

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely

ACTS 5:31-32

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Lesson #8

COMMENTARY ON: 2:22-24

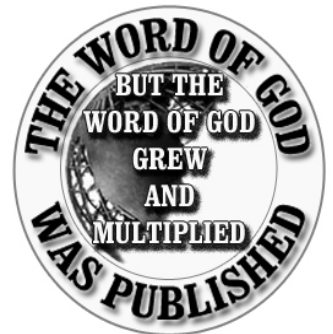
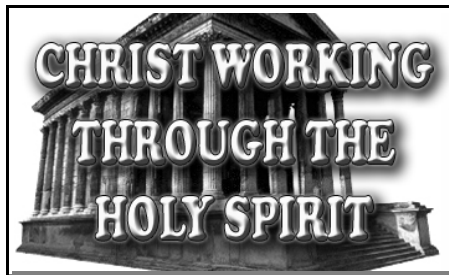
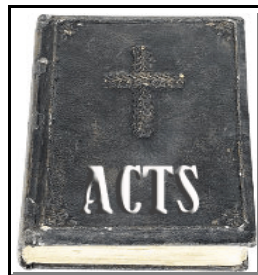
THE PREACHING OF JESUS – HIS DEATH

The day of Pentecost marked, what Peter later referred to as, "the beginning." At this time, "the door of faith" (Acts 14:27) was opened "to the Jew first" (Rom 1:16). Here, the Gospel of Christ was first preached with understanding, by someone other than Jesus who was "filled with the Spirit." There are several things to be noted in this singular event. First, the focus of the preaching. Second, the manner in which that focus, who is Jesus Christ, is expounded. We will find that the words of Peter bear very little, if any, similarity to the preaching of our day. In particular, this lesson will focus on the manner in which the death of Christ is declared. What Peter **does** say about that death is as startling to the institutionalized mind as what He **does not** say. We will also be made privy to "the mind of the Spirit," who is moving Peter to speak.

ACTS 17:26-27

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."

" . . . and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)



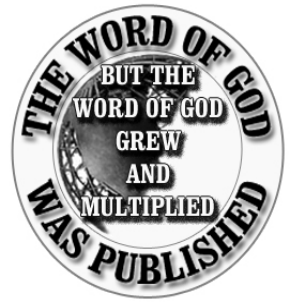
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A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO BUILDING THE FAITH AND ENHANCING THE HOPE OF THOSE WHO ARE WORKING OUT THEIR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

The Book of Acts

Lesson Number 8



TRANSLATION LEGEND: AMPLIFIED or AMP = Amplified Bible, (1965), ASV = American Standard Version (1901), BBE = Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA = Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV = English Revised Version (1885), ESV = English Standard Version (2001), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version (1967), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB = New American Bible (2002), NASB = New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU = New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB = New International Bible, NIV = New International Version (1984), NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV = New King James Version (1979), NLT = New Living Translation (1996), NRSV = New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakh (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TNK = JPS Tanakh (1985), TYNDALE = Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE = Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT = Young's Literal Translation (1862).

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE EXALTED CHRIST, BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS APOSTLES AND HOLY MEN TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD.

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

THE PREACHING OF JESUS: HIS DEATH

“ 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: ²³ Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: ²⁴ Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.” (Acts 2:22-24)

INTRODUCTION

The day of Pentecost marked, what Peter later referred to as, “*the beginning*” (Acts 11:15). Pentecost is to the New Covenant what Sinai was to the Old Covenant. As long as the world remains, there will never be a heaven-sent view of salvation that is at variance with what was presented on the first Pentecost after Jesus ascended “*up where He was before*” (John 6:62).

Here, the Gospel of Christ was first preached with understanding, by someone other than Jesus – someone

who was “*filled with the Spirit*.” The account before us is not the outworking of the wisdom of men. The minds and mouths of men were employed, but they were under the direct supervision of the Holy Spirit, who was working under the direction of the exalted Christ. Any analysis of this day, and the events that took place on it, must be considered within the framework of the will of God, the authority of Christ, and the working of the Holy Spirit. Peter will not deliver a Gospel that is tailored only for the Jews, as some theologians imagine. There are

those who, “*understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm*” (1 Tim 1:7), teach that Peter preached one Gospel to the Jews, and Paul preached another to the Gentiles. The Gospel Peter preached was the same one Jesus commanded to be preached “*to every creature*” (Mk 16:15). Paul preached the same Gospel, but was given to elaborate extensively on both its nature and content. However, the Gospel itself was the same. We do well, therefore, to give heed to what Peter declares, and to the manner in which he directs the thinking

The death of Christ is the basis for God's salvation. How will the Spirit move Peter to preach it? by Given O. Blakely

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of the people. He will give a brief exposition of some of the greatest events in all of history: the death Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the enthronement of Christ, and the events taking place on that day of Pentecost.

There are several things to be noted in this singular event. First, the focus of the preaching. Second, the manner in which that focus, who is Jesus Christ, is expounded. We will find that the words of Peter bear very little, if any, similarity to the preaching of our day. There will be no mention of God loving the people and wanting to be a part of their lives. No reference will be made to contemporary issues, domestic goals, or successful living. Peter will not allude to worship, praise, or “the will of God for your lives.” Prior to the inquiry of the people themselves, he will not refer to the remission of sins, Christ dying for our sins, or a step-by-step way of appropriating salvation. There will be no presentation of Bible study methodologies, no reference to the one true church, and not a single word about reaching certain people groups – like youth, singles, etc. Jesus will not be presented as a problem solver.

I understand such proclamations are cherished traditions in the minds of

many, and am certainly not set to summarily reject them. **However, the truth of the matter is that the Holy Spirit did not provide us a single example of this kind of preaching.** That certainly ought to establish that such **cannot** be a revelation of “*the mind of the Lord.*”

In particular, this lesson will focus on the manner in which the death of Christ is declared. What Peter **does** say about that death is as startling to the institutionalized mind as what He does **not** say. He will say little about **why** Jesus died, as ordinarily conceived.

Peter’s focus is placed on Deity. Everything is perceived and expounded in view of the Person and working of the Lord. Such a view is not strange to those who “*have the mind of Christ.*” Notice the references to Deity in our text.

- ⇒ “**Jesus** of Nazareth” (22a).
- ⇒ “**A Man** approved of **God**” (22b).
- ⇒ “. . . miracles and wonders and signs, **God** did by **Him**” (22c).
- ⇒ “**Him**, being delivered” (23a).
- ⇒ “By the determinate counsel . . . of **God**” (2:23b).
- ⇒ “By the . . . foreknowledge of **God**” (2:23c).
- ⇒ “**Whom God** hath raised up” (2:24a).
- ⇒ “. . . it was not possible that **He** should be holden of it” (2:24b).

There are eleven references to Deity in the three verses of our text.

- ⇒ The only town mentioned is the one from which Jesus came – **Jesus of**

Nazareth (2:22a).

- ⇒ The only approval mentioned is that of God Himself – **approved of God** (2:22b).
- ⇒ The means of approval are the things **God** did through Christ – **miracles wonders and signs** (2:22c).
- ⇒ The first reason for Jesus being delivered up is traced to the “**determinate counsel of God**” (2:23a).
- ⇒ The second reason for Jesus being delivered up is related to “**the foreknowledge of God**” (2:23b).
- ⇒ **God raised Jesus** from the dead (2:24a).
- ⇒ **God loosed the pains of death** from Jesus (2:24b).

Amidst a gigantic departure from the faith, this kind of preaching is virtually unknown in our country. Human assessment and reasoning have become the standard basis for proclamation, and it is not right. By way of comparison, Peter will employ the Spirit’s nomenclature, “*combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words*” ^{NASB} (1 Cor 2:13). **When the results of this preaching are recorded, it will be apparent that the Holy Spirit worked with the words of Peter, convicting the people of the sin of unbelief, the need for righteousness, and the judgment of the devil** (John 16:7-11).

At least one reason for an impotent church is the employment of unfertile words – words that have no spirit of life in them (John 6:63), and consequently cannot be used by the Holy Spirit.

As we consider Peter’s message

When the results of this preaching are recorded, it will be apparent that the Holy Spirit worked with the words of Peter, convicting the people of the sin of unbelief, the need for righteousness, and the judgment of the devil.

we will find no reference to the Pharisees, their activities, or their persuasions. The scribes will not be mentioned, nor their teaching. There will be no reference to the traditions of the elders, or the tactics of the lawyers, who were specialists in the law of Moses.

Peter will not call the people to consider finances. He will not promise them worldly success. He will not upbraid anyone for being poor, or congratulate anyone for being rich. He will make no appeal to worldly status or

achievement. All of this, of course, is very apparent. I only mention it because there is so much of this kind of preaching all around us. It may be said of such preaching that it is *"of the earth, earthy"* (1 Cor 14:47).

There will be an urgency in Peter's words, as well as a staggering tone of judgment. He will describe men as they **really** are, and make no effort make them feel good about themselves. He will declare what they **have** really done – whether they knew it or not –

and will make no effort to gloss it. We will also be made privy to *"the mind of the Spirit,"* who is moving Peter to speak. His reasoning did not originate with him, but, by faith, he had been brought into accord with the thinking of the Spirit of God. There is no variance between Peter's understanding of God's purpose and the purpose itself. From the *"heavenly places"* where he is seated (Eph 2:6), and through the Holy Spirit with whom he is *"filled"* (Acts 2:4), Peter is speaking with absolute precision and spiritual understanding.

YE MEN OF ISRAEL

^{42:22a} **Ye men of Israel . . .** "Other versions read, *"You that are Israelites,"* NRSV *"Men, ye sons of Israel,"* MRD *"Men! Israelites!"* YLT *"O men of Israel,"* LIVING and *"Fellow Israelites."* ISV

At the time of our text *"the door of faith"* (Acts 14:27) was opened *"to the Jew first"* (Rom 1:16). This was necessary because all of the promises concerning the day of salvation had been given to the

whom *"the twelve tribes"* came (Gen 49:28; Ex 24:4; 28:21; 39:14; Ezek 47:13; Matt 19:28; Lk 22:30; Acts 26:7; James 1:1; Rev 21:12). After wrestling with Jacob throughout the night, a heavenly messenger gave him a new name – *"Israel."* It is written, *"And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed"* (Gen 32:28). In Hebrew the

to *"a Jew."* They are also referred to as:

- ⇨ *"Jacob"* (Rom 11:26).
- ⇨ *"The tribes of Israel"* (Gen 49:16; Num 31:4; Josh 22:14; Judges 20:2; 1 Sam 2:28; Psa 78:55).
- ⇨ *"The twelve tribes of Israel"* (Gen 49:28; Ex 24:4).
- ⇨ *"The tribes of the children of Israel"* (Josh 4:5,8; 19:51; 21:1; Rev 7:4).
- ⇨ *"The people of the children of Israel"* (Ex 1:9).
- ⇨ *"The people of Israel"* (Num 21:6; Josh 8:33; Ezra 2:2; Neh 7:7; Amos 9:14).
- ⇨ *"The people of God"* (Judges 20:2).
- ⇨ *"The people of the Lord"* (Judges 5:11).
- ⇨ *"The children of Israel"* (Ex 3:14; 19:2; Rom 9:27; Heb 11:22; Rev 2:14). There are six hundred and thirty-five uses of this expression in Scripture – 621 in the Genesis through Malachi, and 14 in Matthew through Revelation.

The location of the various peoples of the earth – "the sons of Adam" – was determined in accordance with the number of the children of Israel. It is written, "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel"

Jews. It is said of them: *"Israelites; to whom pertaineth . . . the promises"* (Rom 9:4). Jesus also announced to a certain Samaritan woman, *"salvation is of the Jews"* (John 4:22).

The employment of the word *"Israel"* links the people with the Abrahamic promise and *"the fathers"* – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through

name Israel means "God prevails." STRONG'S In the Greek language it means, "he shall be a prince with God." STRONG'S This change of name reflects Divine purpose.

There several names given to these people. They are called *"the Jews"* (2 Kg 16:6; Ezra 4:12; Matt 2:2; Gal 1:13; 1 Thess 2:14). The book of Acts contains sixty references to *"the Jews,"* and eight

The word *"Israel"* is found 2,566 times in Scripture. The only name mentioned more is *"God"* (4,019). "Lord" is mentioned 1,055 times. By way of comparison *"Gentiles"* and *"Gentile"* are

mentioned 123 times, and “nations” 336 times.

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THE LOFTIEST VIEW

“Ye men of Israel” reflects the highest view of the Jewish nation. Although many Israelites found confidence in being a “Jew,” resting in the Law and making a boast in God (Rom 2:17), the term “Israel” removes all cause for national boasting. This traces their existence back to God, who “chose Israel” and made Himself “known” to “the house of Jacob” (Ezek 20:5).

Lest the Gentiles imagine that the Israelites no longer have any significance with God, Paul presents a lengthy argument for the absurdity of such an imagination. It is appropriate to briefly consider his argument, lest we be tempted to view Pentecost as a mere technicality. This was a “first fruits” harvest, and was reaped in anticipation of a fuller harvest of the children of the Israel, as well as the “other sheep” that would be added from the Gentile world (John 10:16). Peter will also acknowledge this greater harvest when he cries out, “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39).

ROMANS CHAPTERS 9-11

Here, I will only provide an outlined overview of Paul’s argument, confirming that at no point is the offer of salvation, and the anticipation of it being received, withdrawn from Israel.

- ⇒ Paul maintains a great concern for Israel (9:1-3).
- ⇒ God made a determined investment in Israel (9:4-5).
- ⇒ There is a remnant within the nation, chosen by God, as confirmed

in their history (9:6-13).

- ⇒ The righteous character God supports the maintenance of Israel, for His will is the determining factor, in both those who reject and those who accept (9:14-24).
- ⇒ There is a remnant within Israel who will yet be reaped. The reasonableness of this is seen in the fact that the Gentiles were themselves redeemed from an unacceptable state. It makes all the more sense for the Israelites to also receive mercy (9:25-33).
- ⇒ Just as with the Gentiles, the

- ⇒ Thus there remains a remnant among the people, “according to election,” even though they are presently in a state of unbelief (11:5).
- ⇒ This arrangement is in perfect accord with the grace of God (11:6).
- ⇒ Israel as a whole has not obtained the benefit, but the remnant within them did, and “the rest were blinded” (11:7-10).
- ⇒ The stumbling of Israel is not a permanent condition – i.e., they have not utterly fallen (11:11a).
- ⇒ Instead, this has been God’s means

Lest the Gentiles imagine that the Israelites no longer have any significance with God, Paul presents a lengthy argument for the absurdity of such an imagination. It is appropriate to briefly consider his argument, lest we be tempted to view Pentecost as a mere technicality.

present state of unbelieving Israel is due to their own spiritual obtuseness (10:1-3).

- ⇒ Faith, however, induced by the hearing of the Gospel, can triumph over such a sordid past (10:4-17).
- ⇒ Although the sound of the Gospel has been heard by the Israelites, God, in accord with His word through Moses, will provoke them to jealousy by the acceptance of the Gentiles (10:18-21).
- ⇒ It is categorically stated that God has **not** cast away His people Israel (11:1a).
- ⇒ Paul presents himself as proof of this, for he was not cast away (11:1b).
- ⇒ The fact that God has always preserved a remnant among this people is confirmed by such a preservation in the days of Elijah (11:2-4).

of bringing salvation to the Gentiles, to whom, God had not sent a prophet affirming a coming salvation (11:11b).

- ⇒ The salvation of the Gentiles is not intended to be an end of itself, but is designed to provoke Israel “to jealousy” (11:11c).
- ⇒ If the fall of Israel brought the riches of salvation to the world, and the diminishing of them meant salvation’s wealth was brought to the Gentiles, much more will blessing be brought by their restoration (11:12).
- ⇒ Paul magnified his ministry to the Gentiles in order that he might provoke the Israelites to jealousy (11:13-14).
- ⇒ If the casting away of Israel meant the reconciling of the whole world, receiving them again will induce an even greater spiritual resurrection (11:15).

- ⇨ If the beginning of the nation (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) was holy, then so are their offspring (11:16).
- ⇨ Only “some of the branches” were broken off of the tree, making room for the grafting in of the Gentile branches, who came from a wild tree (11:17a).
- ⇨ The Gentile branches are partaking of the stability and vitality of a Jewish root and tree. Therefore, it cannot be that the total Jewish tree has been rejected (11:17b).
- ⇨ Gentile believers should not be proud against the Israelites, for the Gentiles are being supported by the Israelite’s tree (11:18).
- ⇨ Some Gentiles may assume that the Israelites were broken off in order

that they might take their place. This is not so. It was because of unbelief that the “some” branches were broken off, and the Gentiles are in the tree by faith, and thus will, also be broken off if they abide not in that faith (11:19-22).

- ⇨ Likewise, the fallen Israelites will also be grafted in again if they abide not still in unbelief. That makes more sense to men that the grafting in of the Gentiles, who never were a people. What is even more, “God is able to graft them in again” (11:23).
- ⇨ If the Gentiles were put into the rich olive tree “contrary to nature,” “how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?” (Rom 11:24).

A TECHNICAL POINT

Prior to the time when Peter was speaking, Jesus had already told

Jerusalem it would be rejected, because it had rejected Him, knowing not the day of it’s visitation (Luke 19:42-44). He categorically told them, “Behold, **your house is left unto you desolate**: and verily I say unto you, **Ye shall not see Me, UNTIL** the time come when ye shall say, *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*” (Luke 13:35). **Yet Peter rises on this memorable Pentecost, and will call forth the remnant, fulfilling this word:** “until the time come when ye shall say, *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*” True, it will be a remnant, yet it will also be the “first fruits” of an even greater harvest to come!

Therefore, when Peter addresses these people he is appealing to their Divine heritage. He is stirring up a recollection of “the fathers” and the unequivocal promises that were made to them. He will therefore, by this means, plead with great insight and power. We do well to give heed to his words.

HEAR THESE WORDS

^{422b} . . . **hear these words.**” Other versions read, “listen to these words,” NASB “listen to this,” NIV “listen to what I have to say,” NRSV “give ear to these words,” BBE and “I beg you to listen to my words.” PHILLIPS

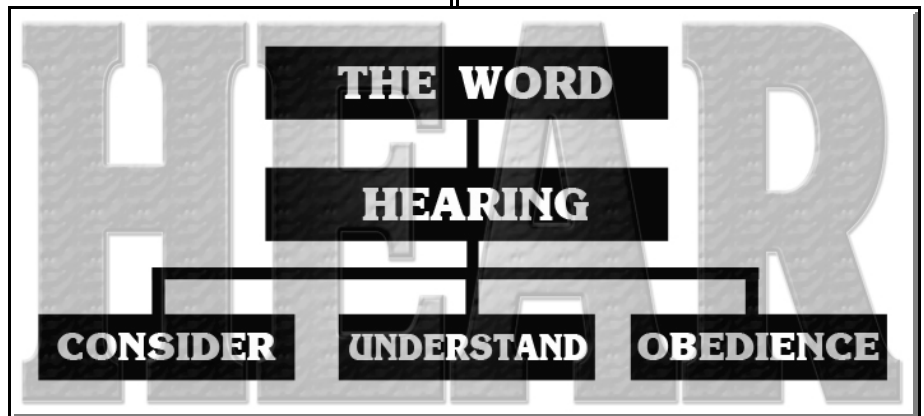
We cannot make too much of these words. If it is true that “faith cometh by hearing,” then men must be exhorted to hear – to listen, hearken, give heed, and take into their hearts and minds what is being said by the Gospel.

Jesus had told His disciples, “Preach the Gospel to every creature!” (Mk 16:15). The promise that those who “believe” and are “baptized” shall be saved, postulates that the Gospel has been heard. The emphasis here is on the preaching, not on the baptizing. For some, this is too hard to hear, because they imagine that it is somehow demeaning baptism. Such a notion is only an unfounded thought to be cast down.

Paul stated the case, and it is to be received, offensive or not. “For Christ

sent me **not to baptize**, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the

baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had



cross of Christ should be made of none effect” (1 Cor 1:17). **Paul said this because there were some in Corinth who attached more significance to their baptism, and who performed it, than to the Christ into whom they were baptized.** He wrote, “Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I

baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other” (1 Cor 1:13-16).

It was certainly not that Paul was indifferent about the subject of baptism. Much of what we know about this ordinance was delivered to us by Paul

himself (Rom 6:3-17; 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:5; Col 2:12-15). However, if you remove Jesus Christ from Paul's writings, you will also have to remove the subject of baptism, for it all hinges on Christ Jesus the Lord.

Now Peter calls upon the people before him to "hear" his words. The word "hear" comes from a word meaning, "to attend to, using the faculty of hearing; consider what is said; understand, perceive the sense of what is being said." ^{THAYER} A summons to "hear my words" is a call to consider and understand with the intention of obeying. This is the kind of statement a spiritually confident man makes. Peter does not assume this posture because of his natural speaking ability. His is an sureness produced by faith – the "full assurance of faith" (Heb 10:22), and "the full assurance of understanding" (Col 2:2). He has not been taught speaking skills, nor has he taken a course in the art of persuasion. The truth of God has impacted his spirit, and he himself comprehends what he is going to say.

RECEIVING IS NOT OPTIONAL

I have often heard men present what they conceive to be the truth as though there was an option available to men to reject it. They call upon men to research the possibility of what they say, and buttress their remarks with words

whom we have to do, there is no room for such approaches. When we address the death of Christ, human guilt, and the resurrection of Christ, there really is no room for any opinion. We need the unvarnished truth on such issues, and men must be exhorted to hear what is being said.

IS IT IMPORTANT TO HEAR?

If you are tempted to wonder how important hearing is, consider the words of the prophet Isaiah. "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" (Isa 55:3). Is there anything about that word that makes for indifference, differing opinions, or the development of some lifeless philosophy? Is there no consequence for failing to "incline your ear" to the living God? Is being made alive irrelevant? What of passing by an "everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David?" Does that sound like something that is neutral, unimportant, or merely interesting?

Remember, Peter is speaking as Christ's witness. Jesus had already told the disciples that when the Spirit came upon them, and they were "endured with power from on high," they would be His "witnesses" (Acts 1:8). That is, God was speaking to the people through Peter.

10:16). There is a "threefold cord" (Eccl 4:12) that is woven by God. It consists of God Himself, the Lord Jesus whom He has sent, and those who are sent out by Christ. To reject the one who is Christ's witness is to reject Christ Himself. To reject Christ, is to reject God.

Ponder the word that Jeremiah was given to speak. "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD" (Jer 22:29). Consider the outcome of rejecting that threefold admonition. I will venture to say there has never been a time when God spoke to men through holy men that He was indifferent about their response.

Let your mind take in the words of Moses, the servant of the Lord. "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of My mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, My speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God" (Deut 32:1-3). God's word is copious, supplying nourishment to those tender souls, whether they are new in the household of faith, or a bruised reed, or smoking flax. It also supplies rich nourishment to the stable and strong, who are like the robust and full-grown grass of the field. However, the profitable and abundant word of the Lord brings no benefit to those who do not hear it, failing to give their ears to the Lord. Peter knows this well, and that is why he calls upon the people to hear his words.

If you have "an ear to hear" you will sense that one of the besetting sins of the modern church is that its ministers rarely have very much to say. Too many of its preachers speak only of modern day issues. They do really have a message – one through which faith "comes" (Rom 10:17), because it is the means through the Holy Spirit works on the hearts of men. Too many professing ministers are only giving sundry responses to what is happening among men. You will at once perceive that this is not the way it is with Peter. He does have something to say, and he therefore bids the people to give their attention to it. He will speak forcefully and candidly, and will demand that the people listen to him.

Jesus made quite clear how heaven regards those who refuse the ones He sends, not hearkening to them, or treating them just as though they had said nothing important. "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me"

like, "I believe this with all of my heart." Such produces an atmosphere much like an academic classroom where the students are asked to consider various contradicting theories, then pick the one to which they are attracted. It all sounds innocent enough, and maybe even "intellectually honest."

However, when you are speaking of matters with eternal consequences, and issues that relate to the God with

perfectly coinciding with Paul's later statement, "as though God did beseech you by us" (2 Cor 5:20).

Jesus made quite clear how heaven regards those who refuse the ones He sends, not hearkening to them, or treating them just as though they had said nothing important. "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me" (Luke

JESUS OF NAZARETH

^{22c} . . . *Jesus of Nazareth* . . .”

Other versions read, “*Jesus the Nazarene*,”^{NASB} and “*Jesus from Nazareth*.”^{GWN}

The phrase “*Jesus of Nazareth*” occurs seventeen times in Scripture (Matt 26:71; Mk 1:24; 10:47; 14:67; 16:6; Lk 4:34; 18:37; 24:19; John 1:45; 18:5,7; 19:19; Acts 2:22; 6:16; 10:38; 22:8; 26:9). John records **the full writing** of the inscription that Pilate had “*prepared and fastened to the cross*.”^{NIV} “*And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS*” (John 19:19). Matthew refers to the writing as an “*accusation*,” or charge against Him. “*And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS*” (Matt 27:37). Mark refers to the sign as a “*written notice*,”^{NIV} and represents it as saying, “*THE KING OF THE JEWS*” (Mk 15:26). Luke also refers to it as a “*superscription*,” and says it read “*This is the king of the Jews*” (Lk. 23:38). John informs us that the “*chief priests*” objected to this sign. They went to Pilate about the matter. “*Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews*” (John 19:21). Ponder the following.

- ⇨ His enemies were known to refer to Jesus as “*Jesus of Nazareth*” (Matt 26:71; Mk 14:67).
- ⇨ The demons calls him by this title (Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34), indicating they were well familiar with Him, and where He was raised and conducted His affairs unto thirty years of age.
- ⇨ When Bartimaeus asked who was passing by, this was the description the people used (Mk 10:47; Lk 18:37). Angels called him “*Jesus of Nazareth*” (Mk 16:6).
- ⇨ On the road to Emmaus Cleopas referred to Him in this way (Lk 24:19).
- ⇨ When Philip found Nathanael and told him they had found the one of

whom Moses and the Prophets wrote, he called Jesus by this title (John 1:45).

- ⇨ When the soldiers came to the garden to arrest Jesus, and He asked them who they were seeking, they twice replied, “*Jesus of Nazareth*” (John 18:5).
- ⇨ When Stephen’s opponents raised charges against him, and eventually stoned him, they said, “*For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of*

“*Christ*” or “*Messiah*.” He rather speaks of the Lord as He was last publically known – when He was crucified and a sign was placed above His head identifying Him as “*Jesus of Nazareth*” (John 19:19). When He was arrested in the garden by “*the men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees*,” this was how they referred to Him (John 18:3). This is how He was known among the people. Those standing before Peter well knew that this was the man concerning whom they had cried out “*Crucify Him, crucify Him*” (John 19:6), and “*Away with*

Herein is a most interesting circumstance! At this point, Peter does not refer to “Christ the Lord,” “the Son of God,” the “Savior of the world,” or even “Christ” or “Messiah.” He rather speaks of the Lord as He was last publically known – when He was crucified and a sign was placed above His head identifying Him as “Jesus of Nazareth”

Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us” (Acts 6:14).

- ⇨ When Peter preached to Cornelius and his household, this is how He referred to the Savior (Acts 10:38).
- ⇨ When Jesus appeared to Saul of Tarsus, and Saul asked Him, who He was, the Lord replied, “*I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest*” (Acts 22:8).
- ⇨ When Paul recounted his past life, he said, “*I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*” (Acts 26:9).

CONSIDER THE SAYING

Herein is a most interesting circumstance! At this point, Peter does not refer to “*Christ the Lord*,” “*the Son of God*,” the “*Savior of the world*,” or even

Him, away with Him, crucify Him,” and “*We have no king but Caesar*” (John 19:15). When Pilate told the crowd he was “*innocent of the blood of this just person*,” the people shouted out, “*His blood be on us, and on our children*” (Matt 27:25).

That was the “*Jesus of Nazareth*” the people standing before Peter knew. When the people had been exposed to His matchless words, in spiritual coldness and rebellion they had responded, “*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him*” (Mark 6:3). So far as they were concerned, that was the Jesus they knew, and they had clearly made known their view of Him. Now Peter would face them with who Jesus really was, what they themselves had done, and how the very purposes of God had been fulfilled in their presence.

A MAN APPROVED OF GOD

^{422d} . . . a Man approved of God among you . . .”

The people to whom Peter was preaching had **not** approved of Jesus – not as He had represented Himself. The had received Him as “the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses, and of Judah and Simon” (Mk 6:3). They had received Him to some degree as “the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee” (Matt 21:11). **But they had never perceived this Jesus as Peter was going to proclaim Him.**

This is the man they had rejected,

God,” NKJV “a man accredited by,” NIV “a man who had the approval of God,” BBE “a man pointed out . . . by God,” CSB “a man borne witness to by God,” DARBY “a man whom God brought to . . . attention,” GWN “a man made manifest . . . by God,” MRD “a man commended to you by God,” NET “God publicly endorsed,” NLT “a very special man. God clearly showed this,” IE “a Man accredited and pointed out and shown forth and commended and attested . . . by God,” AMPLIFIED and “a man proved . . . by God himself.” PHILLIPS

First, this is something that was done deliberately by the living God, and

fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:21).

In addition, throughout Christ’s prodigious ministry, He was “approved of God.” Later, Peter declared to the household of Cornelius, “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10:38). Nicodemus, an inquiring Pharisee, acknowledged that it was evident that God was “with Him” (John 3:2). When the Jews objected to Jesus saying God was His Father, He said to them, “the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me” (John 5:36). He also affirmed that “the Father” had “sealed” Him (John 6:27).

A Critical Requirement

Although much is not made of this fact during our time, **what the Father thinks of the Son of paramount importance.** Many spend a considerable amount of time speaking to men about what God thinks of them. It all sounds very nice, but it is not. The Gospel focuses on the Father’s approval of Jesus, for without that approval salvation is simply not possible. **If men are going to be saved, someone who is, without any question, approved by God must accomplish it, for we cannot extricate ourselves from the bondage into which sin cast us.**

Salvation in all of its aspects must come from **outside** ourselves. This is because sin has made men thoroughly unacceptable to God. That is a condition that results in unregenerated men being “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1).

The One charged with effectively addressing and correcting this condition **must** be approved by God, being well pleasing to Him, for **God Himself is the reason for the salvation.** Also, His work must be accepted. Scripture affirms this in a number of ways.

⇨ Jesus “suffered for sins” that He might “bring us **to God**” (1 Pet 3:18).

Although much is not made of this fact during our time, what the Father thinks of the Son of paramount importance. Many spend a considerable amount of time speaking to men about what God thinks of them. It all sounds very nice, but it is not. The Gospel focuses on the Father’s approval of Jesus, for without that approval salvation is simply not possible.

not knowing that in Him they had experienced “the time of” their “visitation” (Lk 19:44). Jesus Himself told them He had brought them the “things which belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thy eyes” (Lk 19:42). In fact, in accordance with the word of the prophets, God had “visited and redeemed His people” (Lk 1:68). God had even sent a forerunner to announce the Savior’s coming, and ready the people to receive Him. Thus Zecharias, the father of that prophet John the Baptist, declared, “Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:78-79).

APPROVED OF GOD

. . . a Man approved of God. . .” Other versions read, “a Man attested by

directly specifically to the Israelites. The aim was to sanction “Jesus of Nazareth” as the promised Messiah.

From the very beginning this was made plain. When, for example, Jesus was born, a holy angel told lowly shepherds, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). Before Jesus was born “of a woman,” an angel from the Lord told Joseph, to whom Mary was espoused, “And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matt 1:21). When Jesus was baptized by John, God Himself said “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt 3:17). In His first message in His own home town, Jesus read Isaiah’s prophecy of the coming Messiah and what He was sent to do. He then announced, “This day is this scripture

- ⇒ Jesus reconciled us **“to God”** (Rom 5:10).
- ⇒ We have been **“alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord”** (Rom 6:11).
- ⇒ Being made **“free from sin,”** we have become **“servants to God”** (Rom 6:22).
- ⇒ We have been **“married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God”** (Rom 7:4).
- ⇒ Only those who serve Christ are **“acceptable to God”** (Rom 14:18).
- ⇒ In salvation we turn **“to God”** (1 Thess 1:9).
- ⇒ It is through Christ that we **“come unto God”** (Heb 7:25).
- ⇒ Through Christ we have been made **“kings and priests unto God”** (Rev 1:5).
- ⇒ There is only **“one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus”** (1 Tim 2:5).

The entirety of our salvation, from beginning to end, depends upon God’s approval of Christ. The Jesus we embrace MUST be the One God approved and sent into the world. It MUST be the One whom God sustained during His earthly ministry. It MUST be the One whose death God accepts, as confirmed by His resurrection from the dead. It MUST be the One to whom God listens as He makes intercession for those who come to God through Him.

There is a **“Jesus”** that is sanctioned, accepted, and approved by God for the work of saving men. **That means that God honors His words and His works. It means He blesses those who receive Jesus in the capacity God has ordained.**

If God has **“approved”** Jesus, there can be no acceptable reason for rejecting Him. It can never be acceptable to ignore what He says, or refuse what He offers.

AMONG YOU

... among you ...” Other versions read, **“to you,”** ^{NKJV} **“to your attention,”** ^{GWN} **“publicly endorsed,”** ^{NLT}

Now Peter informs the audience that God’s approval of Jesus did not take place behind closed doors, or on a mountain apart from the people. God

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approved, sanctioned, and endorsed **“Jesus of Nazareth” among them.** He drew their attention to Him, publicly endorsing Him. Paul referred to the public nature of Christ’s life, ministry, and death when he said to Festus, **“For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner.”** ^{NASB} (Acts 26:26).

The Divine approval of **“Jesus of Nazareth”** was not merely general – only for the masses of people at large. It was a targeted approval – **“among you,” “to your attention.”** The Israelites were the ones among whom Jesus ministered. His activities were primarily in their villages, towns, and cities (Matt 9:35; Mk 6:6; Mk 6:56). He was in their synagogues (Matt 4:23), and taught daily in their Temple (Lk 19:47). He ministered in all three parts of their land: Galilee (Matt 15:41; John 7:1,9), Samaria (Lk 17:11; John 4:4), and Judaea (Matt 19:1). He attended, and ministered at their feasts (Matt 26:17; John 5:1; 6:4; 7:2, 37). He ministered by their sea shores (Matt 13:2), desert places of their area (Matt 13:13-15), as well as throughout their country (Matt 931; 14:35). He ministered in Caesarea Philippi in the far North (Matt 15:13), and the southmost region of Idumaea (Mk 3:6).

In all of these regions, it was **apparent and beyond question that Jesus was no ordinary man.** Multitudes flocked to Him **“from every quarter”** (Mk 1:45). It is written, **“And there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan”**

(Matt 4:25). Three times Matthew wrote, **“great multitudes followed Him”** (Matt 8:1; 12:15; 19:2). Seven times the people to whom Jesus ministered are referred to as **“the multitudes”** (Matt 5:1; 9:33,36; 11:7; 14:22,23; 21:9).

In the ministry of Jesus the rich were exposed to Him (Lk 18:23), the **“common people”** (Mk 12:37), the religious elite (Matt 15:1), and the socially unapproved (Matt 9:10). The king heard about Him and His mighty works (Mk 6:14). Special religious councils were convened because of Him (Matt 22:15; Mk 3:6). Two times He fed a multitude miraculously with very small supplies of bread and fish (Matt 14:21; 15:38). He went into their homes (Matt 9:10,28; 26:6). He healed their sick in the streets (Mk 6:56), throughout **“all Syria”** (Matt 4:24), and in desolate places (Matt 12:15).

All of this is a commentary on **“among you.”** Peter will establish that there was no possible excuse for the Jews missing the significance of Jesus, much less for their rejection of Him.

A PRINCIPLE TO BE SEEN

In the end, we will see that there is no valid reason for the ignorance of God – not so much as a single one. Even where it appears as though the Gospel has not been preached, men have been

created with a conscience that should compel them to engage in a quest for God, for the “*work of the law*” has been Divinely written upon it (Rom 2:15). **In addition to this, God has strategically and purposefully positioned every person in both time and geography in order that they might seek the Lord.** “*From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and*

He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us”^{NIV} (Acts 17:26-27). I hardly see how anything can be stated with greater precision and objectivity.

Add to this the ministry of the

Prophets and John the Baptist among the Jews, together with the prodigious ministry of Jesus, and the words of Peter obtain unusual strength and conviction – “*A Man approved of God among you.*” There was not a soul in that region that had not in some way been exposed to “*Jesus of Nazareth.*” He was like a household name throughout the length and breadth of the land.

THE MEANS BY WHICH HE WAS APPROVED

^{422e} . . . **by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you . . .**”



Now Peter declares the means by which Jesus was publicly “*approved by God*” among them. The appointed means were in no way ambiguous, vague, or open to question. They were thorough, unquestionable, and beyond all controversy.

Three classifications of mighty works are given, with each of them transcending the natural order. By “*transcending the natural order*” I mean the works Jesus wrought could not have been accomplished by natural means, even though some of them had to with natural activities. They occurred in nature, but were not done by employing the forces, or laws, of nature. Take, for example, the feedings of the four thousand and the five thousand. Both of them involved a natural activity – eating. The multitudes were not fed miraculously by nourishing the people without them eating. They also were given bread and fish – ordinary food. They were not fed with “*bread from heaven,*” (John 6:31-32) or “*angels’ bread*” (Psa 78:25). **Yet, Jesus used a means of multiply the bread and fish that were outside the boundaries of natural power.** Bread cannot reproduce itself, or increase in quantity by means of natural laws.

I say these things because there are those who teach that miracles, signs, or wonders are wholly outside the limits of nature. Those holding to this view take the position all works within he categories of our text are creative in

nature. However, as in the case of Jesus feeding the multitudes, He did not create bread and fish, but rather increased

^{NAB} “*powerful deeds,*”^{NET} “*by the miracles and portents and signs,*”^{NJB} “*by doing tremendous miracles,*”^{LIVING}

THE MEANS OF DIVINE APPROVAL		
MIRACLES  POWER EFFECTIVE ABILITY AUTHORITY THE ONE WORKING THE MIRACLE IS THE POINT	WONDERS  PUBLIC ATTENTION-GETTING CAUSING MARVEL THE NATURE OF THE DEED ITSELF IS THE POINT	SIGNS  POINTER DISTINGUISHING TOKEN OF GREATER THE PURPOSE OR AIM OF THE WORK IS THE POINT

them. That is the same kind of miracle wrought when the widow of Zarephath found her small portion of oil and meal being sustained throughout a famine, even though it was being used (1 Kgs 17:16). The same was true of the widow’s “*pot of oil,*” which, though small, was used to fill a great number of vessels, yet the oil in the “*pot*” did not diminish (2 Kgs 4:3-6).

BY MIRACLES . . .

“ . . . **by miracles and wonders and signs . . .**” Other versions read, “*with deeds of power,*”^{NRSV} “*mighty works,*”^{ASV} “*works of power,*”^{DOUAY} “*mighty deeds,*”

The Greek word from which “*miracle*” is translated is *δυνάμει* (doon-a-mesi). It comes from the same root word as the word used in Romans 1:16: “*the gospel of Christ . . . which is THE POWER of God unto salvation.*” Often the word is translated “*mighty works*” (Matt 11:20-23; 13:34), and “*power*” of God (Matt 22:29). In Matt 25:15, it is translated “*ability*” (Matt 25:15). In Mark 5:30, it is translated “*virtue.*”

This word accents the ability and authority of the Lord to do something. The deed that is wrought is accomplished

because of the power and dominance that is resident in the Lord – inherent. The lexical meaning of this word is, “inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or which a person or thing exerts and puts forth,”^{THAYER} “able to produce a strong effect, power, might, strength,”^{FRIBERG} and “ability, capability.”^{LOUW-NIDA} **That is, the worker, is able to cause something to happen that could never be accomplished through the ordinary or extended course of nature.** An example of a “miracle” is “the miracle of the loaves” (Mk 6:52). **Here, the accent is on the one who DOES the miracle, and the power or authority HE possesses.**

As used in this text, the word “miracle” does not mean sign, or proof. It

blood the effects of the miracle were seen, and not the miracle itself.

In this sense, not all of Christ’s mighty works were “wonders” – done openly with the intent to gain the attention of the people. It is not that they were not wonders in the sense of being able to cause the people to marvel. Rather, they were not done openly – like turning water into wine (John 2:1-10), and Peter getting a coin from a fish’s mouth (Matt 17:27).

Examples of “wonders” would be the more open works that caused the people to marvel (Matt 8:27; 9:8,33).

resurrection of Christ, which confirmed that He was the Son of God with authority and power (Rom 1:4). Using the same word that is employed in this text, Jesus said of His resurrection, “*But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*” (Matt 12:40).

In this case, the PURPOSE of the work is the point – the reality to which it points.

WHICH GOD DID AMONG YOU

“... which God did by Him in the midst of you.” Other versions read “which God did through Him in your midst,”^{NET} “Which God performed through Him in your midst,”^{NASB} “which God wrought by Him in your midst,”^{DARBY} and “which God performed through Him right here among you.”^{WILLIAMS}

By these supernatural means – miracles, wonders, and signs – God sanctioned the Person, word, and works of “Jesus of Nazareth.” No adversarial power, whether Satanic or human, could stand before the Lord’s Christ. No demon ever argued with Jesus or sought to resist His will. No infirmity could remain when Jesus had dismissed it. No natural element ever failed to yield to Him, whether wind, storm, waves, water, trees, or fish. He spoke “with authority” (Lk 4:36) because He had authority from God, being approved by Him. No man could touch, harm, answer, or arrest Jesus until the time came for Him to lay down His life. **The reason for this – He was “approved of God.”**

This Divine approval did not take place in a remote area, but “among” the Jews themselves. **It was a public approval, a frequent approval, and an effective approval.** God gave the people enough evidence of His unqualified sanction of “Jesus of Nazareth”, so that no question concerning the identity or authenticity of Jesus could possibly be legitimate.

Jesus had gone “among the people,” working the works of God. As it

By these supernatural means – miracles, wonders, and signs – God sanctioned the Person, word, and works of “Jesus of Nazareth.” No adversarial power, whether Satanic or human, could stand before the Lord’s Christ. No demon ever argued with Jesus or sought to resist His will. No infirmity could remain when Jesus had dismissed it. No natural element ever failed to yield to Him, whether wind, storm, waves, water, trees, or fish.

rather speaks of the ability and authority to do something – like dismiss demons with His word (Matt 8:16).

BY... WONDERS

Other versions read, “did amazing things,”^{GWN} “prodigies,”^{MRD} and “portents.”^{NJB}

Coming from the Greek word τέρας (teras), a “wonder” is something that is so **unusual it draws the attention of men.** It is something wrought externally that can be observed and analyzed by others. Lexically the word means, “something so strange as to cause it to be watched or observed,”^{THAYER} and “something so unusual it arouses close observation.”^{FRIBERG} **Here the accent is on the NATURE of the work that is done.**

The healing of a man with a withered hand, and the raising of an impotent man, might be called a “wonder” – something that could be seen. By way of comparison, in the woman who was miraculously healed of an issue of

BY... SIGNS...

Other versions read, “miraculous signs,”^{NET} and “wonder-works”^{WILLIAMS}

The word “sign” comes from the Greek word σημεῖον (say-mi-ois), which refers to a supernatural work that serves as a pointer to some distinguishing characteristic. Lexically the word means, “that by which a person or a thing is distinguished from others and known,”^{THAYER} “basically, what serves as a pointer to aid perception or insight; sign, mark, distinguishing characteristic”^{FRIBERG} and “a sign, a mark, a token,”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

An example would be the healing of the paralytic man who was let down through the roof to Jesus’ feet. Before healing Him, Jesus said: “*But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house*” (Mark 2:10-11).

Although not the point of this text, the preeminent “sign” is the

is written, “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease **among the people**” (Matt 4:23). And again, “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching

in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease **among the people**” (Matt 9:35). His presence among them was so arresting that it is written, “So there was a division among the people **because of Him**” (John 7:43), and

“There **was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings**” (John 10:19). The entire area was aflame with an acute awareness of the presence and ministry of Jesus, His words, and His works. Peter powerfully places this before the people.

YOU KNOW IT WELL

“^{22f} . . . as ye yourselves also know.” Other versions read, “just as you yourselves know,”^{NASB} “as you yourselves have knowledge,”^{BBE} “as you also know,”^{DOUAY} “as you well know,”^{NLT} “according as also ye yourselves have known,”^{YLT} “You know this is true,”^{IE} and “as you very well know.”^{PHILLIPS}

Peter now appeals to the conscience of the people. **They were fully aware of the Divine approval to which Peter has referred.** It was their hard hearts and unwillingness to yield that caused them to ignore all of that evidence, rejecting the Son of God. Ponder the many references to the response of the people to Jesus. They confirm they knew— at last intellectually – of the extraordinary nature of Christ, His words, and His works.

⇨ **ASTONISHED AT HIS DOCTRINE.** “And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine” (Matt 7:28).

⇨ **THE PEOPLE WERE AMAZED.** “And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?” (Matt 12:23).

⇨ **THE PEOPLE FOLLOWED HIM.** “When Jesus heard of it, He departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed Him on foot out of the cities” (Matt 14:13).

⇨ **THE PEOPLE PRAISED HIM.** “And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest” (Matt 21:9).

⇨ **THE PEOPLE RAN TO HIM.** “And straightway all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him” (Mark 9:15).

⇨ **THE PEOPLE GLORIFIED GOD.** “And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion”

wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?” (Luke 4:22).

⇨ **THE PEOPLE PRESSED TO HEAR HIM.** “And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennesaret” (Luke 5:1).

⇨ **THEY GLORIFIED GOD AND WERE FILLED WITH FEAR.** “And they were

Peter now appeals to the conscience of the people. They were fully aware of the Divine approval to which Peter has referred. It was their hard hearts and unwillingness to yield that caused them to ignore all of that evidence, rejecting the Son of God.

(Mark 2:12).

⇨ **THE PEOPLE RESORTED TO HIM.** “And He arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto Him again; and, as He was wont, He taught them again” (Mark 10:1).

⇨ **EVEN THE SCRIBES AND CHIEF PRIESTS KNEW OF HIM.** “And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy Him: for they feared Him, because all the people was astonished at His doctrine” (Mark 11:18).

⇨ **THEY WONDERED AT HIS WORDS.** “And all bare Him witness, and

all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day” (Luke 5:26).

⇨ **THE PEOPLE RECEIVED HIM.** “And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received Him: for they were all waiting for Him” (Luke 8:40).

⇨ **MANY BELIEVED ON HIM.** “And many of the people believed on Him, and said, When Christ cometh, will He do more miracles than these which this man hath done?” (John 7:31).

The above texts are all confirmation of the impact of God's

approval of Jesus among the people. There was no acceptable reason for the

Jews rejecting Him – not so much as a single one. He had been approved with

unwavering consistency over and over, time and again, **among them.**

HIM!

^{423a} **Him . . .** Other versions read, “This man,” NASB “this Jesus,” RSV “This same,” DOUAY and “This very man.” ISV

In this single word Peter narrows the focus of his words to a solitary Individual – the Lord Jesus Christ. The prophets had declared that the hopes of humanity depended upon “a Man” – not a nation, not an army, not a body of people, but “a Man.” *And a Man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land* (Isa 32:2). Again, speaking of the coming Messiah – a single person – Isaiah wrote, “*And He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to*

What spirit would provoke any one to shine the spotlight of attention on any other person? How is it possible for a people to become so enamored of an individual, a movement, or a line of thinking that do not give the obvious preeminence to this man? **Keep in mind, that to divide the people of God, you must focus on something other than Jesus, for He is not divided, and cannot be the cause of division among His people.**

Throughout history – from very early times – the focus of the church has been its weakness. Paul stated the case well to the Colossians, who were being pulled away from a proper focus. “*Beware lest any man spoil you through*

cause a person to in any way excel in spiritual life. **Men may extol such things as hermeneutics, homiletics, apologetics, logic, and the likes, but there is no life in any of them.** No person can in any way say of such principles of thought, “*they are spirit, and they are life*” (John 6:63). None of them can make “*the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*” (2 Tim 3:17). Unlike the Word of God, none of them can beget a soul (James 1:18), save the soul (James 1:21), build men up (Acts 20:32), or make men “*wise unto salvation*” (2 Tim 3:15). Only the Word of God, which focuses on the Lord’s Christ, can accomplish such things – and **they are all essential to our identity with God through God.**

There are at least two principle diversions from Christ in the “*Christian*” community. These have to do with appropriating and maintaining a productive relationship with the living God. Both of them have this one thing in common: Jesus is **not** the main thing. He is **not** the solitary means of Divine approval or moral improvement. **All of them are driven by an overestimation of the human mind and an underestimation of the need for the grace of God as ministered exclusively through the Lord Jesus Christ.**

LAW

Within, for what of a better term, “*Christendom*,” there is an approach to man’s association with God that is based upon the **Law principle.** This approach assumes a fundamental recalcitrance within “*Christians*.” This primary propensity requires an approach to Divine acceptance and godly living that is much like surrounding the individual with a fence. Boundaries are established beyond which men cannot go, and within which they are bound to operate by obligation. This particular view prompts unlearned preachers and teachers to say to believers, “*We are just like the Israelites of old*,” or “*You know how we*

What spirit would provoke any one to shine the spotlight of attention on any other person? How is it possible for a people to become so enamored of an individual, a movement, or a line of thinking that do not give the obvious preeminence to this man?

both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (Isa 8:14).

The Divine assessment of every person will be made upon the basis of this Person. He will either be a place of refuge, or a Stone of stumbling, a great Rock to shelter them from the heat or a “*gin* (trap) and a snare” by which they will be discovered and condemned. He would be either a Foundation – the means of their stability – or a crushing Rock that would grind them into powder.

philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power” (Col 2:10). **It is not possible to obtain any resource required for life and godliness that is not resident in the Person of Christ.** There is no body of human knowledge that contains so much as a mote of spiritual value. No mere man has ever, or can ever, present a new line of reasoning to the people of God, a thought-out procedure that will enhance spiritual life, or a principle that will

are; we seek our own will and do not want to do God's will," or "We just do not listen to the Lord as we should," or "We need to make Jesus the Lord of our life." All of this has a kind of holy sound to it, and draws affirmative responses from the half-hearted and lukewarm.

The premier Law is the one inculcated upon men by the living God Himself – The Ten Commandments and the ordinances that surrounded them. This Law stands for all moral law. **Its purpose was never to justify. It was never intended to be a means of obtaining Divine approval.** Rather, its purpose is summarized in these words: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom 3:19). In this ministry, it is appropriately referred to as "our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal 3:24). **In other words, it confirmed the need of a Savior to all who took it seriously.**

In its ministry, this Law also confirmed the **inability** of law – any law – to justify a person, or exonerate him from sin and its defiling effects. In confirmation of this the Spirit says, "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: **for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law**" (Gal 3:21). That is, for a law to be effective as a means of obtaining God's approval, **it must be able to confer life.**

No person who can handle the Word of God aright will affirm that life – spiritual life – can be conferred upon men by means of a law, or a rule of conduct. Such a postulate borders on insanity. Jesus has made quite clear that life lies in a Person, not a code. He affirmed that He Himself is "the Life" (John 14:6), and that He alone, having life "in Himself," has been given the power or authority, to confer life (John 5:26).

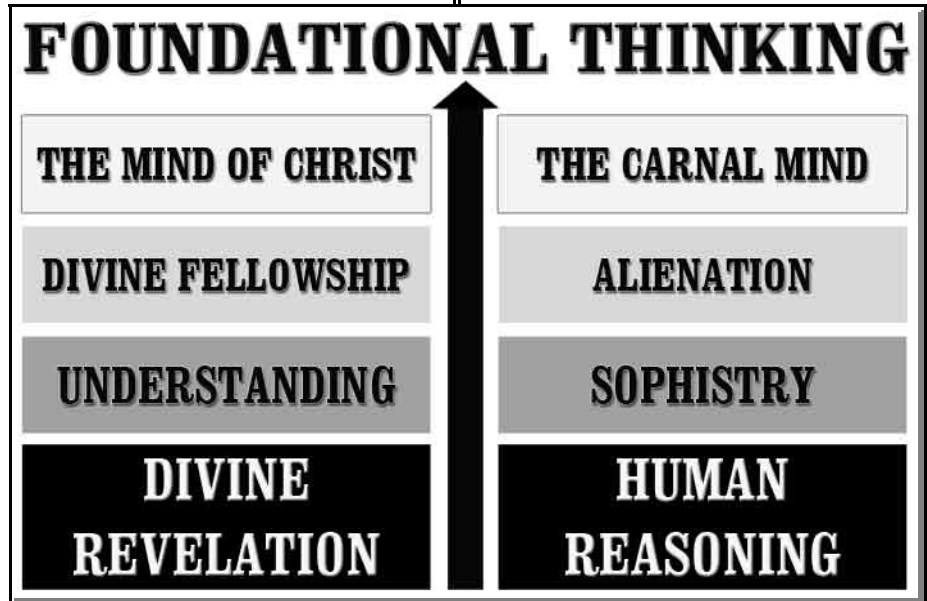
Peter's employment of the term "HIM" draws the attention of His hearers to the Lord Jesus, the sole means of obtaining eternal life and the Divine acceptance that is bound to it.

PHILOSOPHY

A philosophical approach to obtaining life is based upon human reasoning. While it may be associated with various laws, rules, routines, and

the universe."^{AMPLIFIED}

Notice that this approach is contrasted with one that is "after Christ." **This erroneous approach exists because**



disciplines, **the imagined strength of this system is human reasoning itself.**

Paul warned the Colossians of this dreadful approach to spirituality, which was already being perpetrated among them by false teachers. "Beware lest any man spoil you through **philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.** For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Col 2:8-10). Other versions read, "philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men,"^{NKJV} "philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world,"^{NASB} "hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world,"^{NIV} and "so-called philosophy and intellectualism and vain deceit (idle fancies and plain nonsense), following human tradition (men's ideas of the material rather than the spiritual world), just crude notions following the rudimentary and elemental teachings of

men do not believe there is completeness in Christ (Col 2:9). The fulness of the Godhead is not seen as resident in Christ, which imagination allows for the appropriation of needed resources elsewhere. Also observe that the philosophical approach borrows from the world ("rudiments of the world"), and has human tradition as one of its main pillars ("the tradition of men").

The word "philosophy" is an interesting one. It is a transliteration of the Greek word φιλοσοφίας (fil-os-of-ee-as). As used in the Colossian text, its lexical meaning is, "a world view, as opposed to that derived from Divine revelation; human wisdom or understanding,"^{FRIBERG} "human understanding or wisdom and, by implication, in contrast with Divinely revealed knowledge,"^{LOUW-NIDA} "sophistry,"^{GINGRICH}

Human reasoning, and the knowledge resulting from it, must never be allowed to become the basis, or foundation, of religious thought. There is nothing unlawful about reasoning itself. In fact, there is a certain necessity of reasoning within the fabric of spiritual life. However, the conclusions reached by human reasoning are only valid when they are found in perfect harmony with Divine utterance. Legitimate conclusions

are always founded upon precise Scriptural affirmations.

Hermeneutics

There are a number of bodies of human knowledge that fall into the classification of philosophy. Chief among these intellectual culprits is hermeneutics. The definition of this term is, "The study of the methodological principles of interpretation; a method or principle of interpretation," MERRIAM-WEBSTER, "a philosophical technique concerned with the interpretation and understanding of texts. It may be described as the theory of the interpretation and understanding of a text on the basis of the text itself. The concept of "text" has been extended beyond written

like a manual of human conduct – a sort of roadmap to heaven. In this view, the Scriptures are primarily a legal document written to spell out the details of human conduct. Others read it as a kind of unreachable goal that is set before us – the ideal toward which we hopelessly strive. Still others perceive it within an institutional setting – a way of finding out how to identify the one true church. In this approach to Scripture, the lense of human perception is placed over the Scripture, so that it is read with a purely human conclusion in mind.

No absolutely hermeneutical

the great Primary One. **However, in the development of their distinction in the Christian community they put Him into the background.**

Peter does not do this. Immediately He brings the Lord Jesus Christ into the foreground – **"HIM!"** All of the people knew that Jesus stood out among men as He went about *"doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil"* (Acts 10:38). However, as Peter will confirm, they did not regard Jesus as **absolutely** preeminent.

THE FOCUS DIVINELY DEFINED

If God's message centers in His Son, why would our message revolve around anything else. *"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son"* (1 John 5:10-11).

The message focuses upon what Jesus did, not what we should do. *"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand: by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that **Christ died** for our sins according to the scriptures; and that **He was buried**, and that **He rose again the third day according to the scriptures"** (1 Cor 15:1-4). If we "stand" in the Gospel, then who is the author of the notion that the Gospel is not to be preached to the church?*

If accomplishment is the point, then the summary of our doctrine must be Christ Himself. *"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: **We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man"** (Heb 8:1-2). **What Jesus IS doing is the primary activity.** All other activities are prioritized after that consideration, and are only valid as they are directly related to Christ's activity.*

The Spirit clearly states that there is a thoroughness in Christ Himself that makes us completely adequate. "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Col 2:10). Thus Christ is described as "all, and in all" (Col 2:11), "our Life" (Col 3:4), and "the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). If all of the "fulness of the Godhead" dwells in Christ Jesus (Col 1:19; 2:9), how could there possibly be any emphasis other than "Him" ?

documents to include, for example, speech, performances, works of art, and even events. Thus, one might speak of and interpret a 'social text.'" OXFORD

There are a number of official hermeneutics – scientific principles by which the Bible is interpreted (as compared with "believed"). The Britannica Encyclopedia provides four of the primary ones. "Its (HERMENEUTICS) primary purpose is to discover the truths and values of the Bible, which is seen as a receptacle of divine revelation. Four major types of hermeneutics have emerged: LITERAL (asserting that the text is to be interpreted according to the "plain meaning"), MORAL (seeking to establish the principles from which ethical lessons may be drawn), ALLEGORICAL (interpreting narratives as having a level of reference beyond the explicit), and ANAGOGICAL or MYSTICAL (seeking to explain biblical events as they relate to the life to come). More recently the word has come to refer to all "deep" reading of literary and philosophical texts." BRITANNICA ENCLYCLOPEDIA

For example, some read the Bible

approach perceives Christ Jesus Himself as being the central subject of Scripture, and Object of personal quest (Phil 3:7-14). Some, for example, perceive the primary focus to be the worship of God. Others see it is obtaining the secret to success in this world. Still others see the fundamental matter to be holiness. More could be said, but this will suffice.

At the lowest possible rung of the ladder of human perception there are those who read the Scriptures as a Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Christian Church, of Christ of Christ, Charismatic, Catholic, and even a professing Christian sodomite. Each of these manage to find justification for their particular division of institutionalized Christianity. All of these, however, read over the real point of Scripture, and manage to miss the key Person of God's Son. Oh, they know He is there, and even acknowledge that He is

The Spirit clearly states that there is a thoroughness in Christ Himself that makes us completely adequate. *“And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power”* (Col 2:10). Thus, Christ is described as *“all, and in all”* (Col 2:11), *“our Life”* (Col 3:4), and *“the hope of glory”* (Col 1:27). If all of the *“fulness of the Godhead”* dwells in Christ Jesus (Col 1:19; 2:9), how could there possibly be any emphasis other than

“Him” ? If salvation in all of its multifarious aspects is described as receiving *“of HIS fulness”* (John 1:16), then we are shut up to Him for all resources required for life and godliness.

BRIEF CONCLUSION

Peter now turns the attention of the people to the Son of God – **“HIM.”** This is the one individual who is of eternal relevance, and upon whom the

destiny of all men is hinged. He will declare that what happened to Jesus is infinitely more important than what has happened to them. He will attribute the most important counsel, knowledge, and work to be that of God Himself. **He will also declare that what they did to Jesus was more pertinent to their current status than anything else they ever did.** Christ Jesus is the most relevant Person who has ever walked on earth.

BEING DELIVERED UP

^{4 23b} . . . being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God . . . ”

The subject is Christ Jesus – the One who had been clearly approved by God among the very people now standing before Peter. What would men do with the Man whom God unquestionably and powerfully approved among them? What advantage had their religion given them in the matter of recognizing the One foretold by the holy prophets? How ready had the teaching of the scribes made them to receive *“the Lord’s Christ”*? That is what Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, will now address.

BEING DELIVERED

“ . . . being delivered . . . ” Other versions read, *“delivered up,”* ^{NASB} *“handed over to you,”* ^{NIV} *“when He was given up,”* ^{BBE} *“given up,”* ^{DARBY} *“who was given over to death,”* ^{GWN} *“delivered over,”* ^{NAU} *“who was put into your power,”* ^{NJB} *“after He was delivered,”* ^{TNT} *“being given out,”* ^{YLT} *“God . . . let you,”* ^{LIVING} and *“after He was betrayed.”* ^{WILLIAMS}

Jesus was put into their hands. That is, **He was placed within the perimeter of their power.** They could do with Him whatever they desired. The border of their wills now was extended to include *“Jesus of Nazareth.”*

Prior to the time when He was **“delivered”** into their hands, they had absolutely no power of influence of any kind over Him. When the people of His own home town *“rose up and thrust Him out of the city,”* they *“led Him unto the*

brow of the hill whereon the city was built, that they might cast Him down headlog.” It looked like He was within their power at that time – but He was not. It is written, *“But He passing through the midst of them went His way”* (Luke 4:30). Another time, later in His ministry, the Jews *“took . . . up stones to cast at Him: but Jesus hid Himself, and*

mentioned event, Jesus was put into their hands. Of that occasion it is written, *“Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to Him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves. When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against Me: but this is your*

Here is what men did when they were given the opportunity by God to do so. The hearts of Jews, Gentiles, common people, religious people, religious leaders, and politicians will now be revealed.

went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by” (John 8:59). Of another occasion it is written, *“Therefore they sought again to take him: but He escaped out of their hand”* (John 10:39). When the *“officers from the chief priests and Pharisees”* came to arrest Jesus in the Garden, He acknowledged that He was, indeed, *“Jesus of Nazareth.”* Of that occasion it is written, *“As soon then as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground”* (John 18:6). **Up to that moment, He had not yet been delivered into their hands. That is why they could not so much as lay a hand on Him, much less do Him harm.**

However, following the above-

hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53).

It was God Himself who delivered Jesus into the hands of the people. Later Peter will tell another group of Jews, *“But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled”* (Acts 3:18). It was God who *“delivered”* Jesus up *“for our offenses”* (Rom 4:25). It is categorically stated, **“He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all . . . ”** (Rom 8:32). **If God had not handed His own Son over to this hateful mob, they would have been totally frustrated in every one of their attempts to take Him. They were used by God and did not even know it.**

Here is what men did when they were given the opportunity by God to do so. The hearts of Jews, Gentiles, common people, religious people, religious leaders, and politicians will now be revealed. Thus the word of Simeon will be fulfilled: *“Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed”* (Luke 2:34-35).

BY THE DETERMINATE COUNSEL

“... by the determinate counsel. . . .” Other versions read, *“by the determined purpose,”* ^{NKJV} *“by the predetermined plan,”* ^{NASB} *“by God’s set purpose,”* ^{NIV} *“according to the definite plan,”* ^{NRSV} *“by the decision,”* ^{BBE} *“according to God’s determined plan,”* ^{CSB} *“by a plan,”* ^{GWN} *“being hereto appointed. . . the good pleasure of God,”* ^{MRD} *“by the deliberate intention,”* ^{NJB} *“His prearranged plan,”* ^{NLT} *“it was part of His plan which He made long ago,”* ^{IE} *“God’s settled purpose,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} and *“according to the definite and fixed purpose and settled plan.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

What occurred to Jesus was not a “prediction.” God does not “predict” or “forecast.” Men make predictions upon the basis of observation, experience, or scientific reason. ^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER} Jesus referred to such predictions when He said, *“When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?”* (Mat 16:2-3). **However, this is NOT the nature of Divine dealings, prophecies, and inspired foretelling.**

Early believers knew this is the manner of the Kingdom. When they prayed for Divine power, they referred to God’s determination in regard to the suffering and death of Jesus. *“For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done”* (Acts 4:28).

Jesus Himself said of His

imminent death, *“And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!”* (Luke 22:22). It was God who set the agenda for Christ’s vicarious death. The prophet Zechariah traced the vulnerability of Jesus to the Father’s work. *“Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn Mine hand upon the little ones”* (Zech 13:7).

Determinate Counsel

The words *“determinate counsel”* speak of something that is **Divinely purposed** to happen. It takes place **because** God has decreed it. It would never have taken place if God did not **determine** that to happen.

The word *“counsel”* means “purpose . . . the contents of a Divine plan,” ^{THAYER} “an inward thought process leading toward a decision . . . the result of inner deliberation, resolve, decision, purpose, plan,” ^{FRIBERG} “that which has been purposed and planned,” ^{LOUW-NIDA} “determination,” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} and “resolution.” ^{GINGRICH}

“Determinate counsel” speaks of an appointed objective. **It declares the will of God that is inherent in Himself, and is not a mere reaction to earthly**



circumstance. In this *“counsel”* there is an unwavering and unalterable decision. There is a determination that cannot be changed or in any way thwarted. There is a Divine resolve that will be carried out to the fullest extent, and without a single minuscule omission. **This is God’s will at its highest level, where there is no input**

from any source other than the Godhead. This *“counsel”* cannot be improved or negated by any influence external to God Himself.

There **is** a level of God’s will that is subject to variation – a level that interfaces with human circumstance. For example, God is described as One *“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Tim 2:4). However, this does not mean that all men **will** be saved. It rather leaves men with the thought that the door of salvation has been opened to them. **At this level of the Divine will, faith is the actuating agent.**

Again it is written, *“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”* (1 Thess 5:18). This by no means suggests that every one wearing the name of Jesus is thankful. It rather presents God’s will as a sort of circumference within which insightful thanksgiving is offered by faith. Again it is written, *“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication”* (1 Thess 4:3). This is a *“will”* into which we enter, knowing that all of the resources required for its accomplish are found in Christ Jesus. However, this does not mean that personal sanctification is realized independently of our own involvement in the process.

As declared in Peter’s words, the *“counsel”* of the Lord involves a Divine will that cannot possibly be contradicted. God says of His *“counsel,”* *“My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure”* (Isa 46:10). This is a *“counsel”* that cannot possibly be frustrated – you might say it is unconditional: *“The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations”* (Psa 33:11). The delivering up of Jesus took place at a precise period of time – *“the fulness of the time”* (Gal 1:4). It also was fulfilled in an exact segment of that time – *“the hour”* (John 12:23; 17:1). **Man had absolutely no input into this “counsel.”** The only reason any man knows about it is that God has revealed it to us.

AND FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD

“... and foreknowledge of God . . .” Other versions read, *“and knowledge of God,”* ^{BBE} *“God had determined in*

advance, ^{”GWN} *“the prescience,”* ^{”MRD} *“God knew what would happen,”* ^{”NLT} and *“God knew ahead of time.”* ^{”IE}

Right here a lot of confusion has been introduced among believers. Several of the translations reflect this confusion, presenting the *“foreknowledge of God”* as though it speaks of God looking into the future, and seeing what was going to happen. Thus James Murdock’s translation reads, *“the prescience.”* The word *“prescience”* means *“Divine omniscience, foresight,”* ^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER} *“ability to foresee future events, having knowledge of events before they take place.”* ^{OXFORD} The New Living Translation reads, *“God knew what would happen,”* and the International English Version reads similarly, *“God knew ahead of time.”* It is not possible for a view to be more off-target than is represented by these versions. **Our salvation has not been accomplished by means of God foreseeing what men would do to Jesus.** To even suggest that the expiation of sins, the reconciliation of men to God, and the making of peace could rest upon such a foundation displays an staggering ignorance of God, Christ, and redemption.

The word *“foreknowledge”* comes from the Greek word προγνωσει (prognosis). Lexically it means, *“forethought, prerrangement,”* ^{”THAYER} *“foreknowledge or purpose,”* ^{”UBS} *“chosen beforehand.”* ^{”LOUW-NIDA} The Louw-Nida Lexicon translates this verse, *“God, in His own will and foreknowledge, had already decided that this One would be handed over to you.”*

Even in the lexical definitions, many of the lexicographers miss the point. **“Foreknowledge” has to do with purpose, not mere awareness.** That is why it is tied with God’s *“determinate counsel.”*

Divine *“foreknowledge”* relates to what God Himself purposes to do, NOT



what He knows in advance that man will do. Therefore it is written, *“Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world”* (Acts 15:18). Other versions read, *“To the Lord was His own work known from the beginning of the world,”* ^{DOUAY} *“From the beginning of the world God knoweth all His works,”* ^{”GENEVA} and *“Known from the ages to God are all His works.”* ^{”YLT}

When it comes to things immediately related to God’s eternal purpose, He is motivated by Himself, and not by the works of fallen man. This fact is made clear by the Holy Spirit.

- ⇒ *“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began”* (2 Tim 1:9).
- ⇒ *“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself”* (Eph 1:9).
- ⇒ *“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will”* (Eph 1:11).
- ⇒ *“According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Eph 3:11).

It is essential that this be seen, else a distorted view of God and His purpose will take hold of the heart. **The Divine will, particularly as it relates to**

salvation, was conceived and implemented within the confines of His Person, and without any input from without Himself. Therefore we read of God purposing *“in Himself”* (Eph 1:9).

Now, it should be apparent that Peter is not speaking about God merely foreseeing what the Jews were going to do to Jesus. Peter affirms that what they did was in strict accord with what God had determined. In this case, His foreknowledge was the **cause** of the action. **If this is not the case, then we would have a redemption that was initiated and carried out by men, not God.** Who would dare to embrace such a foolish notion? This would mean that God took what men did and reworked it, so to speak, so that salvation was brought from it. It is not comely to imagine that this can be involved in a salvation that is *“of the Lord”* (Jonah 2:9).

The Use of “Foreknowledge”

The word *“foreknowledge”* is likewise used in First Peter. There it is also causal in nature: that is, **it is what causes things to happen.** *“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied”* (1 Pet 1:2). Some choose to believe that men are *“elect”* because God foresaw what they were going to do. However, even a cursory perusal of Peter’s inspired utterance will confirm the folly of such a view. There he joins three elements together to explain our salvation.

- ⇒ *“The foreknowledge of God.”*
- ⇒ *“The sanctification of the Spirit.”*
- ⇒ *“The sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”*

How likely is it that, **at the foundational level,** the foreknowledge of what men would do could be blended together with what the Spirit would do and what the blood of Christ would do? In my judgment this would be like the *“tool”*



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of man being used to build the altar of God – something that was strictly forbidden. As it is written, “*And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.*” and “*And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them*” (Ex 20:25; Duet 27:5). The same was true in the building of the Temple. “*And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building*” (1 Kg 6:7).

Here, the entire Godhead is involved. The “*sanctification of the Spirit*” refers to the Spirit’s own activity. It’s effectiveness is in no way mingled with the aspirations or works of men. The “*sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*” speaks of Divine activity, not human activity. This is not a process that is in any way accomplished by men. How, then, could it be possible for these two works to be joined with “*the foreknowledge of God,*” if it is nothing more than God seeing in advance what men would be and do? The whole notion is too absurd to merit any further discussion.

Jesus Foreordained

The vicarious death of Christ was foreordained by God, independently of human input. Therefore it is written, “*But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you*” (1 Pet 1:19-20). Jesus is also referred to as “*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” (Rev 13:8).

The Spirit reveals that a Divine caucus between the Father and the Word was held in the heavenly chambers. This event took place with the eternal counsels of God in the background. The prophetic portion announcing this conversation is found in the fortieth Psalm. “*Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,*

I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa 40:6-8). The exposition of that Psalm is found in the book of Hebrews. The Savior Himself is depicted as saying these things when He made His entrance into the world.

“*Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou*

Here, the entire Godhead is involved. The “sanctification of the Spirit” refers to the Spirit’s own activity. It’s effectiveness is in no way mingled with the aspirations or works of men. The “sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” speaks of Divine activity, not human activity. This is not a process that is in any way accomplished by men.

prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb 10:5-10).

There are several key considerations found in this passage. Remember, we are speaking of the “*determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.*”

⇒ God never desired the sacrifices offered under the Law. They were not provided for Himself, but were designed to prepare the way for the Lamb whom He did desire.

⇒ A special body was prepared for Jesus that enabled Him to be a Man – a Man that could die, offering up His own body.

⇒ Burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin never did please the Lord. That is, they brought no satisfaction to Him,

and no cleansing for men.

⇒ When it became apparent that this was the case – that the offerings of the Law were not satisfactory to God or effective for men – then the Word prepared to enter the world to do the will of God – a “*will*” that had already been determined.

⇒ Jesus did not come into the world

because men requested Him to do so. He came to “*do the will of God.*” In so doing, He would take away “*the first*” (covenant), and “*establish the second*” (covenant).

⇒ It is that “*will,*” or second covenant, that would be the means of sanctifying men.

⇒ The sanctification itself would be accomplished “*through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*”

Men Will Be Held Responsible

Thus God is set forth as the One who delivered Jesus into the hands of the people. This was done in order that His counsels, not man’s need, might be fulfilled. **Even so, men will be held responsible for what they did to Jesus.**

For some, “*this is a hard saying.*” Why would God deliver Jesus into the hands of men, then hold them responsible for what they do? There is no need of stumbling at this. God has revealed that this is His manner.

⇒ He raised up Pharaoh to make a name for Himself, hardened his heart, and then punished him for that hardness (Ex 9:16-17; Psa 136:15).

⇒ God raised up Nebuchadnezzar to chasten His people for not honoring

the land Sabbaths, then punished him for what he did to Israel (Jer 27:6; 25:11-12).

⇒ Judas was an instrument in the hands of the Lord, raised up to fulfill the word of the Lord. Yet, he fell by transgression, which transgression was the deed appointed by God Himself (John 6:64; Acts 1:25).

Admittedly, this is a line of reasoning that flesh cannot trace. Yet, God has revealed this to be His manner, and especially when it comes to matters directly related with salvation. Further, this is the precise application that Peter will make to his audience.

PRELIMINARY SUMMATION

Peter has drawn the attention of His hearers to the activity of God

Himself. **Jesus had not simply fallen into their hands. They had not outsmarted Jesus, or taken Him unawares.** If God had not delivered Him into their hands, they would never have been able to put their hands upon Him. Furthermore, God was not backed into a corner on this matter. He did not deliver Jesus into their hands because of what **they** desired, or because He saw what they would do. **Who is the fool who would imagine that the salvation of God would rest upon such a flimsy foundation?**

Now Peter will face the people with what they did to Jesus when they had the power to do so. Although God delivered Him into their hands, and did so in accordance with His own determined purpose, He did not **make** them do what they did. **Given the opportunity to do whatever they wanted**

with Jesus, their wicked hearts drove them to do what they did, fulfilling the very objective of God. In Christ's death, not only was the purpose of God made known, but the depravity of man as well.

For some, this view is very difficult to receive, and they cannot process it in their minds. They become confused when they hear of an unrestricted God carrying out His will by the hands of fickle men who are under the domination of Satan. Nor, indeed, can they imagine that a person could do such evil as is here presented, and do it because they themselves were evil, or that a holy God could even use such people to fulfill His counsels. However, those are the circumstances before us, and Peter will bring them to bear upon the people. He will do it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

YOU HAVE TAKEN

^{23c} . . . **ye have taken . . .** Other versions read, "you,"^{NASB} "after you had taken,"^{GENEVA} "ye have delivered,"^{MRD}

followed Him. When He was accessible to Matthew, he left his place of business and followed Him. **But these men, when**

The word "taken" is one associated with violence. It means "to take with the hand . . . in order to use it."^{THAYER} Here the idea is that they took hold of Jesus to implement their own wills. **Now they would be able to express what they really thought of Jesus.** It appears on the surface that they did this by force – and, indeed, the deed is attributed to them just as though that was the case. However, it was the submission of Christ to the will of the Father that enabled them to "take Him."

God handed His Son over to them, and they promptly took Him into their custody to do whatever they willed. When Jesus was made accessible to Peter, Andrew, James, and John, they followed Him. When He was accessible to Matthew, he left his place of business and followed Him. But these men, when they had a chance, took Jesus.

"You took,"^{NJB} and "being given out."^{YLT}

The emphasis here is on "YE" – in particular, the Israelites standing before Peter – the Jews, the "men of Judea," the "devout men." God "delivered Him," and they took Him. **God handed His Son over to them, and they promptly took Him into their custody to do whatever they willed.** When Jesus was made accessible to Peter, Andrew, James, and John, they

they had a chance, took Jesus. Of that taking it is written, "Then the band and the captain and officers of **the Jews took Jesus, and bound Him, and led Him away to Annas first; for He was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year**" (John 18:12-13). Matthew reads, "And they that had **laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled**" (Matt 26:57).

ISAIAH'S PROPHECY
Isaiah prophesied of this taking in his inspired treatise of the sacrificial Lamb of God. "**He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of My people was He stricken**" (Isa 53:8). Other versions read, "By oppression and judgment He was taken away,"^{NASB/NIV} "He was arrested, taken away, and judged,"^{GWN} "Oppressed and condemned, he was taken away,"^{NAB} and "Forcibly, after sentence, he was taken."^{NJB}

Isaiah views the purpose for

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which Jesus was “*taken away*.” This was the passage the Ethiopian eunuch was reading when Philip was directed to him: **“In His humiliation his judgment was taken away; and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth”** (Acts 8:33). Another version reads, “*In His humiliation He was taken away by distressing and oppressive judgment and justice was denied Him [aud to cease].*” ^{AMPLIFIED} This text is quoted from the Septuagint version which places the accent on the experience from Christ’s point of view: **“In His humiliation His judgment was taken away.”** ^{SEPTUAGINT}

The reference to Christ’s “*humiliation*” accents His submission, not the manner in which men humiliated Him. It is written that Jesus “*humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*” (Phil 2:8). **That is the only reason Jesus was able to be taken in the garden, taken from the courtrooms in which He was tried, and taken to the cross where He was crucified.** Nevertheless, the responsibility for this dastardly deed will be placed squarely upon the shoulders of the Israelites.

That is why Peter accents **the ones who took Jesus away**, in order that they might judge Him and terminate His life cutting Him “*off out of the land.*” Peter charges the people themselves for the deeds appearing to be done by relatively few people.

- ⇒ Judas (John 18:2).
- ⇒ A band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees (John 18:3).
- ⇒ The chief priests and elders of the people (Matt 26:47).

- ⇒ Annas, a former high priest and father in law to Caiaphas (Luke 3:2; John 18:13,24).
- ⇒ Caiaphas the high priest, together with the scribes and elders (Matt 26:57).
- ⇒ The multitude of chief priests and rulers of the people who cried out “*Crucify Him! Crucify Him!*” (Lk 23:13,21).

“*scribes and chief priests . . . sought how they might destroy Him: for they feared Him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine*” (Mark 11:18). Again, His enemies “*sought to lay hold on Him, but feared the people,*” who, at that time, favored Christ (Mk 12:12). Luke says of that occasion, “*And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people*” (Luke 20:19). Again it is written, “*And the chief priests and*

During those earlier times, the leaders could not implement their will toward Jesus because the people were for Him. But when “the hour arrived” for His appointed death the climate was not the same. The Jewish leaders no longer “feared the people,” but boldly launched their initiative against the Lord Jesus, taking Him.

Jesus did the same thing when He stood over the city of Jerusalem and said weeping, “*Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation*” (Luke 19:42-44).

John the apostle did the same when he wrote, “*He came unto His own, and His own received Him not*” (John 1:11).

During Christ’s ministry the

scribes sought how they might kill him: **for they feared the people**” (Luke 22:2).

During those earlier times, the leaders could not implement their will toward Jesus because the people were for Him. **But when “the hour arrived” for His appointed death the climate was not the same.** The Jewish leaders no longer “*feared the people,*” but boldly launched their initiative against the Lord Jesus, taking Him. There was a sense in which the nation was united in their rejection of Christ.

That is why Peter now speaks with such convicting candor. **Being moved along by the Holy Spirit of God, and in full possession of his faculties of mind, he will now address the death of Christ from the perspective of those upon earth.**

YOU USED WICKED HANDS

^{23d} . . . **and by wicked hands have crucified and slain”**

It is the nature of the Spirit of God to press matters of critical

importance, whether in the area of comfort or conviction. **When eternal issues are at stake, it is not the time to mince words and seek to appease the wills of the people.** Not only had the

people taken Jesus, they had done something with Him after they took Him – something that was evil, and could only have been done deliberately. Peter will now place that squarely before them,

doing so with precise and weighty words.

BY WICKED HANDS

“ . . . and by wicked hands . . . ”

Other versions read, “by lawless hands,”^{NKJV} “by the hands of godless men,”^{NASB} “with the help, of wicked men,”^{NIV} “by the hands of those outside the law,”^{NRSV} “by the hands of evil men,”^{BBE} “you used lawless people,”^{CSB} “with wicked hands,”^{GENEVA} “by using men who don’t acknowledge Moses’ teaching,”^{GWN} “into the hands of the wicked,”^{MRD} “using lawless men,”^{NAB} “by men outside the law,”^{NJB} “with the help of lawless Gentiles,”^{NLT} “by the hands of unrighteous persons,”^{PNT} “by the hordes

answered, “If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee” (John 18:30). A “malefactor” is an “evildoer,”^{NKJV} or “criminal”^{NIV} – an extremely vague generalization. Pilate replied, “Take ye Him and judge Him according to your law.” The people quickly replied, “It is not lawful for us to put any man to death” (John 18:30-31).

Of that occasion John says, “That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die” (John 18:32). The “saying” of reference was, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death

them. It is true that the will of the Lord was being done, but it was through the instrumentality of vessels of “dishonor” who were dominated by unbelief, and filled with all manner of wickedness (2 Tim 2:20).

Here “the intents of the heart” are made known as well as the “determinate counsel” of the God of heaven. When Pilate told the people he found no fault in Jesus, “they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place” (Luke 23:5). It was then that Pilate, now knowing Jesus was a Galilean, sent Him to Herod, who had jurisdiction in that area (Lk 23:7). After “Herod with his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe,” he “sent Him again to Pilate” (Luke 23:11).

All of this was the playing out of our text: “ye have taken, and by wicked hands” (Acts 2:23). The Jews employed the Roman government carry out their own wicked will, and Peter boldly confronts them with that fact.

HAVE CRUCIFIED AND SLAIN

“ . . . have crucified and slain.”

Other versions read, “have crucified and put to death,”^{NKJV} “you nailed to a cross . . . and put Him to death,”^{NASB} “put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross,”^{NIV} “you crucified and killed,”^{NRSV} “did crucify and slay,”^{ASV} “you put to death on the cross,”^{BBE} “did crucify and slay,”^{ERV} “you crucified Jesus,”^{GWN} “you killed,”^{NAB} “put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross,”^{NIB} “you took and had crucified and killed,”^{NJB} “you nailed Him to a cross and killed Him,”^{NLT} “having crucified – ye did slay,”^{YLT} “ nail Him to a cross and murder Him,”^{LIVING} “you . . . have nailed to a cross and have put to death,”^{WEYMOUTH} “kill by nailing Him to a cross,”^{WILLIAMS} “you crucified and put out of the way [killing Him],”^{AMPLIFIED} and “you nailed up and murdered.”^{PHILLIPS}

Two deeds are charged to the Jews – Israelites and men of Judea: the crucifixion and killing of “Jesus of Nazareth.” **The killing was done by means of crucifixion, and the intention of the crucifixion was to impose death.** Yet, there were two distinct deeds, and they were both charged to the very people now

To that you could also add rejection, unbelief, ignorance, hatred, hardness of heart, wickedness and spiritual adultery, and perversity. Sin is never a simple matter. It is always accompanied by all manner of inward as well as outward corruption.

of unrighteous people,”^{TNT} “God . . . let you use the Roman government,”^{LIVING} “by the hands of Gentiles,”^{WEYMOUTH} “by the hands of lawless and wicked men,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “and you used for your purpose men without the Law!”^{PHILLIPS}

In their handling of Christ, the Jews solicited the aid of ungodly men. The record of this is provided by the Spirit. Having held a caucus in which they condemned the Lord’s Christ, “all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death: and when they had bound Him, they led Him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor” (Matt 27:1-2). First they bound Jesus and “led Him away to Annas” (John 18:13). Then “Annas had sent Him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest” (John 18:24). Then, from Caiaphas, Jesus was bound again and delivered to Pontius Pilate (Mk 15:1).

When Pilate was confronted with Jesus, he asked them the purpose for delivering Jesus to him. The Jews

He should die” (John 12:32-33), referring to His crucifixion. Jesus had also said of His death, “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him” (Matt 20:19). And again Jesus said, “Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified” (Mat 26:2).

A sophist might reason that since God’s “determinate counsel and foreknowledge” was involved, together with the words of Jesus being fulfilled, the people ought not be charged with any responsibility. After all, it was the will of the Lord that was being carried out. Such reasoning is too simplistic, and is unbecoming of anyone professing to know the Lord. The Jews did not do these things mindlessly, being moved along by some mystical source that neutralized their powers of reason. They entered into matter with great zeal, knocking down every barrier that was raised before

being addressed by Peter.

A transgression is a compound matter. Here the effects alone are addressed: crucifixion and killing. Peter had also associated other deeds with this transgression: “*ye have taken*,” and the employment of “*wicked hands*.” To that you could also add rejection (Mk 8:31), unbelief (Matt 13:58), ignorance (Lk 19:44), hatred (John 15:25), hardness of heart (Mk 10:5), wickedness and spiritual adultery (Matt 16:4), and perversity (Lk 9:41). **Sin is never a simple matter. It is always accompanied by all manner of inward as well as outward corruption.**

Keep in mind that the Man these people had crucified and slain through the hands of wicked men had been clearly and unquestionably “*a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know*” (Acts 2:22). Yet, with all of staggering evidence placed before them, they eagerly entered into the most dastardly deed ever committed by men – crucifying and killing the prince of life. **Those who choose to stifle the impact of truth in order to walk in their own ways to not have the faintest notion of how capable of sin they become by doing so.**

The words are staggering in both clarity and conviction. Peter plainly says the Jews – “*men of Judaea, and all that dwell in Jerusalem*” – took the life of Jesus. **They put Him to death, nailed Him on the cross, killed Him, murdered**

Him, and put Him out of their way. They used the hands of wicked men to do it, but the responsibility for the deed belonged to them.

According to appearance, it looked like the Romans did this. However, Peter says the Jews did it. They were the ones who delivered Him to the Romans, and the ones who accused Him. They were the ones who refused to do the deed themselves, yet insisted that it be done anyway. They were the ones who charged Him with being a criminal. They were the ones who unrelentingly cried our “*Crucify Him! Crucify Him!*”

Did the Jews kill Jesus? Some say they did not, and vainly seek to argue their case. However, the Spirit has said too much on this matter for any doubt about it. Later, after the day of Pentecost, Peter said to the Jews, “*But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead: whereof we are witnesses*” (Acts 3:14-15). Still later, Peter will again make a point of this to the rulers and elders of the people. “*Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole*” (Acts 4:10). Again, Peter hurled this charge at the people. “*The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree*” (Acts 5:30).

When preaching to the Jewish council, Stephen also charged them with the murder of Jesus. “*Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers*” (Acts 7:52).

When Peter preached to the household of Cornelius, he made mention of the Jews responsibility for Christ’s death. “*And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree*” (Acts 10:39).

In Antioch of Pisidia, Paul made mention of this on the Sabbath day in a synagogue. “*And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre*” (Acts 13:28-29).

Paul also referred to the general guilt of the Jews in the matter of Christ’s death when writing to the Thessalonians. “*For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men*” (1 Thess 2:15). There can be no doubt in our hearts on this matter!

GOD RAISED HIM UP

^{24a} *Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death . . .*

There are two basic postulates behind Peter’s words – realities that

undergird what He is saying. **First**, the things that have happened to Jesus were according to “*determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*.” That is, if God had not willed that Jesus be taken, crucified, and slain, those things could not possibly have occurred. It was true of the Jews just as surely as Jesus said was the case with Pilate. “*Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin*” (John

THE KINGDOM IS THE LORD’S . . . HE IS GOVERNOR

TAKEN

CROSS

SLAIN

DETERMINATE COUNSEL AND FOREKNOWLEDGE

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19:11).

Second, God determined the outcome of these events as well as their actual occurrence. **A Divinely intended purpose was being served which involved the destruction of the devil and the reconciliation of the world.** The fulfillment of that purpose was confirmed and validated by the resurrection of Christ Jesus, which Peter will now proclaim.

WHOM GOD RAISED UP

"Whom God hath raised up . . ."

Other versions read, "And God raised Him up again,"^{NASB} "But God raised Him from the dead,"^{NIV} "But God gave Him back to life,"^{BBE} "Whom God has raised up,"^{DARBY} "But God raised Him from death to life,"^{GWN} "But God . . . raised Him back to life,"^{NLT} "Jesus suffered the pains of death, but God set Him free,"^{IE} and "He raised Him to life again."^{PHILLIPS}

The Jews took Jesus, crucified Him, and killed Him. **That was a revelation of the value they attached to Jesus.** In their judgment He was not worthy to live. That is why they cried, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him . . . King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15).

God, however, reversed their verdict, thus nullifying it. Their judgment was completely false, as confirmed by the resurrection of Christ. He came back from the judgment they passed upon Him. **They said He was not fit to live. God said He was not fit to stay dead!** Christ's death confirmed what the Jews thought. His resurrection confirmed what God purposed and knew. The purposes of the Jews were carried out in Christ's death. However, their purposes were voided, and the determination of God confirmed by His resurrection.

Throughout the book of Acts, there are repeated pivotal references to the resurrection of Christ. **Most of the time, the raising of Jesus is contrasted with the malicious deed of the Jews.**

⇒ "And killed the Prince of life, **whom God hath raised from the dead**; whereof we are witnesses" (Acts 3:15).

⇒ "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, **whom God raised from the dead**, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole" (Acts 4:10).

⇒ "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. **Him hath God exalted with his right hand** to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:30-31).

⇒ "And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: **Him God raised up the third day**, and showed him openly" (Acts 10:439-0).

⇒ "And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre. **But God raised him from the dead**" (Acts 13:29-30).

Scripture.

⇒ "And **declared to be the Son of God with power**, according to the spirit of holiness, **by the resurrection from the dead**" (Rom 1:4).

⇒ "Who was delivered for our offences, and was **raised again for our justification**" (Rom 4:25).

⇒ "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, **yea rather, that is risen again**, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom 8:34).

⇒ "And God hath both raised up the Lord, **and will also raise up us by his own power**" (1 Cor 6:14).

⇒ "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, **and shall present us with you**" (2 Cor 4:14).

⇒ "That I may know him, and **the power of His resurrection**" (Phil 3:10).

Throughout the book of Acts, there are repeated pivotal references to the resurrection of Christ. Most of the time, the raising of Jesus is contrasted with the malicious deed of the Jews.

⇒ "Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and **risen again from the dead**; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ" (Acts 17:3).

⇒ "That Christ should suffer, and that he should **be the first that should rise from the dead**, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:23).

In addition, the fact that Christ's death fully met its Divinely intended purpose, was proved by His resurrection from the dead. Much is made of this in

⇒ "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was **raised from the dead** according to my gospel" (2 Tim 2:8).

⇒ "Now the God of peace, **that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus**, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Heb 13:20).

⇒ "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope **by the resurrection of Jesus**

Christ from the dead" (1 Pet 1:3).

- ⇒ "Who by him do believe in God, **that raised Him up from the dead**, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God" (1 Pet 1:21).
- ⇒ "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God.) **by the resurrection of Jesus Christ**" (1 Pet 3:21).

The resurrection of Christ was therefore necessary for our justification, His intercession for us, and our own resurrection from the dead. It was essential for us to obtain Divine power, have a Good Shepherd, and be born again. It was needed for us to believe in God, and have faith and hope in God. His

... having loosed the pangs of death . . . Other versions read, "**putting an end to the agony of death**," ^{NASE} "**freeing Him from the agony of death**," ^{NIV} "**having freed from death**," ^{NRSV} "**having loosed the pangs of death**," ^{RSV} "**having made Him free from the pangs of death**," ^{BBE} "**ending the pangs of death**," ^{CSB} "**having loosed the sorrows of hell**," ^{DOUAY} "**and loosed the sorrows of death**," ^{GENEVA} "**and destroyed the pains of death**," ^{GWN} "**and hath loosed the cords of the grave**," ^{MRD} "**releasing Him from the throes of death**," ^{NAB} "**freeing Him from the pangs of Hades**," ^{NJB} "**freeing Him from the horrors of death**," ^{NLT} "**having terminated the throes of death**," ^{WEYMOUTH} "**liberating Him from the pangs of death**," ^{AMPLIFIED} and "**But God would not allow the bitter pains of death to touch him**." ^{PHILLIPS}

In this statement, Peter reaches beyond the perimeter of earthly experience. By inspiration he reaches

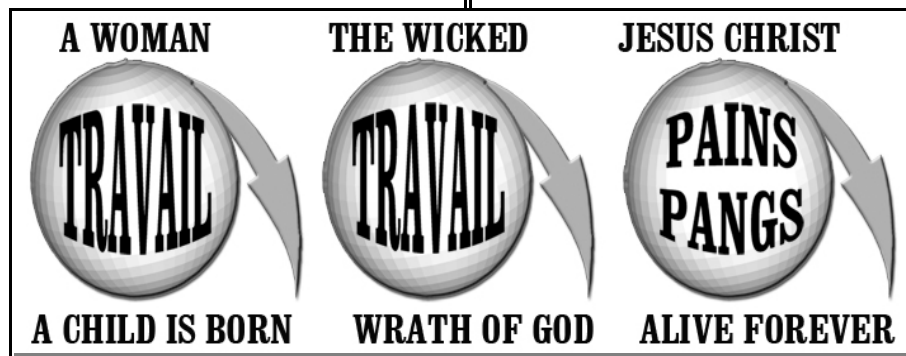
relates to the wicked. "*For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail (ἄδιν) upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape*" (1 Thess 5:3).

In each of these three cases (a woman giving birth, the wicked experiencing wrath, and the Lord Jesus raising from the dead), travail, or pangs, is the prelude to something else. The travail is not the point, but what comes after it. **Travail, or pains, or pangs, are the mean by which the appointed outcome is realized.** For the mother, the travail is the prelude to the birth of a child. For the wicked, the painful travail realized at the coming of Christ will be the prelude to damnation. For the Lord Jesus, death itself was the preface to "*the power of an endless life*" (Heb 7:16).

In the case of Christ, it is not possible for the mind of man to comprehend what was involved in "*the Prince of life*" experiencing death. **There is no greater contradiction than what is found in life and death.** That is the comparison from which other contradictions spring – such as light and dark, and righteousness and unrighteousness.

In the matter of the salvation of man, it was essential that, in the Person of Christ, life spring forth from death. This was necessary because salvation involves making the dead alive, both in the spirit and in the body. However, this could not happen unless a Pioneer blazed the path from death to life, triumphing over him "*that had the power of death, that is, the devil*" (Heb 2:14). **The way back to God had to be raised up and sanctified for us coming to God.**

By loosing "*the pains of death*," Peter was saying death could no longer retain Jesus. His tenure in that domain was over. His Spirit was loosed from Hades, and His body was loosed from the grave.



resurrection is even the thing that validates our baptism into Christ.

Those who crucified Christ did not have a single one of these intentions in their evil objectives. Further, if their will had prevailed, we would not receive any of them. Therefore, God reversed their verdict, raising Jesus from the dead.

HAVING LOOSED THE PAINS OF DEATH

into the domain of death and declares that a certain freedom was realized in the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

The Pains of Death

This is, indeed, an intriguing expression – particularly when we are speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "*pains*" is the same word translated "*travail*" (ἄδινας – o-deen-as). This is the word used to describe a woman in the travail of birth. It is also the word used in reference to the Lord's return as it

SOMETHING THAT WAS NOT POSSIBLE

" ^{24b} . . . because it was not possible that He should be holden of it."

The word "*because*" precedes the explanation of Christ's resurrection.

While it was an area of great Divine power (Eph 1:20), it was also something

If the truth concerning Jesus is not declared, men will not be saved. God will not give life to men by means of a corrupt view of His Son. It is also gloriously true that He will not allow death to hold any person who embraces His Son as He is declared in the Gospel – the record God has given of His Son.

that could not possibly fail to take place. **This is a form of reasoning that is outside the circumference of human logic.** For men, something cannot be possible and impossible at the same time. However, that is only because human experience, as men view it, has only one dimension. It is like a vapor that eventually dissipates (James 4:14), or breath that is confined to the narrow passages of our nostrils (Isa 2:22). However, when we consider the workings of the Lord, particularly in death, there are two dimensions: **what can be seen, and what cannot be seen.** Peter will now point us to something that **cannot** be seen with any purely human sense or ability.



IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE

“... because it was not possible. . . .” Other versions read, “since it was impossible,” ^{NASB} “because it was impossible,” ^{NIV} “*inasmuch* as it was not possible,” ^{DARBY} “because *it could not be*,” ^{MRD} “for *in fact* it was not possible,” ^{WEYMOUTH} “*seeing that it was not possible*,” ^{AMPLIFIED} and “*indeed there was nothing by which*.” ^{PHILLIPS}

When the Spirit says “**not possible**,” or “**impossible**,” He does not speak after the manner of men. When men say such words, there is still a crack in the door of hope. But with the Spirit, there is not a single ray of hope for

something that is “*impossible*.”

There are things that are “*impossible with men*” (Lk 18:27). **In such matters no man or amalgamation of men can make them possible.** Jesus said that it is “*easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God*.” When the disciples heard it they responded, “*Who then can be saved?*” The all-knowing Christ replied, “*With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible*” (Mat 19:26). **It is not common for men to associate salvation with something beyond all human capability.** But that is the way it is.

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, announcing she was going to give birth to the Son of God, he boldly announced, “*For with God nothing shall be impossible*” (Luke 1:37).

In this text, Peter will affirm that there was something death could **not** do. It was an area where death was impotent.

THAT HE SHOULD BE HOLDEN

“... that He should be holden of it.” Other versions read, “that He should be held by it,” ^{NKJV} “for Him to be held in its power,” ^{NASB} “to keep its hold on Him,” ^{NIV} “for Him to be overcome by it,” ^{BBE} “that He should be held in the grave,” ^{MRD} “death could not keep Him in its grip,” ^{NLT} “to be held fast by death,” ^{WEYMOUTH} “seeing that it was not possible for Him to continue to be controlled or retained by it,” ^{AMPLIFIED} and “and indeed there was nothing by which death could hold such a man.” ^{PHILLIPS}

After three days and nights had elapsed death could no longer retain the Lord Jesus. It would have been easier for

heaven and earth to pass away than for Jesus’ body to remain in the grave, or His spirit remain in Hades, for **one** more day. Jesus had said, “*the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again*” (Mark 8:31). It was not possible for this saying to fail!

Christ’s death and burial were intended to accomplish something. In His death, and prior to His resurrection, the following were to accomplished. This is only a sampling of the many things carried out by Christ’s death.

- ⇒ He had to “*put away sin*,” taking it away (Heb 9:26; John 1:29).
- ⇒ He had to “*destroy the devil*” (Heb 2:14).
- ⇒ He had to blot out “*the handwriting of ordinances that was against us*,” taking it “*out of the way*” (Col 2:14).
- ⇒ He had to “*spoil principalities and powers*” (Col 2:15).
- ⇒ He had to “*reconcile*” those who were enemies (Rom 5:10).
- ⇒ He had to “*make peace*” (Col 1:20).

Once these appointments had been accomplished, death had no alternative – it had to release Jesus. The “*gates of Hades*” had to swing open of their “*own accord*,” just like the prison gates opened for Peter (Acts 12:10).

The resurrection of Christ was the fact to which Jesus was alluding when He said of the foundation of His Sonship, “*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*” (Matt 16:18). Death would not maintain its grip upon Jesus, nor will it maintain its grip upon those who “*die in the Lord*” (Rev 14:13).

In the world, death is more powerful than life. It finally conquers all life, swallowing up humanity, and refusing to let any of them return. Even when such great men as Abraham, David, John the Baptist, and Paul passed into the domain of death, it appeared as

In the world, death is more powerful than life. It finally conquers all life, swallowing up humanity, and refusing to let any of them return. Even when such great men as Abraham, David, John the Baptist, and Paul passed into the domain of death, it appeared as though their lives had been permanently terminated.

though their lives had been permanently terminated. They never again showed themselves to men in the earth. It appeared as though the hold of death was invincible.

However, when Jesus “descended

into the lower parts of the earth” (Eph 4:9), death took hold of a different kind of man. **This is one Man it could not retain!** He is the pledge of our own resurrection, in which “*all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the*

resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29). Thus it is written for our comfort, “*Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you*” (2 Cor 4:14). Thus we see that the resurrection is a fact – and yet it is more than a fact. **It is also a pledge that God will not leave us in the domain of the dead either!** There is a time for the redemption of the body!

Those who teach and lead the people of God must keep the facts of the resurrection of Christ and our own resurrection before the people, that they “*faint not.*” They are absolutely critical to our survival in a world destined for destruction.

CONCLUSION

Thus, Peter has powerfully declared the death of Christ as no one standing before Him had ever heard it. They heard that this was an appointed death, designed by God to accomplish His own inscrutable will. They also were made aware of what they had really done, and that they were as guilty of Christ’s blood as Judas himself. That fallen bishop betrayed Jesus, but the people had eagerly taken the One he betrayed, then crucified and killed Him through the hands of wicked men. They let nothing stand in their way. They ignored the clear approval of God. They refused to consider Christ’s own witness. They declined to consider the testimonies of those who had been healed and delivered by “*Jesus of Nazareth.*” They even disregarded the challenging questions of Pilate, and turned his offer of a prisoner exchange. That is what sin does to a people. It blinds them, hardens them, and makes them utterly unreasonable and foolish.

It is imperative that God’s people see the necessity of insightful preaching, and declaring the truth about Jesus. It is to be admitted this is not fashionable to do. To those who have a “*form of godliness, but deny the power thereof,*” it seems totally irrelevant. Such people prefer an emphasis on the “here and

now,” because that is all they can see. Their hearts have a veil over them, and they are insensitive to the issues of eternity. This is the kind of people Peter addressed on the day of Pentecost. They were blissfully unaware of the judgment that had been pronounced by Jesus upon their city. Although many of them had heard about the day of judgment, and of the appearance of Nineveh and the Queen of the South, it had made no impact upon them. They had already forgotten their cries for the crucifixion of Jesus less than two months ago, to say nothing of the triumphal entry a few days before. They were in a sad state.

As Peter addresses this crowd of people, it will become increasingly apparent that there is no place in the

Divine economy for human opinion, traditions, or methods. He will not speak as the wise men of his day – or as the religious experts of our day. He will not in any way employ the wisdom of men, or seek to please men, or try and catch them with cunning words. There will be a freshness in his words, as well as penetrating power. They will be words the Holy Spirit can use.

If the truth concerning Jesus is not declared, men will not be saved. God will not give life to men by means of a corrupt view of His Son. It is also gloriously true that He will not allow death to hold any person who embraces His Son as He is declared in the Gospel – the record God has given of His Son.

There is no place in the Divine economy for human opinion, traditions, or methods. If the truth concerning Jesus is not declared, men will not be saved. God will not give life to men by means of a corrupt view of His Son. It is also gloriously true that He will not allow death to hold any person who embraces His Son as He is declared in the Gospel – the record God has given of His Son.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 8/18/2006 – NEXT WEEK!. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The ninth lesson will cover verses twenty-five through thirty-two of the second chapter: “THE PREACHING OF JESUS: HIS RESURRECTION.” The resurrection of Christ is the confirmation of the acceptance of His death by God Himself. The exaltation and enthronement of Jesus is related to that resurrection, which was foretold by the prophets. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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