Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Peter's Sermon: Exalting Christ, Part 1
Scripture: Acts 2:22-23
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We come in Acts Chapter 2 then in our continuing study of Acts to the sermon that Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. Now we've been seeing much about this all the way through the book of Acts as God has set the stage for the preaching of this sermon. Although the sermon doesn't start until Chapter 2, verse 14. Everything leading up to that is really just preliminary to this preaching of the powerful sermon that Peter gives. The occasion of Pentecost has no parallel. The sermon has no parallel prior to it. It is a very unusual occasion. The Spirit of God has descended. The Spirit of God has melted together by baptism all the believers into one body, the body of Christ. Then the Spirit of God filled each of those believers and sent them out with a new kind of boldness and speaking languages that they did not know. And speaking to the people the wonderful works of God.

And all of that was simply a buildup to this fantastic sermon that climaxes the day of Pentecost. Everything that the Lord had done up to this time was to set the stage so Peter could stand up and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now just to review for a moment. You remember that in Chapter 1, Jesus gave the disciples all the equipment they needed to fulfill the commission that He gave them, which was to go into all the world and preach the gospel. They had all of the equipment to do that. The only missing thing was the power of the Holy Spirit. And He said, "not many days hence you will receive the power of the Holy Spirit."

And in Chapter 2 it came. Beginning at Chapter 2, the Spirit of God descended. They were blended into the body. They were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and they began to do the job. And then God in the marvelous miracle allowed the Spirit of God to be made obvious to some extent by the sound of a mighty rushing wind and the crowd began to gather. Then the disciples begin to speak in languages and because of that, the people were confused and they couldn't understand how a lot of ignorant Galileans could possibly be such linguists.

And then to hear them speak the wonderful works of God even confused them more, because they had believed, the Jews had, that these men were of the devil. They had concluded much earlier that what Jesus did, He did by the power of whom? Satan, Matthew Chapter 12. And they believed that this was a whole satanic movement against their true God. And now all of a sudden, they were speaking the wonderful works of Jehovah God, which made it a little bit hard for them to understand. There are only 2 supernatural sources for miracles, Satan and God. And you can be sure that Satan

wouldn't be going around glorifying God. Therefore, they recognize that they were speaking concerning God and yet they believed in their hearts them to be blasphemers because they had assigned themselves to Jesus Christ who was the greatest blasphemer because He claimed to be Messiah.

And so they were confused. At the same time that they were confused, they were gathered together. They did not understand what was going on and that's exactly what the Holy Spirit wanted to have accomplished. He wanted them to be together in one place, well confused. And involved in it would be activity of the supernatural. And so that somebody could stand up and say now let me tell you what this is all about. And that's exactly the setting for Peter's sermon.

There were several hundred thousand people in Jerusalem at this time. It was the key time because it was the feast of harvest, 50 days after Passover. Hence it's called Pentecost. And so they are gathered together in a perfect fullness of time type fulfillment to fulfill the picture of the feast of harvest. They are drawn in their minds and in their bodies into one confused conglomerate and they are ready to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. The strategy is fantastic. It is the key time. Because Jerusalem has been invaded by all the Jews from everywhere.

And everyone of them is going to get infected with the gospel. They may not all catch the disease of salvation, if we can call it that in this analogy, but they're all going to be carriers, at least of what's gone on here when they go back to their own country. And so it's a critical time to get the message out. And so gathering all of them together confounding them by the miracle of languages, then preaching the gospel to them sends them back to their own homes with a lot going on in their minds and an awful lot to tell everybody.

And thus they became willing or unwilling carriers of the message of Jesus Christ back to all of their own people. So in response to sovereign timing, the Holy Spirit came. And the strategy was fantastic. God had set the stage perfectly. Now it's interesting to me just to draw a couple of tangents here, footnotes. It's interesting to me that everything up to verse 14 was preparation and immediately when the preparation was done, they did the job and the preparation was all spiritual. There was no structural preparation.

Somebody asked me this week what's your view of church organization. And I began to draw from this particular passage, a least a basic view and that is the first thing the church is to do is not to get organized, it's to get at it. Do you realize that in the book of Acts the basic structure of the church never even begins to appear until the 6th Chapter. For the first part of the book of Acts up until Chapter 6, they're just kind of moving with the Spirit of God. And then all of a sudden in Acts Chapter 6, they realize that it's time to set some structure so that they can really operate like the Spirit wants. In other words, the first responsibility is to do the job and worry about getting organized later. Not to create a structure seemingly in which everything has to function. In Acts Chapter 6, finally the

apostles who had had to serve dinner and everything else, said look it's ridiculous. Guys we've got to give ourselves to the most important things. We'll give ourselves continually to the study of the Word and to prayer, and that's really what the ministry's all about. "You guys wait on tables. Choose out from among you men full of the Holy Spirit to do the job." And they were called what? Deacons. And that's the basic structure of the church.

It never ever gets any more involved than that. That's it. The leaders called, of course, in the early church, the beginning church, thefirst-century church, that apostolic church--they were the apostles and prophets. Later on called bishops, pastor, teachers, or elders or Presbyters, all the same idea. And that is the leader, that's the pastor teacher and under them are the deacons and that's it. That's all there is in the involvement of the organized church. It stayed just that flexible because the Spirit of God moves the way He wants to move and it's always different. It's always different.

We've found here at Grace Church that as the church has grown, as the Spirit of God has led us in certain directions that all of a sudden the old organizations of the church are obsolete and we keep running into old organizations that don't have anything to do with what we're doing. In other words, the church is to be organized only as it accommodates the moving of the Spirit of God flexible enough so that the Spirit can move in another direction without throwing everything into chaos.

LaCoch said on one occasion, "Christians when they get organized become very un-Christian." And that's very often true. When the structure restricts the work of the Spirit, then the structure isn't right. And so these people weren't too concerned about the organization. They didn't start a committee immediately after all the preparation. They just got at it and preached. And then later on they let the structure catch and accommodate the work of the Spirit.

And so they were completely unconcerned about organization. They were a living organism. Now you don't have to sit down and plan your body. Do you have to do that? Plan your activities for your hand for the day? Plan the activities for your feet? Do you sit down and map it all out. Now knee you be sure you cooperate with ankle there. We want to get a subcommittee to make sure that thigh goes along.

When you have an organism you don't need to have an organization. And so the structures are always minimal in the New Testament because they were living, breathing body of Christ really doing it the way God intended them to do it. And the only kind of structure they had was to accommodate the ministry that the Spirit was directed.

And the most obvious characteristic that we see of them is that they got right at the job. So many times we excuse ourselves to work on something when we could go right out and do it. Now this was a new age. We saw that didn't we? A new age had begun in the day of Pentecost. The age of law had ceased. The age of grace had been born. The age of the church had been born and this was a whole

new ballgame. In every dimension the new age had dawned a few days before this the disciples were huddling in secret in their little upper room and they were kind of afraid. They were hesitant, they were powerless, they were hobbled by questions and fears and doubts and weren't too sure really what was going to go on and all of a sudden Pentecost came, the Spirit of God came, the Spirit of God filled them, no more secret knocks, no more little secret passwords. They were out on the streets and they were announcing Jesus Christ all over the place like a mortar barrage. They were unhesitating.

The transformation proves the Spirit had come. The transformation proves the new age had been born. And unto the energy that was there it's because of the birth of a new age, because of the birth of the church and because of the baptism and the filling of the Spirit of God they moved out to preach Jesus Christ with power and boldness. And they began in Peter's sermon. Peter was first. He got the first shot at it. And he announced a blockbuster announcement to the Jews. He announced to them, I'm telling you the messianic age has arrived. Now that is a fantastic announcement.

Every Jew since the first one has been waiting for that. Since the Abrahamic covenant in which God promised to bless all nations through the seed of Abraham. Every Jew since then has been waiting for messianic times for the Messiah to come for the wrap up on history. For the time when the kingdom would come, when the wrong would be made right and the injustice is just and Israel would be recovered, placed in the land and ruled in the land and all would be well and the curse would be reversed and the lion would lie down with the lamb and the desert would blossom with a rose, that all...like a rose. That all of these things would happen. Every Jew was waiting for that day.

Then all of a sudden Peter stands up and says you know what you've just seen, you've seen the beginning of messianic times. That is a blockbuster announcement. And that's how Peter begins his sermon. They thought that the disciples were drunk. That's how spiritually perceptive they were. Peter says they aren't drunk, verse 15, "But this is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel, it shall come to pass in the last days." You've seen the beginning of the last days. The last days in Jewish terminology has been going on now for 2,000 years. The last days to the Jews meant the time of Messiah. Messiah has come and He'll back to set up the kingdom. All of that is the last days, the Jewish last days.

And so Peter makes this fantastic announcement that the Spirit has come as Joel said He would, and you have seen the beginning of the last days. That's how he begins his sermon. That's his introduction. Now we studied his introduction last week, and we saw that his introduction explains Pentecost. Today we're going to study his theme and his theme exalts Christ.

Like any good preacher, he starts with an introduction, then has a theme, then he makes an appeal at the end and then examines the results. And to begin with, we saw the introduction last time as he explained Pentecost. He said you know what it is? It's the birth of the messianic age. Now let's face it,

if the messianic age has been born, then Messiah must be around, true? That's the point Peter wants to make.

He says in verse 21, and we saw this last week, "It shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. It's time folks to get saved. It's messianic times. It is the last days. And he shows how that some of the last days will involve the signs that are indicated in verses 18, 19, and 20. And these are signs, of course, of the second coming of Christ. But nevertheless, this whole period is the last days.

Joel's prophecy has already been prefilled. It will be fulfilled at the second coming of Christ. And we studied that last week. But he says you need to get saved. Now if he's saying to them it's messianic times, it is the last days, you need to get saved, then the implication is obvious. There must be a Messiah around here somewhere. That's exactly what Peter wants you to think because he's about to tell them who it is.

And he informs them in his theme, verses 22-36 that the Messiah is none other than Jesus of Nazareth. This is a powerful, powerful sermon. If we could only reconstruct the whole Jewish attitude and the whole scene, you would see that this was a dynamic event to announce that messianic times had come would be one thing, but to announce it in view of the miracles that they had just seen and the wonders of those languages made it monumental.

And then for Peter to say what you saw was the beginning of the end. It's messianic times. Now let me tell you who the Messiah is. And then when he opened his mouth and said it is Jesus of Nazareth, can you even begin to imagine the reaction? The same one that 50 days earlier had been crucified as they all screamed for His blood. Peter says, "you've killed the Messiah of God." The one you've been waiting for centuries and centuries and centuries came and you killed Him. That's Peter's announcement.

Now to the Gentile reader, it may seem like a small thing that Jesus is the Messiah, because we don't understand what Messiah is. Messiah is the ultimate ruler. Messiah is the one of whom it was said the scepter shall not depart from Judah. Messiah is the one promised to David in 2 Samuel Chapter 7 when he said, "there will come a king who will be an everlasting king, who will rule in peace and righteousness over Israel." Messiah was the great anointed king who would come and set everything right and give Israel its kingdom and reign in Israel and restore everything that had been lost. Messiah was the greatest figure in the Jewish heart and mind. And for Peter to announce that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah to the Jew was the absolute height of blasphemy.

They crucified Jesus because He was a blasphemer, they said. And here's Peter continuing to blaspheme. I'll never forget I went into the office of a rabbi in Hollywood who is the rabbi of the largest temple there and I wanted to just talk to him about Jesus Christ. I got an appointment with him and I

went in and I...his name was Bowman, and I said sir, I'd just like to ask you what you think of Jesus Christ. And he looked at his fist and he hit the desk as hard as he could and things just went up and right down again. And he pointed his finger at me and said don't you ever mention that name in my presence. That's what he said.

And then he says, you don't know anything about Judaism. He said, you can't even read the Talmud. I said, let me see a copy. He wasn't aware that I had had enough Hebrew to barely get by. Well, he didn't show me a copy, but I spent the time talking to him about everything but Jesus Christ. He refused to mention the name of Jesus Christ. And for Jesus to be exalted as the Messiah of Israel right in the face of all these Jews gathered in Jerusalem, was absolutely the most powerful dynamic, open and forceful issue that ever could have been brought to their attention. This was a serious situation. And Peter shows boldness encouraged like he has never shown before.

And so Peter stands up and he doesn't just say it. He proves it. He proves that Jesus was the Messiah and the evidence is overwhelming. And there are many things that Peter...he didn't use all his thunder in one sermon. You just keep reading through the book of Acts, the first part when Peter's preaching up through Chapter 12 and there's just thunder after thunder. He stores some of it up. It doesn't say it all at once. When you read through this chapter and I keep thinking to myself, boy why didn't he use that Old Testament passage. Gee, Peter if you had used that one and then later on you say oh yeah he did use it over here, see.

But Peter is going to prove that Jesus is Messiah. Now I want to show you just there are four things that he uses to prove it and we'll only cover two of them today. Four things that he uses to prove, the life of Jesus, the death of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, and the exaltation. Life, death, resurrection and exaltation. It just goes chronologically right through it.

Verse 22, the life of Christ. Verse 23, death of Christ. Verse 24 clear on down to verse 32 the resurrection and then verse 33-35 the exaltation. He just says everything about Him, His life, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension into heaven all proves He is Messiah. And the sermon is so absolutely passionate and so overwhelming that when it's done with they are stunned and they are shocked and they stand there in a stupor and say what shall we do?

And then Peter tells them, repent. Look to begin with how Peter presents His life. This is the first thing that accredits Jesus as Messiah. Verse 22, "Ye men of Israel hear these words," and I like that positive approach. I like that boldness. "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."

Did you catch two things in there? Number one, God did it. God did it. Number two, you saw it, you saw it. The same time he accredits Jesus by God, he indicts them because they can't claim

ignorance. And so he begins with a confident demand for their attention. Listen to me, I'm going to talk to you about Jesus of Nazareth. "Ye men of Israel." He speaks first to the men of Israel. Christ came in the beginning you remember to Israel. Israel was always to be God's vehicle. It wasn't that God didn't want to reach the Gentiles. It was that God had designed to reach the Gentiles through Jews. But finally when the Jews rejected Christ, He just completely bypassed them and went directly to the Gentiles and called His church out of the Gentiles and the remnant of believing Jews.

And so here he announces again the message is to Israel. In the beginning Christ came to Israel and the disciples were told specifically, of course, to go to the outer most part of the earth, but the Bible still indicated that it would begin in Jerusalem. Jesus said, "You'll be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem." That's where it'll all start. And that's grace, that's just grace. The message of grace is given to the ones who crucified Christ.

And so the age of grace begins with the greatest illustration of grace in the Bible. Grace to the crucifier. Grace to the unbelieving. There were times in the Old Testament, do you remember when God wrote Ichabod in Israel, that means the glory hath departed and just walked away, but here they have committed the greatest crime that could ever be committed. The execution of their own Messiah and yet He turns to them in love. That's the age of grace.

In the Old Testament, they would have seen the word Ichabod, and God would have walked away. In the age of grace, grace is extended. Now notice that Peter uses the name Jesus of Nazareth. This is, of course, not the theological name of Jesus, but it's His common name. It's the name by which the Jews called Him in mockery, because they all believed that nothing good came out of Nazareth. Nazareth was really nothing. I mean, just a little nothing town and for the Messiah to come out of Nazareth, they just didn't believe that. In John's gospel, they said Messiah, no prophet comes out of Galilee.

Nothing good, John 1, can come out of Nazareth. That was not where Messiah would come. Not through that kind of a pattern or route. And so they mockingly called Him Jesus of Nazareth. When He died on the cross, that's the inscription they put over His, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. Why? Because it was so incongruous for anybody from Nazareth to be king of anything. They thought that was a laughing kind of matter. And so Peter picks their own word, Jesus of Nazareth.

In a very sarcastic way, Jesus of Nazareth. The one that you have despised. And he uses that same name for Jesus in Chapter 3, verse 6, Chapter 4, verse 10, Chapter 10, verse 38, whenever he talks about Jesus, he called Him Jesus of Nazareth. Only the next time that he uses it, he puts the word Messiah in there. Jesus, Messiah, from Nazareth. Oh can you imagine the reaction?

Can you imagine they were tearing their...they were tearing their clothes you know hearing that. Jesus of Nazareth our Messiah. No way. It's an open rebuke to the Jews, because it was their

mocking name for Him. And yet it's also a beautiful way for Peter to show the condescension of Jesus Christ who was God in human flesh and condescended all the way down to be a humble man from the humblest of villages, Jesus of Nazareth.

Then he says this, a man approved of God. That is just a rich statement. Jesus Christ didn't have to give testimony to Himself. He said in John 5, "I have a greater who gives testimony for Me, My Father. John 8, "My Father in heaven." In John 5, He made the statement "That I don't do the things I do of Myself. I do them because the Father shows them to Me." He said, "My meat is to do," what, "the will of Him that sent Me." He was approved by God.

Now what does it mean to be approved? This is a fantastic word, enapodeiknumai. It has many shades of meaning. Let me give you a couple and pull it together. First of all, the word is used in 1 Corinthians 4:9 for exhibiting. For putting something on display. And so we could translate it that way. Jesus of Nazareth, a man put on display by God. It also means to bring evidence to prove your point. It's used that way in Acts 25:7, the idea of proof. We could read it that way. Jesus of Nazareth, a man proven by God.

Thirdly, it's used in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 proclaiming someone to a high office. So just in that little word approved, you have the whole thing. You have God in human flesh on display. God in human flesh proven to be who He claims to be. And proclaimed to be the Messiah. Everything in that word is true of Jesus. God exhibited Him. God proved by infallible evidence that He was who He claimed to be. And then God declared that He had the right to the highest office. God even said, "Thou art My beloved Son."

You say well, by what did God approve Him? By what did God proclaim and prove and exhibit Jesus Christ to be whom He claimed to be by, look at it, "miracles and wonders and signs." In the life of Jesus Christ there is overwhelming miraculous evidence that He is who He claimed to be. He did miracles. He created things. He said to a man 38 years ill, would you like to be well, and the man said yes, and so He recreated his insides. He took blind people and recreated eyes that did not function. He gave hearing where there was no capacity to hear. That's creative miracles. He saw people who had no ability to speak and He gave them voice.

One day by the sea of Galilee with 20,000 people sitting at His feet, He made fish and He made bread out of His own hands and just turned it over to them. He began His miracles at a wedding where He created wine. Then one day He stood by the tomb of Lazarus and He performed the acid test. He stood there and simply said, "Lazarus, come out!" Now that separates God from man. As I said before you, you stand can stand beside the cemetery and you can say come out everybody and the only people that will come out are the caretakers.

He said Lazarus come out and he did. That's the acid test. He was a man approved, proven, proclaimed, exhibited by God to be the Messiah and it was verified by miracles, signs, and wonders. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night and he said, hey he said, we know, we know. We don't think so. We know, and he was no believer, Nicodemus. We know that nobody could do what You do except, what, that they be from God. You do things that people can't do. And he was right. He was approved by God. You say well, that's the thing that I can't buy miracles. Now you can always get the rationalistic argument. Well, I can't hack miracles. I mean, that's the thing that's wrong with religion is miracles. Listen, miracles are no big thing. You know, the German rationalists went through the Bible on one occasion in about the 18thcentury and they just ripped all the miracles out. They wanted to get it back to the rational. No miracles. You know, that is ridiculous.

No miracles assumes no God, right? And if there's no God, then what is it that got us here? You say it's nothing. Nothing got us here. You say well I believe in evolution. Where did that come from? You know the premise that evolution is built on? Nobody times nothing equals everything. Now you say well I believe there's something up there, but it's not the God of the Bible. Well, what is it? Well, Paul Tillich says it's the holy other. The holy other what? Or is it just the ground of being?

But whatever it is out there, listen to this, miracles are no big thing. There's got to be something that made this. Einstein said, "If a man doesn't believe in a cosmic power he's a fool." But Einstein followed it by saying, "But it's such a power that no man could ever know and dare he was wrong." Now let's say there's a power out there. Let's say there's a God out there. That a miracle's no big thing. A miracle is simply God sticking His finger in the natural and making waves. That's all it is. And if He's supernatural by definition and we're natural, it's no big deal. A miracle then proves the existence of God. And so when I pick up my Bible and I read about miracles that are verifiable then I say God is.

And this book is too. Don't give me a Bible with no miracles. That's not being rational, that's being idiotic because that's assuming that nothing times nobody equals everything and that's the stupidest equation that ever was. There has to be somebody. And then there has to be miracles, because that Somebody can touch this little world and make waves whenever He wants. And when Jesus started making waves, He started telling us who He was. He was approved by God by miracles.

And you'll notice there are three words here. Miracles, being one of them, wonders and signs. Now these three words, though they can't be distinctly cut apart in always, give us shades of variations that I think are important for us to understand. First of all, the first word miracle has to do with their nature. They are dunamis, powerful mighty deeds, supernatural deeds. Deeds that just aren't normal. That's their nature. Miracles were manifestations of the mighty power of a supernatural God. That's the word miracle. That's what it means. It means mighty deeds. Mighty power, mightier than any human could ever do, supernatural.

Then you'll notice the word wonders. Wonders is an interesting word too. It speaks of what is generated by the miracle. It speaks of the wonder or the marveling that goes on in the mind of the individual who sees it. Wonders. Something that is hard to explain. Startling, grabbing the attention by the marvelous character of it. So the nature of it is one thing and the appearance of it is the wonders. What it appears to be to the mind of the beholder.

The third word signs, semeion, it has to do with its intention. They were mighty deeds that people might wonder that they might become signed. Now what's a sign? Well, a sign is something that points you to something, right? And a sign always says go over here or this is this or it identifies something else that you want to know. There's no such thing as a sign in itself. There's no such thing as a sign you just crawl up on and enjoy. See? A sign always refers to something else. If it says this is the store. You don't go into the sign, you go into the store.

In other words, you don't get on a sign and say oh this is a wonderful product. Signs always point to something else and all of Jesus' signs always pointed to something else. They were mighty deeds to catch the wonder of the people to sign them over to some spiritual reality. They were always used to point to spiritual truth. That's what a semeion, sign, is.

And so Jesus put it all together. He did a mighty deed creating wonder in their minds as a sign pointing them to spiritual truth. Jesus never did a miracle as an end in itself. He did miracles to point to spiritual truth. That's what a sign was for. And all the miracles that Jesus did had these features. They were mighty manifestations of the power of God to get the attention of the people to point them to spiritual truth. Do you remember, for example, in John Chapter 6 how that Jesus had fed the what is really called the 5,000, but it's likely 20,000 people.

And when He got all done, He didn't say you're dismissed, how did you like it? Did you like that? No, He doesn't say that. He says, now sit down and listen to this. "I am the bread," what, "of life." You see He begins to teach. He uses that to teach. He goes to the resurrection of Lazarus. What does He say? Just raised Him and listen to this, "I am the," what, "resurrection and the life." Always a sign pointing to a spiritual truth.

Sometimes the sign came after He taught the truth as a great illustration. Sometimes it came before. But always connected to spiritual truth. So here comes Jesus and being approved by God in all of these things that He did. His life is living testimony that He was who He claimed to be. And then this one. Just impact this, look at verse 22. It says God did it among you. God did it by Him in the midst of you and then He adds, as if that's not enough, "as ye yourselves also know." He indicts them. Just plain and simple. You cannot claim ignorance. You guys know those were miracles. You saw those miracles. You can never plead you didn't know.

Rejection of Jesus Christ on the part of Israel was not a question of information, it was not a question of revelation, it was a question of hatred and the love of sin. The Holy Spirit convicts these people then through Peter of sin and rejecting the evidence of Christ's miraculous life. They couldn't plead ignorance. There was no excuse whatever. They sinned against light. They sinned against conclusive evidence and that was what was fatal.

And I love the fact that it says, He was approved of God and the miracles that God did always Jesus gives the credit to the Father, always. And clear through this whole message by Peter down to verse 36, he keeps saying God did it. God did it. God did it. God did everything. God raised Him from the dead he says three times. God exalted Him on the right hand. God sat Him down and God said stay there until I make Your enemies Your footstool. God's running the whole program. And he's trying to tie into the Jewish mind that this Christ is not some stranger, but He is God's approved Messiah. And God's doing it all. And you don't know God, so you don't see it. In fact, Jesus even said to them in John 8:45, He said, "The reason you don't understand Me is I speak the truth." And He said, "the reason you don't know what's going on is because I speak from God and your father's the devil."

Jesus never claimed what He did was His own. He always claimed that it was from God. And it said, He did it in the midst of you and you know it. Now they knew this. They knew He was doing miracles. They knew that. Nicodemus knew it. Now follow me for just a minute and I'll show you how powerfully the evidence had come through to them. How clearly. John 10:37. "If I do not the works of My Father believe Me not." Believe Me not. "But if I do though you believe not Me, believe the works that ye may know and believe that the Father is in Me and I in Him." He says at least believe what you're seeing. Miracles all over the place.

Then in verse 39, "Therefore, they sought again to take Him, but He escaped out of their hand." They didn't even listen. He got all done saying that and they just wanted to kill Him, but He escaped. You say, well, maybe they weren't too clear about the miracles. Look at John 11:47. Well, back to verse 46, Just finished raising Lazarus from the dead. That's hard to argue with, right? I mean, you've got a dead guy and then you've got a live one. Verse 46. "But some of them went their way to the Pharisees and told them what thing Jesus had done. Then gathered the chief priest and the Pharisees and the counsel and said, "What do we do?" What, what do you mean? "For this man doeth many," what, "miracles." They knew exactly what He was doing. They had all the evidence in the world. They did not have any question about the miracle. But their own hard, vile, God-hating hearts restricted from coming to Christ. They didn't get the message from Him they wanted to hear. They wanted a Messiah who would come along and say fellows, you've been so wonderful come on in and we'll reign together. And He kept talking about their sin and they didn't like it.

In John 12, verse 17, "The people therefore that were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the grave and raised him from the dead bore witness. For this cause the people also met Him, for they

heard that He had done this miracle." This is Jesus entering the city on what we call Palm Sunday. The whole city comes to meet Him. Why? Because He's raised so many from the dead. That's the same crowd that later on in the week are screaming for His blood.

It was never a question of evidence. It was never a question revelation. It was always a question of open, willful, God-hating rejection. Listen to Chapter 14, verse 10. "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me," He said to Philip, "the words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself. But the Father that dwelleth in Me He doeth the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me or else believe Me for the very works sake." Philip, you ought to know. I mean, how could anybody deny. Then listen to this, John 15:24, and here He indicts them. Verse 23 says "He that hateth Me hateth My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin." The great sin of rejecting Him. They wouldn't have been guilty of rejecting Him if He hadn't done these miracles. But He gave them all the evidence. "But now have they both seen and," what's the next word, "hated both Me and My Father."

The end of verse 25 says "they hated Me," what, "without a cause." They hated Him. They despised Him. Why? Because He was all the righteousness that they were not. And their whole bag was self-righteousness and He indicted them and He stepped all over their ecclesiastical code. And so the life of Jesus Christ was an exhibit. It was a proof and it was a proclamation by God the Father that this was in fact the Messiah. The evidence was in. The evidence was conclusive and they knew it. "But men love," what, "darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil."

And thus they committed the greatest sin that could ever be committed. They rejected Jesus Christ. Not only though was His life testimony, but so was His death. Look at verse 23. "Him," that is Jesus of Nazareth, he adds it for emphasis, the very person whom God the Father delighted to honor, they had delighted to crucify. "Jesus of Nazareth being delivered by the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

This is a very interesting verse and I wanted to just spend a moment on it because there are several things here that you need to understand. First notice that it says "Him being delivered by the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God." I love that statement. You know the whole thing, they thought they were pulling this great big thing. Get rid of Jesus. Boy we got rid of Him. It's all done. And Peter says, you know, that thing that you did, that was all predetermined by God and you did it right on schedule accordingly as He designed it.

By the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God, you took Him and crucified Him through it. You see what he's saying there? The argument would come up immediately well if Jesus is the Messiah how come He was a victim? If He's really the Messiah and the ruler, why didn't He exercise His power? If He's really divine, why didn't He do something to prevent the cross and Peter says, He was no victim, this was God's plan. Predetermined.

Over in John 19, Pilate says to Him, "Don't You know I have the power to take Your life?" Jesus says to him, "You don't have any power unless the Father gives it to you." Any power. So he simply says that Jesus died, not as a victim, not because He couldn't handle His enemies, but He died because He was delivered to them by the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God. Now let me talk to you about that for just a minute.

The word delivered here is a word used commonly of those who are surrendered over to their enemies. God delivered over Jesus to death. Notice this. It says He was delivered and here's what it was by. Not by the will of men, not because they plotted it out and God looked way ahead and so oh it's going to happen. I better work that into My plan. No, He was delivered by the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God. Let's look at the term determinant counsel.

"Counsel" means will or design. "Determinant" is obvious. It means decreed, determined, appointed, comes from a word that means to mark out with a boundary. God set it down in order, marked it out, said that's My will, Jesus will die on the Passover, crucified, etc., all predetermined. You say well, when did He do that? When did He make those plans? Well, long time ago. 2 Timothy 1:9, "Who has saved us and called us with a 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," what, "began." Did you know that God and Christ had it all mapped out before there ever was a world? They knew there would be a world and it would have trees and one of those trees would be made into a cross. And that it would have people and the people would go through history till they finally came to the place that they would do that. And that was all part of God's predetermined will.

You see somebody had to die for sin, because that was also God's will that men would be recovered from sin by the death of someone else. And thus God planned with Jesus Christ the death of Christ long before the world was ever made. It was by God's planning. In Acts, for example, Chapter 4, Peter is preaching again and he makes the same point, because he wants them to know that Jesus is no victim. This is just really powerful. He describes the attitude of people toward Christ from Psalm 2, quoting David. Verse 26, Acts 4, "The king of the earth...the kings of the earth stood up and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Messiah." And they were against Christ, no question. Not only the Jews, but the Gentile. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus whom thou hast anointed both Herod and Pontius Pilate," the Jews and the Gentiles, "with the nation and the people of Israel were gathered together." They gathered against Christ. To do what? "To do whatever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

Isn't that good? They thought they were so sharp on their own and all they did was carry out the will of God. I told you several weeks ago and I'll remind you of it. It doesn't matter whether you're saved or unsaved. God can use you any way He wants to use you. If He can't use you for His good one way, He'll use for His good another way.

Just because a man's not a Christian doesn't mean he's outside of the ability of God to use him. Oh no. God used these people to carry out His will, but He never violated their will to do it. And that's why He says after all of that and ye have taken Him and by wicked hands crucified and slain. Now notice the word foreknowledge and I want to say something about it just briefly. The word foreknowledge is misunderstood by a lot of people. A lot of people have used the word foreknowledge in terms of predestination or the doctrine of election.

And say well, when we say we're elect, that based on foreknowledge and foreknowledge is that God knows what's going to happen before it happens so that God's up there and He looks down at the world and He says well John MacArthur's going to come to Me therefore I'll elect him. Or this is going to happen over here, therefore I'll fit that into My plan. Foreknowledge then is determined to mean by many people awareness beforehand or knowing something before it happened.

Unfortunately, it never means that in Scripture. It always means a foreordination or a foreplanning or a predetermining and I'll show you what I mean. This verse would be senseless if it said this, Him being delivered by the determinant counsel and because God knew I was going to happen. That doesn't make sense at all. It...foreknowledge could see something, but foreknowledge can't act and make something happen. There's a difference.

One preacher illustrated it this way, he said "God sees a man like this. If I'm driving down the road and I see a guy weaving in and out of the traffic and he's whipping in and out of the traffic, I can have the same kind of foreknowledge God can have and I can say at the rate he's going he's going to have a wreck." And that's what foreknowledge is. That's not...it can't be. I may say yes, he's going to have a wreck, but I...my foreknowledge can't go down there and wreck him. Or maybe God looks at a man and sees him and says boy the way he's going he's going to make it to the right destination.

Now I may be able to say that about a guy driving down the road, but I can't get him there. Foreknowledge can't act. Foreordination can and when Christ was delivered that wasn't foreknowledge that was what? That was foreordination. That was God's planning. The word is prognosis and it means simply to foreordain or foreplan. And if it means there, it means it 1 Peter 1:2. When it says that we're "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." And it means foreordination.

It means foreplanning. It's the only way the verse makes sense. Why would He say your elect according to what God knows is going to happen. That's not election. Certainly foreknowledge knows, but it cannot perform an act like delivering Jesus to His enemy. Nor can it perform an act like calling individuals to Himself. Foreknowledge can only know, it can't act. This is foreordination. *Prognosco* and *progonosco*...*prognosis* I should say... and *progonosco* have to do with ordaining or determining something in eternity that is carried out. And I give you another illustration. The word is used and

translated correctly in 1 Peter 1:20.

FirstPeter 1:20 says "Christ was barely foreordained, before the foundation of the world." Now you certainly wouldn't say Christ was barely foreknown in the sense that God knew what Christ was going to do before the world began. Knowing He planned what Christ was going to do, true?

The word is translated correctly there. And should be translated that way everywhere. You have it again in Romans Chapter 11, verse 2. In Romans 11:2, it says about Israel, "As God set aside Israel whom He foreknew." It doesn't mean that they were the ones He knew about. It means, they were the ones He chose to be His nation. It always has to do with choosing with foreordaining, with predetermination. God is never pictured at any time sitting up in heaven looking over the balcony figuring out what's going to happen to everybody and then putting it into His plan.

God maps it out. He is sovereign. His purposes run the world. Now Peter makes a strong point of this because he wants to show that Jesus is no victim. Not victim at all. Let me add this quickly as Peter adds it. You say well, does that remove human responsibility? Of course not. Of course not. It says in the same verse, you take... "you took Him and by wicked hands," and the indication of the of the "ye have taken" is the Jew, the wicked hands... "the by wicked hands" evidently is a reference to the Romans, "have crucified and slain him."

The Jews were the instigators the Romans were the executioners. You see, he presents the total sovereignty of God and the complete responsibility of man. You say I don't know how those two go together and I say good, I don't either. Praise the Lord, because if I understood everything and you understood everything we'd be equal to God. I'm glad He knows some things we don't know. All I know is that man is responsible for his sin in a human sense from our viewpoint, but from God's viewpoint everything in the world is mapped out according to His divine plan. Now there's a sense in which in His plan man can move freely. How He rectifies those two things, how He justifies them is His problem and don't worry about it. He can handle it.

My puny little brain can't. And I'm not going to try. All I know is that men are responsible. I can illustrate it to you from Luke 22 with this startling illustration. Luke 22:21, talking to Judas at the table there, the Last Supper. Jesus says, "But behold the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table." I don't know whether he was actually holding Jesus' hand or not, but his hand was on the table. And He says this, "And truly the Son of man goes to the cross as it was determined." Did you get that? Did you get it?

Now listen to this statement. "But woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed." You see there's both sides of it isn't it? I'm going, but it was determined, but woe to the man who did it. You have the divine paradox, the absolute sovereignty of God, the responsibility of a man for his deeds. How those two come together is in the mind of God. Too far beyond our understanding. Except know it well "a man is

responsible," watch this, "a man is responsible for his sin, not for the plans of God." Did you get it?

"A man is responsible for his sin, not for the plans of God." They had personally, individually rejected and killed Jesus Christ. They had committed the horrible, blackest sin of all. And as any salvation presentation must, Peter begins with a conviction of sin. You see to be saved isn't just to see the loveliness of Jesus. No, it's not just to see the grandeur and the glory of God. To be saved is to see beyond all the things the blackness of your own sin.

Did you get that? And you'll never come to God and experience real salvation until you've come with a life that has been shattered over the terror and the horror of your own sin. And what sin? One particular sin. John 16:8, "When the Spirit comes He will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." Watch it, "Of sin because they," what, "believe not on Me."

To present the gospel of Jesus Christ, you must begin with a conviction of sin. Now watch this, but it's not enough to say well, you're a sinner, because when you were a little kid you told a lie or you cheated on your income tax or you did this. That's all superficial stuff. What we need to nail down in the hearts of people is you are a vile sinner because you have rejected Jesus Christ. That's the sin. That's the sin. When He has come He will reprove the world of sin. What sin? "The sin because they believed not on Me."

The greatest sin a man could commit is the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ. And we must tell men that they have done the blackest deed in the universe. And if they don't like it, then they're not ready for salvation, right? If they're not willing to admit it, they're not ready for salvation. Let's not squeeze them in some other door. There is no other door.

Either they come knowing the very deep heinousness of the sin of rejecting Christ or they're not really going to get saved. So it is that the Spirit of God through Peter's sermon convicts them of the depth of their sin in crucifying and slaying the Son of God. Even after His life and death had shown that it was approved by God.

But isn't it grace that God had planned into the cross, the salvation of the crucifier? Isn't that grace? God plans the very salvation of the ones who put His son there. And Peter speaks to them now and says repent. Repent. Repent from what? From rejecting Jesus Christ. And I say to you this morning, some of you who are here and you've never received Jesus Christ. You were guilty of the most serious sin in the universe. You are guilty of rejecting Jesus Christ the son of God. But that sin there is no forgiveness. For that sin you will be sentenced to Hell forever.

And I say to you what Peter said, repent. And so Peter begins by showing from the life and death of Jesus that He is the Messiah and the sentence which Jesus' human judges passed on Him and His human executioners carried out has been reversed by God. They were wrong. Jesus of Nazareth,

look at it in verse 36, "This Jesus of Nazareth, God hath made Him Lord and Christ." You crucified Him. God says He's your Messiah.

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