

Series: The Providence of God #1475

Title: Acts 2, Various Scriptures
The Providence of God in Christ

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world! Are you out there on a road somewhere driving along in your car or mini-van? Maybe you are in-between meetings or between errands? Could it be that you're sitting by your radio in that chair that's cozy and comfy on the backside? I know some friends listen to the God is Podcast while they make dinner, another dear friend while he drives to work in what many would consider the middle of the night, about 4.30AM! And our dear friend Ginny listens to God Is multiple times each day through each radio station we are on via Alexa. Hi Ginny and say hello to Alexa for me!

If you are wondering who Alexa is, I do not really know other than to say this is a little gadget Amazon makes – you speak to her and your wish becomes her command. Technology. It is amazing what can be done, both for good and for evil. But in this case, good, and we are happy to have those of you listen via Alexa.

Well, wherever you are and by however you listen (the radio or the podcast, or both), welcome. And only if it is safe to do so, tap open your Bible app on your mobile device or reach for the printed and bound Bible and open it to Acts chapter 2, verse 22. That's easy to remember Acts 2-2-2. Last time I introduced us to the text and the person whose focus we now take up in our ongoing conversation about the providence of God. We turn now to our Lord Jesus.

What we will read is the Apostle Peter's sermon to the Israelites whose attention he now commanded. Peter's objective is to show how Jesus is Israel's Messiah. Christ is God's Chosen One come to earth to redeem His people. Jesus has inaugurated messianic times. But of course this is a tough crowd, a difficult audience to convince, a congregation of people unlikely to agree with Peter. Why, because the Jews had Jesus crucified dead not long ago, primarily because Jesus claimed to be the Messiah and they did not believe Him. They thought He was blaspheming God by claiming to be the Son of God.

Now remember, what interests us in this sermon is the emphasis on the providence of God in the life and death of Christ. So, I have to discipline myself to focus on that. If you are like me and you yearn for detailed, verse-by-verse teaching of the Scripture then it is hard to move so quickly through a passage, especially one that centers on our Lord. But let's try and be real focused now on providence. So, let me read verse 22. This is Acts 2.22, **“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...”**

Immediately providence pops up. Providence is in the name Jesus the Nazarene. This was the popular name given to Jesus in His earthly ministry. Nazarene comes from Nazareth, which was Jesus' hometown in the north of Israel. Jesus of Nazareth or Jesus the Nazarene speaks to the humility of Christ. He is the very Son of God – taking leave of heaven and come to earth and yet His hometown is a backwater, a small and insignificant little town in lower Galilee. The providence of God is God directing the actions of Jesus' human life. And divine providence makes Jesus a resident of Nazareth.

God wants to demonstrate to the world that the Messiah, at His first coming to earth, will be a humble child and man of low estate. He will be the perfect example of humility. And the Jewish religious leaders who were expecting the Messiah to be a conquering King and military man did not welcome this humility. So the “Men of Israel” used “Jesus the Nazarene” in a derisive way. Peter then starts with this as a way to rebuke the Pharisees in his midst.

By doing this Peter highlights the providence of God in where Christ the Messiah grew up.

Second, providence is in God being the one who attested to them Jesus. The word “attested” means to exhibit, to demonstrate, to show by proof, and to proclaim. God the Father Himself testifies to us who Jesus is. That is, in Jesus is the will of Almighty God. This is why Jesus is constantly, repeatedly giving credit to God the Father for who Jesus is. Let's take a quick excursion to John's Gospel chapter 5, verses 31-36. I want you to see what I mean in John 5, verses 31-36. This is Jesus speaking...

“If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true.³² There is another who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true.

³³ **You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth.** (I will skip down to verse 36. John 5.36.)

³⁶ **But the testimony which I have is greater than *the testimony of John*; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.”**

And listen again to Jesus in John 8, verse 18, **“The Father who sent Me testifies about Me.”** (John 8.18.) There is that attestation. God gives evidence and proof that Jesus is the true Messiah. I have always found this remarkable. I wish we had more time for this. Jesus says back in John 5.31, **“If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true.”** Isn't that remarkable. I read that and I want to say, “Really?” Yes. Jesus draws us back to God constantly. The providence of God: everything that will happen in Christ's life happens under divine providence.

And how does God attest to who Jesus is? (Back to Acts 2.22.) Peter says God does so through **“Miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst...”**

Well, here is a third dimension to the providence of God in Jesus' life and ministry. This is a fact: Jesus never ministered his miracles on His own. God the Father is the one who did all the miracles, through Jesus. God does this to put Christ's deity on display *and* to demonstrate that the Father approves of the Son. Peter emphasizes “God performed.” God's providential hand was in each miracle. And boy was Jesus a miracle worker. He sure was! But the inspired Peter preaches this: God was actively involved in Christ's life. That is providence.

Maybe you feel this is a bit technical especially on a Friday? Well, let's review what we have learned thus far in Acts 2, verse 22.

First, God's providence is in the name Jesus the Nazarene. The providence of God is God directing the actions of Jesus' human life. And divine providence makes Jesus a resident of Nazareth. This is similar to the providence of God in you growing up wherever on the planet you did grow up. You and I did not choose where our parents would live, they did...and it is really that *God* did.

Second, providence is in God being the one who attested to Peter's listeners Jesus. The word “attested” means to exhibit, to demonstrate, to show by proof, and to proclaim. God takes direct action in the man Jesus to attest that Christ is the Messiah. As long as Jesus is on earth, God the Father will be providentially acting in His life. Read the Gospels, you will see that to be true.

And third we have learned this about the providence of God in the life of Christ: God the Father is the one who did all the miracles, through Jesus.

If there is one verse that summarizes what we have learned as we lean into Christ and end this week together, I believe it is John chapter 14 and verse 10. Let's hear again our Master Jesus speak to us. I am reading John 14, verse 10, **“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.”**

I love that. Jesus says, **“The Father abiding in Me does His works.”**

That says so much, but one thing this definitely affirms is that the providence of God is present in the life of Christ. And next week we are going further into Acts to find, specifically, God's providential work over evil and sin in what they did to Jesus. I hope that you will plan to be with us all next week, beginning of course on Monday.

Let's pray together. Our Father in heaven, thank You for Your presence with us. We look to Jesus and we cannot take our eyes and ears off of Him. We love you Jesus. Thank you for teaching us everything we need to know about who God is. And thank You, Father, Son, and Spirit, for your providence.

This week we have learned a lot. Thank You for Joseph, your servant. His was a difficult life, and yet He often said of You: "God meant it for good." He constantly spoke of You and Your providential hand in his life. Thank You that now we can spend whatever time You give us with Peter's sermon about Christ. Thank you for the Apostle Peter who you raised up, who you called, who followed you, who sinned and you forgave then who preached this message. I pray You will teach us through your Word. Give us the weekend to rest, and to reflect, and to put into practice all that You have commanded.

In Jesus' Name. Amen. Join us again on Monday for God Is!

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