

## 5. According to God's plan all along

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Good novels and movies are written by brilliant authors who could see the entire plots from bird-eye view that allows the authors to plan everything from many different angles. At the conclusions of those good novels and movies, the audience would say, "Wow, I didn't see that coming. What a perfect ending!"

Men can write that kind of novels or movies because he or she can control within one's book's outcome, not for the total human history. There is only one person who could do that – God.

Only our God could plan the incredible ending before the concept of beginning ever came, and in His infinite wisdom, the Lord weaved the prophecies regarding the profound salvation plan by His Son Jesus throughout the entire history of the universe. After all, it is according to God's plan all along .

### A. THE SPIRIT CAME ACCORDING TO GOD'S PLAN

*Acts 2:14-21 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. 15 For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. 16 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. 21 And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.'*

The spokesman of the apostles, Peter reminded the Jews who thought that these Christian believers were drunk at 9 in the morning . In that day it was unthinkable that people would be so drunk so early in the day .

This message by Peter was an impromptu sermon to the unexpected Jewish crowds. Yet we could say that this was a well-prepared sermon, because it was prepared by Peter's prior life with God and relationship with Jesus. It flowed spontaneously out of his life that was totally affected by the grace, mercy, and love of Christ and now Peter believed his Lord deeply.

In the midst of this great outpouring of the Holy Spirit, among signs and wonders and speaking in tongues, Peter was quoting Joel 2:28-32. Did his focus on God's Word quench the moving of the Holy Spirit? No, it actually fulfilled what the Holy Spirit wanted to do. All the signs and wonders and speaking in tongues were in preparation for this work of God's Word.

Unfortunately, some charismatic Bible teachers consider that studying the Word of God deeply is against the Spirit. They almost think it 's more spiritual to rely on their hyped experience than Bible study. Sadly, this is often due to the weak and unspiritual teaching of some who teach the Bible. The problem with this kind of mindset is that they have to come up with more hyped experiences next time to outdo what happened last time which becomes bizarre and unbiblical.

God told Joel that in the last days He would pour out His Spirit on all people. In the OT, the Holy Spirit would just come on certain people at certain times. Here are a few examples:

The craftsmen who built the tabernacle, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, Samuel, Saul, David, and others were filled with the Spirit of God to do His will.

But when we go to the NT, we see a different story. Jesus promised to us that every-day, garden variety born-again believers would be filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter uses the prophecy of Joel to show them that things are different now, just as God said they would be. Now God offered a New Covenant relationship, and part of the New Covenant was the outpouring of the Spirit for all who receive in faith. Under the New Covenant, every believer can receive the full measure of the Spirit, and be used in a special and wonderful way.

## **B. THE SON CAME ACCORDING TO GOD'S PLAN**

*Acts 2:22-36 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know -- 23 Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; 24 whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. 25 For David says concerning Him: 'I foresaw the Lord always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. 26 Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. 27 For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. 28 You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.' 29 "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, 31 he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. 32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. 33 Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. 34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, 35 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" 36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*

Peter gave them four proofs of the resurrection of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and then he called on them to believe on Christ and be saved.

### **1) The Person of Jesus Christ – v22-24**

Previously just about everyone in Jerusalem had heard or seen Jesus of Nazareth, the miracle Worker. They had heard His promise of His own resurrection. I wouldn't be one bit surprised if the very same crowd in front of the apostles were in front of Jesus standing next to Pilate while they were screaming and chanting, "Crucify Him," at the top of their lungs repeatedly. It had been less than two months ago, and it was still fresh in their mind.

They all also had heard the official story of the stolen body of Jesus by the press secretary Jay Carney as he was lying through his teeth for the Pharisees. But their fabricated story proved to be false due to many witnesses who saw the resurrected Jesus.

## 2) The prophecy of David – v25-31

Peter quoted Psalm 16:8-11, verses that obviously could not apply to David who was already dead and buried. Being a prophet of God, David wrote about the Messiah, that His soul would not remain in hades – the realm of the dead, or His body in the grave where it would decay.

## 3) The witness of the believers – v32-33

Prior to Christ's resurrection, the disciples did not even believe that He would be raised from the dead. They had nothing to gain by preaching a lie, because their message aroused the Pharisees' opposition and even led to the imprisonment and death of some of the believers.

A few fanatics might be willing to believe and promote a lie for a time, but when thousands believe a message, and when that message is backed up by miracles, you cannot easily dismiss it. These witnesses were trustworthy.

## 4) The presence of the Holy Spirit – v34-36

This time Peter was quoting from Psalm 110:1 and reminding the Jewish crowd what they just heard and saw was the manifestation of the Holy Spirit's empowerment as they heard from the Book of Joel.

Peter pointed out that the crucifixion of Jesus was not a simple execution of a criminal against Rome or the Jewish religious leaders. It happened according to God's plan for the condemned mankind.

That is why it is a mute point for people to blame Jesus' death on the Jews and persecute them like KKK or the Medieval Crusaders. If that is the case, they should have executed the popes during that time, because those popes were the descendents of the Roman government that carried out the crucifixion of Jesus and they should stop eating pizza and spaghetti. If we want to place blame for Jesus' death, it is us, all of us. He died for our sins.

## C. THE REPENTANCE CAME ACCORDING TO GOD'S PLAN

*Acts 2:37-41 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?"*

*38 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. 39 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." 40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." 41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.*

The Holy Spirit took Peter's message and used it to convict the hearts of the listeners.

Did you notice the phrase in v37 "cut to the heart"? That is the first sign of repentance. If you say, "I am a Christian, but I don't believe that I am such a bad sinner as some people say that they are." Guess what? What you just said only proves that you are NOT saved at all. Unless you acknowledge that you are a wicked sinner and you cannot make your way to heaven without repenting and receiving Jesus into your heart, you are not saved.

The Bible tells us that our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. If you don't acknowledge that to yourself, you are not accepting the fact that

you need Jesus. If you stay in that mindset until your last breath, you will send yourself to hell by your own choice.

By the way, it is unfortunate that the translation of Acts 2:38 in the King James Version suggests that people must be baptized in order to be saved, because this is not what the Bible teaches.

*Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. KJV*

The Greek word 'eis' which is translated "for" in the phrase "for the remission of sins" can mean "on account of" or "on the basis of." This verse should not be used to teach salvation by baptism. If baptism is essential for salvation, it seems strange that Peter said nothing about baptism in his other sermons in Acts 3:12-26; 5:29-32; 10:34-43. Besides, listen to what apostle Paul said regarding baptism.

*1 Corinthians 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the Gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.*

#### **D. THE CHURCH GROWTH CAME ACCORDING TO GOD'S PLAN**

*Acts 2:42-47 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

The 3,000 new converts needed instruction in the Word and fellowship with God's people if they were to grow and become effective witnesses. The early church did more than making converts; they also made disciples.

The church was unified, magnified, and multiplied. It had a powerful testimony among the unsaved Jews, not only because of the miracles done by the Apostles, but also because of the way the members of the fellowship loved each other and served the Lord.

By now, some of you are thinking, "Why is it that Calvary Chapel of Sahuarita is not growing like this first Century church in Jerusalem or some other big churches in America?" I don't know. It is not my job to figure that out, nor is it my call to have a big church. If He wants us to have it big, it will happen in His time. But I do know that it is my job to teach you from the Word of God faithfully and leave the church growth in the hand of God.

Maybe if I don't teach the truth from the Word of God; talk about feel good messages; pat on your back with "Atta boy" phrases and stroke your ego, our church will grow big?!?! If you wait for that kind of message to come out from my mouth, here is a Hebrew sentence, "Fat chance, not on my watch."

#### **E. APPLICATION**

If you are a part of the body of Christ, it is your role to love and serve the Lord and others. That is God's plan for all of us.