



JULY

TO DO:

God Has  
A Plan

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God's plan for salvation is the key to impacting the chaos in the world around us. This study is designed to reinforce Peter's concepts and actions for the people at Pentecost while sharing how we can make a similar impact in our world today. It is time for us to stop using the world as an excuse and realize it is the exact time and place God wants us to be. Peter demonstrated that His plan of salvation is powerful and personal.

## ACTS 2: 1-13 THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Historically, Pentecost was when all well-practiced Jews traveled to Jerusalem to offer gifts and offerings to God—to celebrate the first fruits of harvest with thanksgiving to God for His provision. It was also time to remember and celebrate The Law, that God had given to Moses, which they had been taught for generations.

During the Pentecost denoted in Acts chapter 2, the Holy Spirit came down, and tongues of fire sat on each one in the crowd. Believers spoke in other tongues, and each pilgrim in the audience understood the message of the Gospel in their own language.

That moment at Pentecost was not just a singular occurrence—it was the beginning of something that would continue. The miracle of tongues was indeed a one-time event, but the power manifested that day is still very much alive. Even today, believers live under this supernatural presence of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.

Some skeptics in the wider audience mocked the believers, accusing them of being drunk. Peter entered the scene and delivered a sermon to address the crowd, and to reveal God's plan.

## ACTS 2:14-21 PETER'S SERMON AT PENTECOST: THE WHAT

First, Peter confirmed there was no drunkenness causing these events. He even clarified by referencing a prophecy familiar to the crowd from Joel in the Old Testament. He did this to explain exactly what was happening—that is, the Holy Spirit was being poured out on them. Peter spoke to them about how God had created an avenue for all

men to be saved—if they call upon the name of the Lord (verse 21).

Peter then moved to the heart of his message and the focus of this study. In verses 22-41, Peter explains God's Plan.

## ACTS 2:22-36 PETER'S SERMON AT PENTECOST: THE HOW

After Peter established exactly what had just occurred at that special Pentecost, he moved into the rest of his sermon to explain how God's plan was executed. In these verses, he unpacked all that had culminated to that moment at that Pentecost. He asserted and defended Christ as the Messiah; the One God used to give each person access to the Holy Spirit. Along with this access, Jesus also provided eternal salvation through His death, burial, and resurrection. Peter made it clear that the events Jesus endured were not just a series of unforeseen events but were all in accordance with God's foreknowledge and His plan from eternity past to eternity future.

Verses 22-24 and 32-35 very practically lay out the Gospel. Starting with verses 22-24, Peter concisely verifies Jesus as God's Son and Messiah to all. Through God, Jesus performed supernatural works, signs, and wonders for mankind to witness and recognize He was God in the flesh. Peter quickly pointed out this Jesus was the One whom the unbelieving Jews sentenced to death at the hands of the Romans (verse 23).

Peter used this clever way to unify the Jews and Gentiles as one group entirely respon-

sible for Jesus' death. They were unified in their desperation and need of a Savior—as is still true today. Every unbelieving person is unified in their sinful nature and their need to know the Savior, Jesus.

Even though Jesus' death was at the hands of men, it was known and predestined by God. His sovereign plan was to use Jesus as atonement for all, so all could believe in Him and be saved. Only God could work in such a perfect paradox. Christ was crucified by the free will and hands of men and by the hand of God Himself in His sovereignty. What a picture demonstrating how God is truly the Ruler and Creator of all and functions as He pleases. He anticipates and uses our free will as part of His greater purpose and plan. However, Christ's crucifixion was not the end of the plan; it was the beginning—God raised Christ from death!

In verse 24, Peter described the raising of Jesus as loosening the "pains of death." The original Greek word for "pains" relates to the pains of childbirth. Note the play on words—the pains of labor bring new life, yet it was the pains of death God removed from Jesus. In his commentary on Acts, Danny Dwyer explains this concept: "Life came from death; the idea is that death could not hold back the resurrection of Christ in the same way a mother cannot hold back childbirth." When it is time for a birth, there is no stopping the baby. When it was time for Christ to rise again, there was no stopping Him. God's plan was and is forever inevitable. The victory is His.

Peter continued reinforcing this truth by referring to the Old Testament again. In this way he connected



the dots so everyone in the audience at Pentecost could understand. He wanted them to realize all the aspects that proved God's promises were true and the fulfillment of His plan for salvation ultimately came through Christ.

In verses 25-31, he quotes and references Psalm 16:8-11, a psalm of David. David rejoiced over the presence of God—and prophetically spoke of God's plan for salvation. In Psalm 16:10 (quoted in Acts 2:27), David spoke confidently in the first person, confirming his personal hope beyond the grave while also delivering a Messianic prophecy—“Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” This prophecy from David pointed to Jesus, the Greater David. Some Jews might have thought these words pointed to David, but it could not, because David's tomb was still occupied in Jerusalem, whereas Christ's tomb was empty due to His resurrection (verses 29-31).

To readers today, the reference might seem trivial, and even distracting that Peter took such a detour in his proclamation of the Gospel. However, to the Jews, this was a powerful picture. This explanation of the Scripture closed gaps in the prophecies and confirmed Jesus as the Messiah.

Similarly, our consideration of all the truth in Scripture today will allow God to reveal His plans and promises for our lives. That is, for the plan of salvation we must share, as well as our everyday obedience and submission to His will.

Peter did not cease to reference the prophets familiar to

the Jews. In verses 32-35, he recalled his personal witness of the risen Lord and again referred to the words of David to reinforce the truth of Jesus ascending. Peter also mentioned the promise of the Holy Spirit, which God the Father had made. He explicitly correlated that promise to the events of that day at Pentecost. He left no shadow of doubt for the Jews in attendance; he had fully explained the truth of God's Plan.

## ACTS 2:36-39 PETER'S SERMON AT PENTECOST: THE WHY AND WHAT'S NEXT

Peter's relatable and logically-sound delivery of the Gospel message ended in the next verses, and the response to his message began to bubble in those listening. His firm closing in verse 36 summarizes with direct and unwavering certainty that the prophecies of the Old Testament point to the crucified and resurrected Jesus as the Lord and Messiah. Verse 37 describes the response to Peter's words. People were “pricked to the heart” and eager to learn what to do in response to the moving explanation of God's plan.

What reaction do we have to God's Plan for salvation? The response can't be superficial; we must allow God to pierce our hearts with His plan and be eager to join Him in the ways He provides for us.

Peter answered them in verses 38-39. He said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 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.” The response is simple: repent and be baptized. Peter was not recommending baptism as a ritual to secure salvation, but as a step of public obedience to Christ. In the Greek, to be baptized means to be “immersed or dipped.” Peter called the new believers to be baptized with the intent to identify with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. They were dipped down in the water to display death to their sin and rose from the water to display Christ’s gift of new life. Again, this practice was not to secure their salvation, but to outwardly express their heart-felt repentance.

Peter also made it a point to express the width and depth of the plan for salvation. He expressed its openness to everyone, in every generation, near or far. The term for those who “are afar off” refers to the Gentiles. Peter again unifies Jew and Gentile, this time in their accessibility to the salvation Jesus offers—a powerful sermon with powerful implications.

## ACTS 2:40 - 41 THE RESULTS

To close the account of Peter’s sermon, the Scripture says he continued to bear witness to the crowds. In verse 40 he urged them to turn away from the crooked generation in which they lived. Those who heard his preaching believed and were baptized, and three thousand were added to the family of God that day (verse 41).

### Making God’s Plan Personal

Peter’s sermon was to the crowd at Pentecost on that day when the Holy Spirit came, but there is still so much to glean from his words today. First and foremost, let’s be clear about God’s Plan—that the sacrifice of His Son Jesus is the atonement for all people who believe in Him. Salvation is open to all who are willing to repent and follow Him.

Let’s make that plan more personal. That salvation God promises through Jesus is intended for me, for you, for each person we know, for each person we love, and for the strangers we have never met. This salvation

is available! The sad truth is just like the crowd at Pentecost, there is stirring, confusion, and even some speculation or hostility about this plan for salvation. Some do not know of Christ’s sacrifice for us. Whether they have heard of it or not, it has not been made real and clear to them in their hearts. They have not experienced that “prick in their heart” as the new converts did at Pentecost. We must make it real to them, as Peter did.

I know who my “Peter” was. Actually, I had more than one—several individuals in my life disciplined me to Jesus, connected the dots, and made His ways clear to me. God used these vessels to make His plan evident to me and help me form it into the center of my life.

I have a background in Catholicism through my family upbringing where I learned a bunch of rules growing up—how to be good enough, do enough, and earn my way to Heaven. We went to the holy days of obligation and were always in a pew on the big church holidays... mainly to keep my grandma happy. The reality: I was out of touch with the living Word of God. I didn’t know what His plan was or that there was even a plan written out in that old Book I saw in the pews on Sunday. It wasn’t until my “Peter” explained the plan to me that it jumped off that Book’s pages and into real life. I learned what the plan was, how it came to be, why it mattered, and what my next steps should be in response.

### Applying and Pondering

My goal for this study is to think about how we can share God’s Plan and become a “Peter” to those who need it.

1. *Peter made sense out of the chaos for the crowd.* He did this by piecing together the truths of God’s Word so his audience could relate and understand. We all recognize the chaos in our world today, and it worsens as we try to unscramble the mess and interject our opinions. As we navigate a lost world and seek to offer clarity to the plan God has, we need to be wise and educated in what the Scriptures say. Multiple times Peter inserted



Scripture into the conversation and wove it together with personal testimony in an intentional way. Prepare to carefully and intentionally articulate truths from Scripture for those who need it, in the way they need it, and in the time they need it. Some of that is solely provided through divine intervention to guide our words, and some of that is our responsibility to invest in our relationship with God so that we know the details of His plan with certainty.

2. *Peter was bold and direct.* There is a fine line when being bold for the Gospel. Being bold does not mean demanding our way and forcing the Gospel onto someone with whom God may not be working at that time. Peter was candid with the truths of God's plan and laid out the facts. He also made it digestible. His sermon was an invitation to the Gospel, where the audience would be challenged to think, understand, and decide. This passage clearly demonstrated that God was at work, and Peter obeyed as he spoke God's truth and delivered His plan to the people. He did not sugar-coat or dilute it, nor did he deliver God's message without love or as a fear tactic or harsh.

3. *Peter did not just speak; he pointed toward action.* Peter could have offered a vague story about the love of God, which lacked spiritual depth, to sell the 'idea' of God while avoiding the commitment to be made.

Instead, he made the truth clear and then urged those who believed to act. Repentance is a true heart decision; it is walking east then turning completely towards the west, a newness of life. It is a choice made with commitment. James 2:18-20 comes to mind; faith apart from works is useless. Faith is what saves those that are lost. However, empty faith that produces no action is worthless. If we love God, we ought to obey God and take action to fulfill every request He makes of us and every command He requires.

I encourage you to re-read the passage Acts 2:22-41. Pray and ask God to reveal practical application from this passage for your life. Perhaps, while you pray and study the passage, you can ponder new ways to act more like Peter on that special Pentecost. Maybe God will bring to your mind the crowds, the place, or even the specific person to whom you are to deliver the message of His plan. *W*

*About the Writer:*

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