

Conviction & Discernment

Introduction

Last week we saw from verses 14 to 21 the fulfillment of prophecy in the birth of Christ's Church and believers from many nations accepting the Gospel of Christ. Verses 1 to 13 revealed, as far as the Jews, God's chosen people, there were two categories of Jews in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. There were those who received what God's Spirit revealed in the disciples speaking in other languages and praised God in amazement. Then, there were those who witnessed the same event and deduced that the disciples were simply in a drunken stupor. These Jews were those who saw God working through men to glorify Himself and the miraculous teachings and works of Christ, which also glorified God the Father, they saw God working just as the Scriptures said would happen, yet they opposed the work of God by their conclusion that these men were drunk.

Peter continues fleshing out this truth as we look further at his sermon on the Day of Pentecost. This is the sad truth that God is doing an amazing work for people's good and His glory and for people to be reconciled back to Him and yet they do not believe. Jesus came from the Father and did untold miracles and preached the Kingdom of God and they conclude He was a danger and an imposter and threatened their power. If any people should believe, it was the leadership of the Jewish nation, God was doing amazing things and they did not believe. So, the truth was the Pharisees and Sadducees, like false prophets and heretics of today, these Jewish leaders led people astray, away from God. Jesus warned, ⁶“Whoever

causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. ⁷ **Woe to the world for temptations to sin!** For it is necessary that temptations come, but **woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!**" (Matthew 18:6-7) To lead people away from Christ by false teaching or doctrine or putting forth false gods or by working using false facts to deny God has serious consciences.

Verses 1 to 21 connected Joel's prophecy given 600 hundred years before Christ, now is the time of Joel's prophecy fulfillment; the Holy Spirit of God is poured out on God's people. Peter preaches saying open your eyes of your soul for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit is now happening. Luke also quotes in verses 19 and 20 what the prophet Joel spoke concerning the amazing work of Jesus as Messiah being fulfilled by the day of Jesus' crucifixion and the day of His resurrection, and now the Day of Pentecost, ³⁰ "And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. ³² And it shall come to pass that **everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.**" (Joel 2:30-32) Once Peter gives the words of the prophet Joel he immediately speaks of Jesus, the One who is the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, saying, ²² "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, **a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know —**"

Here are a few things to take note of as we work our way through this passage; **1)** The people hearing Peter are both those who believe and those who are the enemies of God. Peter uses comparisons between the two that should not be missed. **2)** The Cross was preordained by God and this is proven in the Old

Testament and by its prophecies being fulfilled. 3) God's foreknowledge does NOT remove people's guilt for rejecting Christ.

Our scripture passage, this morning, puts forth two primary truths; God declares sinners guilty for the death of His only Son and God's Son is able to reconcile people back to Himself.

Pray

The Father Attests To The Son

The more we understand that God had the Cross in full view before the foundation of the world, the more we will trust Him in all things. If God foreordained the crucifixion of Jesus to save us and if that all worked perfectly according to His plan then we must conclude that everything is foreordained and works out according to God's plan for His glory and our good. When it comes to our sovereign God, nothing slips through the cracks or is overlooked. As Jesus said, **“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.”** (Matthew 10:29) Beloved, this is an important factor in living our lives, knowing we can trust God with every small detail and be joyful because we know He is in charge, He is good, and He loves His people.

We also observe from this text that God brings about the birth of His New Testament Church through less than desirable people. Those He could have justly condemned, He pardons. Those who committed one of the most heinous sins, namely the crucifixion of God's only Son, were forgiven and became Christ's Church. When I think of my sins, all I can do is praise God for His grace and mercy and love, for I too was an enemy of God, but He loved me and saved me.

Peter continues preaching with his second primary point, ²² “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man **attested** to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— ²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God ...” Peter’s sermon is built upon the Scriptures and at that time the Old Testament was the only written Word of God. Peter demonstrates the Old Testament is Christ-centered; it is all about people’s need for a permanent solution for their sin and Jesus and His coming and God’s plan for salvation through Christ.

Peter makes two very crucial statements here in these opening verses. **First**, he tells everyone that God the Father is the One who endorsed or attested to Jesus of Nazareth as God the Son. I know everything is on-line now, but I remember going to the bookstore and if a book caught my attention, I often would read the endorsements. If the people who endorsed the book were credible then I could trust what they said about the book. So, Peter says, God “**attested**” Jesus was God the Son. What does “**attested**” mean? It means God endorsed, promoted and declared Jesus as genuine. There is no greater person to endorse someone than God. Peter’s point to the people he is preaching this; God endorsed or attested Jesus was His Messiah but you rejected what God attested to and called holy. My beloved, do not be misled by the media or charismatic personalities who use the names of God or Christ; not everyone who uses these holy names actually worships or serves God. Some seek their own glory and power by using God. No religion or person can put anyone in right standing with God; only Jesus, the One attested to by God has the power to bring a sinner back to God as His child. By God attesting that Jesus in His only Son then God attests He has sanctioned one and only one way in which sinful humans come before Him and are forgiven of their sin. As Jesus made clear,

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6)

Here is a simple test; when you hear someone speaking about God listen to see if it is how special God has made them and do they get around to speaking about Jesus and if they speak of Jesus, is He the Jesus of the Bible. That is the litmus test for truth concerning God. If they do not teach Jesus as the way to God or if they deny Christ, then they are not presenting the true God and they have come from the evil one. My beloved, you are to critique what you hear and who you hear it from. Jesus warned, **“For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.** ²⁵ **See, I have told you beforehand.”** (Matthew 24:24-25) God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Apostles all teach believers need to be careful and to not believe everyone who uses the names of God and Christ. As the Apostle John directed, **“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.”** (1 John 4:1-3) When someone tells you – you can have your best life now or I am a prophet of God - send me your money or it does not matter what I believe as long as I believe in God or it does not matter what church you go to or God loves everyone so everyone is a child of God or all true believers speak in tongues or on an on – if you evaluate what they say based on the true Word of God one can spot false teachers. If someone is mostly right or wholly false, do not listen and do not have anything to do with them. My beloved, God wants you, more than this, He commands you and me, to judge what people say about Him and hold it up

to His Word, the Bible. Paul was judged by God's Word, ¹⁰ "The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹ Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, **examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.**" (Acts 17:10-11) These Jews were eager to learn from Paul, but they did not just accept his word without searching the Scriptures themselves to see if what he said was right. We must never get lazy when it comes to studying the Bible, to know God, to grow closer to God and to know who we are in God, we must dig deep into His Word.

The Preordained Cross

Now we come to the **second** crucial statement here in these opening verses, look with me at verse 23, "**this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.**" Literally, the text could read, *Jesus was handed over to be crucified*. In other words, it was the end for which Jesus came and took on flesh, the time had come for Jesus to complete His God-ordained mission. This verse also speaks of the fact that it was because of God's "**definite plan and foreknowledge**" that Jesus was delivered to be crucified. The original language captures the process here. The verb "**delivered up**" is passive and makes clear the driving force is the "**definite plan and foreknowledge of God**". God's plan is the driving force. God's plan or decree is the cause of the crucifixion. God the Father determined that it would happen and it took place as He determined.

Jesus was delivered over by God's predetermined plan and Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, also tells us that it was according to God's foreknowledge. The word foreknowledge does not mean that God just knew something beforehand.

Here the Greek word *prognosis* literally means; Pro-before God's plan was from before the creation of the universe. It is a predetermined prior knowledge of God's predetermined plan. God is outside of time and history; He exists and His knowledge and His plan is from eternity past to eternity future.

Mankind's Guilt

As Peter continues, we see tension building, reading at verse 23, “**this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.**”²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.” On the one hand, the cross was a determined event decreed by God. The cross was going to take place. Yet, on the other hand, God in no way forced evil men to do anything. They acted out of their own sinful freedom. They are responsible for their part in the crucifixion.

What is amazing to me is how today we think that this doctrine is too difficult for people to grasp. There are folks who have been sitting in churches who have never even heard this before. Then there are those who have heard it and wrote it off as too difficult to grasp. This can be a difficult doctrine; God's determined plan and foreknowledge does not prevent people from having free will and being responsible for their sin. People have difficulty getting their minds around this because they do not want to be held accountable for their sin.

Take note, this is Peter's first sermon and he is preaching to lost people who have never heard the Gospel before. This is an evangelistic sermon and he gives them the undiluted truth in all its glory. He does not hold back. Peter's evangelistic call is to repent and call on the name of the Lord and it has as its foundation, God's decree and foreknowledge. In other words, he does not say, all you need is to ask

Jesus into your heart and pray this prayer with me. Perhaps, in our modern attempt to make everyone feel good and be comfortable we have drifted away from the realities that the Apostles clearly and boldly proclaimed. Perhaps the reason we do not hear of people who are cut to the heart and cry out to God to save them is because phrases like, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life”. These phrases do not challenge people to consider their sin. The reality is for those who are still in their sin and outside of Christ - God does have a plan for them and it involves complete and utter condemnation in a horrible place called hell, where they will endure the wrath of God forever and ever with no relief and no end.

Here again we see a deadly contrast, Peter says, you killed Jesus but God raised Jesus from the dead. They needed to understand what they did was to kill God’s only Son and what God did was to raise Him from the dead. These people are God’s enemies and they are guilty of murder. In the Last Days as Joel tells us in God Word, God will issue white-hot judgment on all who reject His Son.

The disciples are speaking forth the Gospel in every language, these enemies of God claim the disciples are drunken fools and God’s perfect Son whom He attested to as the Messiah, they treat as a joke with contempt, but Peter makes clear they are the ones who killed God’s only Son and shows their sin by the fact God rose Jesus from the dead. They are completely and clearly shown to be opposing God, they stand guilty before God. They did not just ignore God and continue in their sin, the murdered God’s Son because Jesus called them to repent of their sin.

Old Testament Validation

It would be really easy for Peter to claim that the cross was in God’s determined plan and foreknowledge, anyone could make that claim. To validate his claim, Peter lays out proof from the Scripture. Notice how he uses texts that they

are familiar with and brings new light to their meaning. He shows that what they have read and learned from childhood about David and the Psalms is proof that God's eternal plan was the coming of the Messiah for salvation. King David foretold of the resurrection of Jesus, reading at verse 25, "For David says concerning him, 'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope.²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'^(Psalm 16:8-11)²⁹ 'Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.'" Here is Peter's second Old Testament quote and He says is all about Jesus. He quotes Psalm 16 as proof that the crucifixion and specifically here, the resurrection were a part of God's eternal plan to save a people for Himself. In this Psalm we understand that King David is explaining this fact and he puts his trust in God. Verse 8 of Psalm 16 sums this and is found in verse 25 of Acts 2, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken ..." Because God is at David's right hand, He is very close to David and David is not afraid. David will go on to even write that because God is the One he trusts and because God is ever before him, he will trust God even in death.

Peter continues explaining that David understood in his own life God was forever true. David is acting as a prophet and pointing to Jesus in the future and

testifying of the resurrection of Christ. Peter continues in verse 30, “Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.” The Apostle Paul referred to this verse of David and added further explanation, “For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption,³⁷ but he whom God raised up did not see corruption.” (Acts 13:36-37) God’s plan of salvation was from eternity and is proven as Peter and Paul explain the meaning of these verses.

Peter continues with David foretelling of Jesus’ ascension, reading at verse 33, “Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.³⁴ For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand,³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool.”’” (Psalm 110:1) It was ten days prior to Peter’s sermon that Jesus was taken up into heaven before the watching eyes of His followers. Everyone that saw it could verify the truth of the matter. Peter though wants not only to prove it actually took place, but much like the resurrection, he sets out to prove that the ascension was also part of God’s divine plan decreed in eternity past. He does this by reaching back into the Psalms and pulls out a portion of Psalm 110 showing logical proof; it was not David who rose from the grave, for David is still in his tomb, but Jesus’ tomb is empty and many there that day were witnesses to both the empty tomb, Jesus walking the earth for 40 days and His ascension and this was spoken of by King David a thousand years before Jesus, David wrote, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand,³⁵ until I make your

enemies your footstool.”³⁷ (Psalm 110:1) Peter is saying, there is prophecy, there are physical facts and there are witnesses, so what excuse would one have for not believing God, and his prophets? None! Peter does not stop here, he goes on to explain exactly who Jesus is, verse 36, “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” Peter has given the gospel and the facts to back it up and says, “Let all the house of Israel therefore know” “All the house of Israel”, that is everyone who considered themselves an Israelite had to recognize their part in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Last Days every person must place their trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, Jews and Gentiles alike. No Israelite, even if they can trace their lineage straight back to Abraham himself, will be saved apart from trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation. Jesus was not just another prophet but “God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ” so hear this Israel – you crucified God’s Messiah that for centuries you had been waiting for. When God finally sent the Messiah, you killed Him.

Sinner’s Right Response

Peter winds things up beginning at verse 37, “Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’³⁸ And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.’⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”

Peter points out their excuse that the disciples were drunk, was just a deflection in order to not have to face their sin. In spite of their sin, God is offering an opportunity to be reconciled to Him. Peter proves that the last days are here, a time of both great grace and great judgment. He proves beyond any doubt that they are responsible for Jesus' death. Even when God attests of Jesus and Jesus did all that the Messiah was to do and even when He went all over Palestine healing, caring, and preaching repentance they still murdered Him in cold blood. There was a mob that came to arrest Him, fake trials to convict, mockery, beatings, spitting, punching, physical abuse and finally they crucifying Him. They knew that everything Peter said was true. The truth cut them deep. But this wound was necessary for reconciliation to take place, as the writer of Hebrew made clear,¹² "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account." (Hebrews 4:12-13) Because the evidence against them is irrefutable, they are guilty before God. Luke tells us their response, "Brothers, what shall we do?" By this response, we know they understood that there was nothing they could do in their own power to effect any change in God's guilty verdict. So, they cry out in terror and seek some possible aid from the Apostles.

When sinners are under the Holy Spirit's conviction they will not try and reason their way out of their condition. They will not say, "*Oh, well we are not all that bad, God will understand.*" When Spirit convicts, they will not try to deny their sin. Here is an example of the Holy Spirit being poured out on the disciples, they have boldness and those hearing the message, they see their guilt and cry out for mercy.

Here we also see that it takes a believer, used by God, to lead an unbeliever to forgiveness through Christ. They do not know what to do on their own. Peter explains their only hope, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Without repentance they have no hope and even if they repent, they must believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Peter’s call here is similar to John the Baptist’s as he preached in the wilderness, ² “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” ³ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.”’ (Isaiah 40:3) (Matthew 3:2-3) The remedy for sin is repentance before a Holy God. Without repentance the Jews were just as sinful as all other peoples and nations and without Christ there is no hope.

Peter says after one repents one is to, “be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” The idea is that everyone who was cut to the heart and was in distress asking what shall we do, was to follow Peter’s remedy. First, be broken and cry out to God in repentance. Second, they would receive the Holy Spirit in their salvation. This was the baptism John the Baptist taught about. Third, physical baptism is to be public “in the name of Jesus Christ”.

The Greek word for “repent” is in the plural form, meaning “repent” every one of you and then on an individual bases, be baptized, the word baptized is singular. We see that this is always the order in which the two are spoken of. Repentance and baptism are connected in a very real sense but the focus is always on repentance, the acknowledging one’s guilt before God. Then concluding that there is not one single thing one could possibly do on their own to remedy the situation, and then relying completely on God’s mercy and trusting Christ alone.

Obedient baptism is the outward evidence of what Christ has already done to forever change you from the inside out. Baptism is the showing publicly you understand this and surrender your life to Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Baptism is not a suggestion but a command of God of what should follow repentance and salvation. When one does this with a true heart, as Peter taught; repent, receive the Holy Spirit and be baptized in the “[in the name of Jesus Christ](#)” they are no longer Jew or Greek or Gentile, but they are a child of God and this is their identity.

The reality here is that through repentance and obedience as seen in baptism these guilty sinners would be given the gift of the Holy Spirit just like the Apostles had. This is the promise of the Father. Not only is God willing to forgive them as they now turn from their sin a love Christ, the One they crucified, but their children are also included in the New Testament covenant. Through Jesus Christ not only are we saved but through Jesus Christ, our children may also be saved. The next generation taught by believing parents may also be saved through trusting in and loving Christ.

The Last Days are days of great power and great exciting advances in God’s Kingdom. It begins with faith in Christ, which leads to repentance and obedience. I pray we all have placed our hope in Jesus Christ the One we crucified. My beloved, demand and seek Christ-centered preaching, acknowledge sin, repent and let the Holy Spirit rule your life. You are part of Christ’s New Testament Church living the New Covenant which God has given through His Son, Jesus Christ – live with zeal for the glory of Christ and may the light of Christ within you shine before men to expose darkness and show people their need for a Savior! Amen!