 16:10 he seems to be saying this: Since David knew the Messiah is destined to sit upon and reign from David's throne forever, the Messiah must be raised from the dead. A dead Messiah cannot sit upon David's throne, so the Messiah must be resurrected. Peter is not saying that Jesus currently is upon David's throne, but the resurrection means God's promise to seat a descendant of David upon David's throne forever is alive and well."²

#3 - The Messiah's Exaltation [Acts 2:33-35] → Psalm 110:1

Psalm 110:1-2 NASB

The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." [2] The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, "Rule in the midst of Your enemies."

The last reference that Peter makes to the Psalms is none other than (Psalm 110:1). Peter's usage of Psalm 110:1 is quite interesting and very important. If Peter had wanted to communicate that Jesus was seated on the Davidic throne in heaven (presently ruling), he would have quoted (vv.1-2) of Psalm 110, not simply the first verse. So, Peter must have wanted us to understand something significant about (vs.1) while recognizing that (vs.2) didn't apply to the argument that he is making.

"Limiting the quotation to verse 1 appears to harmonize with Peter's purpose of pointing to the status of Jesus rather than any present action of rulership; this limitation would therefore have been deliberate on Peter's part."³

It is clear from the passage that Peter was seeking to prove the Messianic authority that Jesus had, which is why he showed his exaltation to the right-hand of the Father, but excluded his ruling from Zion. Peter is making the argument that Messianic authority does not include the

² Michael Vlach, *Is Jesus Currently on David's Throne? Peter's Use of Psalm 132:11 in Acts 2:30*.

³ Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology*, (Zondervan Academic, 2010), 75.

present function of reigning/ruling as Messianic King.⁴

“Peter’s use of Psalm 110 in his Pentecost sermon, however, the emphasis remains on proving the identity of Jesus as the promised Messiah rather than explaining any present activity.”⁵

Peter also parallel’s something that Paul says in 1 Cor 15:24-28:

1 Corinthians 15:24-28 NASB

then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. [25] For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. [26] The last enemy that will be abolished is death. [27] For He HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. [28] When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

Jesus will reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. Jesus will not cease his reign until the last enemy is abolished. We know that not all things are subjected to him, this will happen when the last enemy is defeated.

Revelation 20:14 NASB

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

The next thing we want to look specifically at is the “*right-hand of God*”. Jesus says that he was exalted to the right-hand of God in Revelation 3, yet he distinguishes his throne from the throne of the Father. This point was made above, but will be restated because it is important.

Revelation 3:21 NASB

He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Gerard von Rad states that Jesus:

“...sits as viceroy side by side with Jahweh himself: he does not sit upon his own throne, but upon that of Jahweh [cf. 1 Chron. 28:5; 29:23; 2 Chron. 9:8; cf. also Jer. 3:17].”⁶

The *right-hand* is seen as “the place of greatest favor, power, and preeeminence.”⁷

Saucy agrees:

⁴ Ibid., Robert L. Saucy further states that: “While these blessings are related to the Messiah and the messianic era, they are not the primary feature of the Davidic kingdom *reign* of the Messiah, nor are they part of the picture of Psalm 110. Thus they do not indicate the actual establishment of the messianic kingdom and Christ’s active reign over it at present.”

⁵ Ibid., 69.

⁶ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol.1 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 320.

⁷ The Moody Bible Commentary, *Psalms*, (2014), 850.

“The meaning of the “right hand of God” in Psalm 110:1 and Acts 2:33 is, therefore, the position of messianic authority.”⁸

Some understand the right hand of God to not serve a particular function, but merely to demonstrate his active authority.

“While it denotes the place of highest honor and glory, “the right hand of God” does not in itself suggest any particular function.”⁹

There is an emphasis on the *lack of function* at the right-hand of God, which is seen in Heb. 10:11-13 where the Lord is presently said to be “waiting”. Jesus' messiahship, his power, authority, his intercession, as well as his priesthood are interlinked with his current responsibilities seated next to the Father. This phrase (*right-hand of God*) is used to highlight Jesus' power, glory, transcendence, and his mediatorial work. This is a very important comment. We must recognize that the current position of authority at the right hand of the Father is not linked with his Messianic Reign as King. The *right-hand* doesn't denote that he is presently and actively ruling. The promise to reign (as seen in 110:2) must be a future operation. The present position of Christ must be distinguished from the function of the Messiah ruling from his throne. The right-hand of God is not a spatial term, but a term of authority. Peter has been attempting to prove that Jesus is the Messiah the rightful heir, and rightful authority, not that Jesus is presently reigning from David's throne. This is the conclusion that Peter makes in (vs.36).

Acts 2:36 NASB

Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

“Acts represents the exalted Christ as guiding events only to a very limited degree; usually God the Father is represented as in control. Luke—Acts often applies the *kyrios* title to Jesus, but not in a cosmological sense. Certainly he is not a king of a sort to threaten Caesar's order. Probably during the interim between resurrection and parousia Luke conceived of Jesus as Lord in the sense of ruling over the church as its recognizable savior.”¹⁰

In conclusion, Peter makes a key point to close off his sermon. That this Jesus whom they crucified “God has made both Lord and Christ” (vs.36).

“To prove that Jesus is the Messiah, Peter first used Psalm 16 to show Jesus had risen from the dead (Ac 2:24–32). He then declared (Ac 2:33–35) that Jesus had been exalted to “the right hand of God,” from which he gave the Spirit that was just witnessed by them. This was in fulfillment

⁸ Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology*, (Zondervan Academic, 2010), 72.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christian* (Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series, 1973), 71-72. Taken from Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology*, (Zondervan Academic, 2010).

of Psalm 110:1 and proved that Jesus had been installed as the Messiah (Ac 2:36)."¹¹

The point that Peter was making, was that Jesus was the Messiah, and he proved it by on the basis of these three central tenants:

- **#1 - The Messiah's Throne [Acts 2:30]**
- **#2 - The Messiah's Resurrection [Acts 2:31-32]**
- **#3 - The Messiah's Exaltation [Acts 2:33-35]**

This makes Jesus fit to be the Messiah. There is no text in the New Testament that teaches that Jesus is *presently* ruling from David's throne as King.

"A search of the New Testament reveals that *there is not one reference connecting the present session of Christ with the Davidic throne*. While this argument is, of course, not conclusive, it is almost incredible that in so many references to David and in so frequent reference to the present session of Christ on the Father's throne there should be not one reference connecting the two in any authoritative way. The New Testament is totally lacking in positive teaching that the throne of the Father in heaven is to be identified with the Davidic throne. The inference is plain that Christ is seated on the Father's throne, but that this is not at all the same as being seated on the throne of David."¹²

¹¹ Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology*, (Zondervan Academic, 2010), 69.

¹² John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, 203.