

Eternity Daily Bible Study - No. 351
Series: The Primal Church - Acts Chapters 1-8
Verses: Acts 2:22,23
Topic: The Predetermined Plan and Foreknowledge Of God
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Acts 2:22-23 ISV "Fellow Israelites, listen to these words! Jesus from Nazareth was a man accredited to you by God through miracles, wonders, and signs that God performed through him among you, as you yourselves know. (23) This very man, after he was arrested according to the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

"Jesus of Nazareth" – that was His name among the people in Jerusalem, He was not yet known as Jesus the Christ. There is no hint of His deity in this passage, Jesus is "a man accredited to you by God". Peter starts with what they can believe and leaves the deeper theological insights until after conversion.

Jesus was not accredited by the scribes or by the Temple authorities but by God and the method of His accreditation was not a diploma – but "miracles, wonders, and signs that God performed through him among you."

The servant of God must first of all be accredited through the Spirit of God, without that ordination is meaningless. I have known an unconverted Baptist pastor. These are fairly rare but this man had such abilities and political skill that he sailed through the ordination process. But he was of course a disaster in the ministry. Human accreditation is fallible, some good folk are rejected and some terrible folk are ordained. The true accreditation is from God.

Now this accreditation is not just a sense of being called, or a warmed heart, or a desire for ministry. The accreditation is the demonstration of godly spiritual power and the ability to bless others through the Spirit. The accreditation of an evangelist is significant numbers of converts, of a pastor - clear spiritual growth, of a teacher - people learning and being disciplined, of a healer - the raising up of the sick; and so forth. There must be results. Under normal circumstances a minister with no results is suspect. (This does not apply to new works in difficult places.)

"As you yourselves know" – Jesus accreditation by God was publicly observable, it was obvious. One look at Jesus was enough – his godliness was evident. And ours should be too. True saints are holy on sight, they glow.

"This very man, after he was arrested according to the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God," Now comes the difficult bit – can God plan a gross injustice? Can the murder of a man as innocent as Jesus be part of the predetermined plan of God?

Either answer presents significant problems. If you say “yes” God plans the murder of innocent people – you have a big problem. If you say “no” then the martyrs die outside of God’s plan. Was the cross an evil accident of chance or was it planned by God? If it was planned by God is He still a holy and moral God?

It helps if we see the whole picture. That not only the cross was planned by God, but also the resurrection, ascension and glorification of His beloved Son and His return in glory. In other words God had no malice towards Jesus. He was not acting brutally towards an innocent man – even though He allowed Jesus to suffer greatly.

We have to look at our life and sufferings as a whole, with glory in view.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 ASV (16) Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. (17) For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; (18) while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Sufferings work glory. Thus by allowing Jesus to suffer, He allowed Jesus to come into a great weight of glory. At a human level it was an injustice but on a spiritual level it was an opportunity for great gain.

God is always trying to bless the righteous and sometimes trials are the greatest blessings of all (though I do not enjoy them and protest as much as anyone, if not more so). Therefore we rejoice.... (see Romans 5:1-5, 1 Peter 1:6-8 etc)

God weaves our lives into a rich tapestry and some threads are sorrows, but they are temporary and joy is always the final state of the Christian – and Jesus knew that because “for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross..”.

Hebrews 12:1-2 MKJV Therefore since we also are surrounded with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, (2) looking to Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right of the throne of God.

You may suffer a terrible wicked injustice in this life that scars you and tears your soul. It may be as demonic and hateful and cruel as the Cross. You may be delivered to be crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. And yet it may well be part of God’s will for you. If it is, you will come into great glory as a result. This is not an abstract thing - researchers tell us that 150,000 Christians are martyred every year - and in the last days the Devil will make total war on us.

It is crazy to desire such a thing – even Jesus prayed that the cup would pass from Him. No sane person wants to suffer. But in the end we trust God and say “Not my will but Thine be done”. God’s plan is complex and has some very deep valleys and we may have to walk through them. Even in the midst of insane cruelty God is in

charge and His plan is working for our ultimate good and our deepest joy. This is the “patient endurance of the saints”. (Revelation 14:12)

Blessings,

John Edmiston

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