

THE DAY OF PENTECOST AND THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: THE CHURCH IS BORN ACTS 02:01–13

Introduction

The Day of Pentecost was one of the most phenomenal and important events in all of history. There are several reasons why the event was so important.

=> It was “the coming of the Holy Spirit.”

=> It was the birth of the church.

=> It was the corporate filling of the Holy Spirit, of the body of believers with the promised presence of Christ (Jn. 14:16-18).

=> It was the personal filling of the individual believer by the Holy Spirit.

=> It was the Presence and Power of God coming upon believers, gifting and equipping them to proclaim the glorious message of salvation to men.

I. There was God’s providence (v. 1).

II. There was man obeying (v. 1).

III. There was the spirit of being together, in one mind (v. 1).

IV. There was the Spirit’s infilling (vv. 2-4).

V. There was witnessing — God-fearing men heard the Word (vv. 5-11).

VI. There were different reactions (vv. 12-13).

ACTS 02:01–04 PENTECOST, THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The disciples had been deliberately prepared for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Throughout the Bible the revelation of the Spirit had been step by step, that is, progressive. Prophecy shows this clearly.

1. Joel prophesied, “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people....” (Joel 2:28-29).
2. John the Baptist said, “I baptize with water, but He shall baptize with [en, in] the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16).
3. In the early part of Jesus’ ministry, He had said that believers were to be “born again...[by] the Spirit” (Jn. 3:3- 4; see 1 Jn. 5:1).

4. During His ministry, Jesus taught that men were to receive the Holy Spirit by prayer (Lk. 11:13).
5. In the Upper Room, Jesus identified the Holy Spirit as a Person (Jn. 14:15-26), and He outlined the work of the Spirit with both unbelievers and believers (Jn. 16:7-15). Significantly, He revealed that He was praying to the Father for the Comforter to come and abide with the disciples (Jn. 14:16-17).
6. After His resurrection from the dead, Jesus appeared to His disciples in the Upper Room. There He symbolically breathed on them, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn. 20:22). But He insisted they not begin their ministry until they experienced the Spirit actually coming upon them with power (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:8).
7. Right before Jesus was to ascend into heaven, He said, "John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5).
8. Then, ten days after Jesus' ascension and after much prayer, the Holy Spirit came upon and filled the whole body of believers at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

There are two events of the Holy Spirit's coming that seem to hold historical significance. These two particular events are very, very special to the church, for both Jewish and Gentile believers were clearly seen to be in God's historical plan. Both Jew and Gentile were baptized by the Holy Spirit, that is, placed into the body of Christ, His Church.

1. At Pentecost: the disciples were "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4).
 - a. This was in fulfilment of the prophecy by Joel. The Spirit was *poured out* upon the believers (Acts 2:16).
 - b. This was in fulfilment of the prophecies by Jesus and John. The Spirit *baptized*, that is, immersed the believers with His own presence (Acts 1:5; 10:44-48; see 11:15-16, esp. 16).
2. At Cornelius' house: the Holy Spirit "came on", had been "poured out", and was "received" by the Gentile believers (Acts 10:44-47).
 - a. Peter said to the Jews who came with him, "They have received the Holy Spirit *just as we have.*" (Acts 10:47).
 - b. Peter reported the event to the Jerusalem Church: "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 11:15-16)
 - c. Peter used the experience to support Paul before the great Jerusalem Council:

Acts 15:8 God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us.

In all three instances the idea conveyed is that of an event just like *their own* experience. It is as though Peter pointed to a Gentile Pentecost or at least an extension of Pentecost in Acts 2 to include the Gentiles.

Note two other facts:

1. At Pentecost, the account uses the word *filled*, not *baptized*.
2. At Cornelius' house, the account says the Holy Spirit *came on*, had been *poured out*, and *received*. But in reporting the experience to the Jerusalem Church, Peter used the word *baptized*. He said the Gentile believers were "baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 11:16) "as he had come on us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15). This clearly says that although the word *baptized* is not used in the Pentecost experience, the disciples were baptized or immersed with the Spirit's presence at Pentecost. The words *filled*, *received*, *poured*, *baptized* and *came on* are all used interchangeably to describe the Spirit's presence coming into a believer's life. (If believers would heed this, it would eliminate many of the arguments that arise over terminology.)

Other than these two events Acts records only four other times that the Holy Spirit came upon believers.

1. A little prayer band in Jerusalem was "filled" with the Holy Spirit (see Acts 4:8).
2. The Samaritans (half-Jews, half-Gentiles) "received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:15-17).
3. Paul was "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17).
4. The disciples of John experienced "the Holy Spirit came on them" (Acts 19:6).

One other fact is important. Other than Pentecost and Cornelius' house, the word *baptize* is used in connection with the Holy Spirit only once in the rest of the New Testament. That one reference is 1 Cor. 12:13: "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body." That is, the Holy Spirit takes all believers and baptizes or immerses, places and positions them into the body of Christ — into the church, the universal church.

In conclusion, what does all this mean?

1. When a man grasps the gospel and believes, really believes, the Holy Spirit enters his life. He *comes upon*, *falls upon*, *pours*, *fills*, *baptizes* (immerses) Himself into the life of the believer. This is a personal *experience*. This act of the Spirit takes place in the life of the believer. The believer *experiences* the Spirit coming into his life. The believer receives the Spirit *experientially*.

2. When a man grasps the gospel and believes, really believes, the Holy Spirit takes him and *baptizes* or immerses, and places him into the body of Christ, which is God's Church. The believer does not feel or experience this act. It is an act of God that takes place in heaven. The believer is *counted* as a child of God. He is *counted* as a member of the body, of the church. This is a *position*, not an experience, which the believer feels. It happens once-for-all. The believer is adopted as a child of God — irrevocably. It is an eternal *position*, an eternal sonship. The believer becomes a member of God's Church — positionally (1 Cor. 12:13).
3. After a man is saved, he is to be filled and kept on being "filled with the Spirit" — day by day (Eph. 5:18; see Jn. 14:21, the word "manifest"). The early believers were continually filled (Acts 4:8, 31). □

I. Acts 02:01 *Feast of Pentecost; The Providence of God*

There was God's providence. The Feast of Pentecost needs to be understood in order to see God's providence at work. Pentecost was celebrated fifty days after the Passover. It was also known as the "Day of the First Fruits" (Num. 28:26), or the "Feast of Weeks" (Exo. 34:22), or the "Feast of Harvest."

Pentecost was a glorious day of celebration, a day when the people were to heap praise and thanksgiving upon God. There were three particular reasons for which they were to thank God.

1. The harvest of the fields. Note the very name of the Feast says that it is a celebration of the "First Fruits." It was celebrated when the first fruits of the harvest began to come in, which was around the first of June. It actually opened the harvest season.
2. The Exodus, the deliverance of the nation Israel from Egyptian bondage (Dut. 16:12). The people were to thank God for the day he delivered them out of slavery.
3. The giving of the law upon Mt. Sinai (Exo. 19-20). This was the day the people were constituted as a nation, as the great nation of Israel. They were to live as God's very own people upon earth. They were to thank God for Himself and for His law, the rules and principles He had given to govern their lives and nation. It is important to note that the Jews figured the law had been given to Moses fifty days after the Exodus.

Now note the providence of God, how all three events were fulfilled in the coming of the Holy Spirit.

1. When "the day of Pentecost came" the first fruits were born — the church itself and the first harvest of souls. The new beginning, that is, the filling of the Holy Spirit, began fifty days after Jesus' death and resurrection (Acts 2:4).
2. The coming of the Holy Spirit had a very specific purpose. The Holy Spirit was to live and work within the heart of man, to deliver and free him from the enslavements of

this world — from sin, death and hell. The Holy Spirit came to set man at liberty even as God had delivered the Jews out of Egyptian slavery (2 Cor. 3:17: see Jn. 16:8-11).

3. The coming of the Holy Spirit was two things.
 - a. It was the birth of the church, the new people of God. People who truly came to God were now to be sealed and known by the presence of the Holy Spirit, by His very presence within their hearts and lives.

2 Cor 1:21-22 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Eph 1:13-14 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.

Eph 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

- b. It was the institution of the new law, the new rule and principle of God. Man is now to be guided by the Spirit who empowers him to live right and to serve Christ.

John 14:26 “But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

John 16:13 “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”

Rom 8:14 Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

1 Cor 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

ACTS 02: 01 JEWISH FEASTS

There were three major Feasts celebrated by the Jews. Each had been instituted by God to celebrate significant events in both the daily life and history of the people and their nation. But God also had something else in mind as well, the coming of His Son and the birth of His followers. Therefore each of the Feasts find their fulfilment in Christ and His Church.

1. There was the “Feast of the Passover.” It was a week of giving thanks...

- for God’s deliverance out of bondage and slavery, looking back to their forefathers’ slavery under Egypt.

The Passover Feast was fulfilled in the crucifixion of Christ. Christ was the “Lamb of God” who was to die for the sins of the world. He and His death had been symbolized in the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb. (See notes, Mt. 26:17-30; Lk. 22:7-23.)

2. There was the “Feast of the First Fruits.” It was a day of giving thanks...

- for the birth and growth of the new crops, the reaping of the first fruits of the earth.
- for the birth of their nation at Mt. Sinai.

This Feast was fulfilled in the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the day when the church was born and the first of God’s new people were reaped. (See note, Acts 2:1.)

3. There was the “Feast of Tabernacles.” It was a week of giving thanks...

- for the end and completion of the harvest season, the journey of toil and struggle experienced in gathering the harvest.
- for the end of their nation’s wilderness wanderings under Moses.

The “Feast of Tabernacles” is yet to be fulfilled. It will be fulfilled when our Lord returns. The Feast will symbolize our joy, liberty and victory through the wilderness wanderings of life and the glorious provision of God, that of living and serving eternally in His wonderful presence (Zee. 14:16). (See note 1, Jn. 7:37.) □

II. Acts 02:01 Obedience

There was man obeying. Note: the believers were in “one place,” in the city of Jerusalem precisely where Christ told them to go and wait upon the coming of the Holy Spirit. They were obedient — obedient despite the great danger the Jerusalem authorities posed to them. (See note, Acts 1:12-15.)

Thought 1. One thing is absolutely essential if a believer wants to receive the fullness of God’s Spirit: *obedience*. The believer must obey Christ and follow His instructions.

John 14:15-17 “If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”

John 14:23 Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

III. *Acts 02:01 Unity*

There was the spirit of being together in one mind. (See *One Accord*, Acts 1:14.)

IV. *Acts 02:02–04 Infilling of the Holy Spirit, Pentecost*

There was the Spirit's infilling. Note the word "suddenly." The Holy Spirit came suddenly, abruptly, unexpectedly, the kind of abrupt happening that jolts and startles a person. God was dramatizing the supernatural and precious significance of the event.

1. There was a mighty sound that filled the room.
 - a. The sound was from heaven, that is, from God. It came from God's activity, not from the activity of natural causes upon earth. It was supernatural. God created sound for this very special occasion.
 - b. The sound was like the blowing of a *violent* wind. It was not wind, but a sound like the deafening roar or blast of a strong wind (see a hurricane, tornado or gale).
 - c. The sound filled *all the house*, that is, it was localized upon the house where they were *sitting*. Why? There are at least three reasons.
 - => First, people needed to be startled and alarmed, attracted to gather from all over Jerusalem, seeking to know what had happened. An audience needed to be gathered for the first preaching of the gospel.
 - => Second, the mighty power of the Spirit needed to be symbolized and dramatized for the disciples. They needed strong confidence instilled within them in order to stand and preach the gospel before the very persons who had crucified the Lord and who had hunted them down as accomplices.
 - => Third, the disciples would learn how Christ wanted them to preach the gospel. The presence of the Holy Spirit upon them would either bring people flocking from all over, asking what had happened or lead them to the people whom they were to reach.
2. There was the appearance of *cloven tongues (diamerizomenai)*. The Greek means a tongue that was cloven, that is, torn apart. The idea is that a single tongue appeared and then began to split and divide itself, resting upon each of the disciples.
 - a. The tongues were not fire, but *like fire*; that is, they only looked like fire. They were a brilliant, luminous, fire-like substance created by God to dramatize the moment of the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples.
 - b. The tongue of fire that first appeared symbolized the presence of the Holy Spirit which was to dwell in the midst of God's people as a whole. When He began to divide into many tongues of fire and to rest upon each believer, He was symbolizing that He was to dwell within each believer as well as within the whole body of believers. (See notes, 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 6:19-20.)

Note the words, “He came to rest” (*ekathisen*). The word is singular, not plural. Scripture does not say “they came to rest,” but He, the Holy Spirit Himself, was descending and resting upon *each* of the disciples. They were not receiving “tongues of fire” but the Spirit of God.

Note also that the Spirit appeared in the form of a tongue of fire. The tongue symbolizes the instrument of speaking and preaching and sharing the gospel. The Holy Spirit was to be the burning power of the tongue, of the convicting message to be proclaimed.

3. There were the results which were twofold.

a. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. (See *Holy Spirit*, Acts 2:1-4.)

First, both the body (church) and each individual believer were filled. They were “all filled” with the presence and power of the Spirit — all of them corporately and each of them individually. It was both a corporate and a personal, individual infilling. Each believer had been commanded to wait for the baptism of the Spirit, and each one was to be so filled with His presence and power. It was a command to the individual believer as well as to the corporate body. Each one was to experience and know His grace and power and fruit (Gal. 5:22-23).

Thought 1. A critical point is often ignored and neglected. The command to be filled with the Spirit is still God’s command to every believer, both individually and corporately (the church).

Eph 5:18 *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*

Gal 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

Thought 2. How neglectful the church is! Ignoring and neglecting the command “[to seek to] be filled with the Spirit.” How many churches actually meet together to pray and wait for the filling of God’s Spirit?

Luke 11:13 *“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

Second, the disciples were given the gifts of the Spirit to carry on the work of the ministry upon earth. This fact is not mentioned here, although it is certainly to be demonstrated in the preaching and witnessing about to take place. The giving of the Spirit’s gifts is covered in Ephesians.

Eph 4:8, 11-12 *This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.”....It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Eph 1:19-20 And his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.

- b. The disciples began to speak in other tongues (see *Tongues*, Acts 2:4).

ACTS 02:04 TONGUES; HOLY SPIRIT

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Acts 02:04

What is meant by “other tongues” here? Note two things.

1. “Other tongues” definitely means foreign languages (see verse 6-13). The disciples were supernaturally witnessing and preaching in the languages of the different nationalities gathering together. Scripture is so clear about this that there can be no reasonable doubt without really twisting the Word of God.
2. “Other tongues” could also mean the *tongues* or ecstatic utterance covered in 1 Corinthians; that is, it could have been what is commonly called the *heavenly* or *prayer language* (1 Cor. 14:2,14. See notes, 1 Cor. 14:1-40 for discussion on *Tongues*.) An ecstatic worship could be taking place while the disciples were experiencing the infilling of the Holy Spirit. There seems to be some time between the moments of infilling and the crowds arriving to see what caused the explosive sound or noise (v. 2). And there can be no doubt that the disciples were flooded with joy, an ecstatic worshipful joy. They now knew the most wonderful things...
 - Christ was in them. His Spirit had actually entered into their hearts and lives. Their wonderful Lord had returned to them just as He had said He would.
 - They were filled with a deep sense of His presence and power, His concern and love for the world. His courage and drive to share the great news of the glorious gospel.

One thing needs to be noted, however: the words “as the Spirit enabled them.” They spoke in tongues “as the Spirit enabled them.” This may indicate a clear difference from the gift of tongues in 1 Cor. 14, a clear difference in this sense:

=> All gifts once bestowed by the Spirit are thereafter exercised by the believer as the believer wills to use them. In fact, in order to be faithful, the believer *has* to use his gifts as need or as opportunity arises. This is clear from 1 Cor. 14:28-33.

=> The gift of tongues here in Acts 2 says that the gift was supernaturally exercised by the Spirit, not by the individual believer. □

V. *Acts 02:05–11 Witnessing*

There was witnessing — God-fearing men heard the Word. Witnessing is also a result of being filled with the Spirit. Note several things.

1. Devout men, Jewish pilgrims who had come from *all over the world*, had returned to Jerusalem to celebrate the “Feast of the First Fruits.” The words *God-fearing* (*eulabeis*) means reverent, worshipful, careful. It means persons who handle spiritual matters carefully.
2. The words “when they heard this sound” seems to be saying it was the news of the disciples’ behaviour that brought the crowd together. But the Greek says, “When this sound was heard” (*genomenes tes phones tantes*). It was apparently the sound of the thunderous blast caused by God that brought the people rushing to the scene.
3. The crowd heard an amazing thing — the disciples supernaturally speaking in their own tongue (dialect, language) (see vv. 6, 8, 11).
4. The number of dialects and languages spoken included most of those from the known areas of the world at that time. Luke’s purpose in giving the list seems to stress that people from all over the world were present for Christ to save and to send back to their native lands as servants of His, servants to proclaim the message of the glorious gospel.
5. What the crowd heard in their native languages was “the wonderful works of God,” the personal witness of the gospel, the very things Peter was about to preach to the whole crowd (vv. 14-40).

Thought 1. Note how the groundwork for preaching is first laid by personal witnessing. (See *Witnessing*, Acts 1:8.)

VI. *Acts 02:12–13 Reaction to the Gospel*

There were different reactions. All were *amazed* (*existanto*) and astonished, marvelling at what was happening. There was a twofold reaction.

1. Some were *perplexed* (*dieporounto*) attracted and wondering, at a loss as to what was happening. But they were attracted to seek meaning in it all.
2. Others simply mocked, made fun of, accused the disciples of being drunk. (Just imagine the ecstatic joy flooding their hearts for them to behave in a way to cause such a charge! Where is the infilling of such joy today?)

2 Cor 6:2 For he says, “In the time of my favour I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favour, now is the day of salvation. ■

THE FIRST SERMON (PART I): THE GOSPEL MESSAGE ACTS 02:14–24

Introduction

This is the first sermon ever preached in the new church age, after Jesus' ascension and Pentecost, that is, after the coming of the Holy Spirit. If men would preach what is preached here, what a difference would exist in men's lives, in the church, and in world history. (Because of its length and the time limit placed on preachers in the churches of so many industrialized societies, the message preached by Peter is split into three studies.)

- I. Infilled believers (vv. 14-16).
- II. These are the last days, the days of God's last work on earth (vv. 17-21).
- III. This is the day of God's Saviour: Jesus of Nazareth (vv. 22-24).

I. Acts 02:14–16 *Infilling of the Holy Spirit*

The believers were infilled. The disciples were so full of the Holy Spirit, so full of God's presence and joy, they could only...

- act excited.
 - speak about the wonderful works of God (see Acts 2:11).
 - express joy and rejoicing in what God had done.
 - demonstrate absolute confidence, assurance and conviction of God's presence and eternal salvation.
 - bear testimony to all who would listen.
1. Such behaviour required an explanation. It was not common behaviour, not among a people who lived in a world of trials, uncertainty, struggles, suffering and death; a people who knew their world was such, but who evaded the fact and did all they could to escape the reality of it. A person who demonstrated absolute confidence and conviction of God's presence and of eternal salvation had to explain himself.
 - a. Some in the world were amazed at such behaviour and wished to know what it meant. An answer was required (see Acts 2:12).
 - b. Others mocked, jokingly suggesting that such behaviour *was crazy and foolish*, just like the behaviour of a drunken man; and they, too, were due an answer (see Acts 2:13).
 2. A spirit-filled person is not under the influence of a man-made, induced excitement. Peter stood to his feet *with the eleven* other apostles: they all stood before the thousands who had gathered (v. 41). Peter spoke at the top of his voice. Note the authority and forcefulness of Peter! What a difference the Spirit had made in this man — the man who had been so *up and down* in following Jesus:
-

=> “Let me explain.”

=> “Listen carefully to what I say.”

=> “It’s only nine in the morning!”

Peter declared that they were not deluded; they were not acting and speaking *foolish* things like a drunken man. What was happening was just what Scripture predicted. It was the work of God, just what God had promised to man. It was the glorious gospel (good news) promised by God.

II. *Acts 02: 17–21 The Last Days and the Work of God*

These are the last days, the days of God’s last work on earth. Standing there before the throng of thousands, Peter declared:

=> Today, this day, the great prophecy of Joel begins to be fulfilled (Joel 2:28-32).

=> Today, this day, begins the *last days* of earth’s history.

=> Today, this day, begins the *last days* of God’s work on earth.

=> Today, this day, begins the *last days*, the final age of God’s plan for human history.

=> Today, this day, begins the *last days*, the dispensation of God’s grace (the church), the age of the gospel.

Thought 1. In the Scripture, the “*last days*” mean all the above. The *last days* began when Christ came to earth and they will end when Christ returns to earth. Note: we are already 2000 years into the last days.

1. The last days include the great outpouring of God’s Spirit.
 - a. The word *pour* (ekcheo) means to pour out, to pour forth, to shed forth. It means that God gives His Spirit...
 - to *dwell in* the believer (Jn. 14:17; 1 Cor. 6:19-20).
 - to *abide with* the believer forever (Jn. 14:16).
 - to abundantly fill, to overflow the believer (Eph. 5:18).
 - to give very special *manifestations* of Christ to the believer (Jn. 14:21).
 - b. God pours out His Spirit on *all people*...
 - upon sons and daughters.
 - upon young men and old men.
 - upon His slaves, servants and handmaidens.

The point is this: God’s Spirit shows no discrimination. The Spirit of God is available to all: male and female, young and old, slave and free, rich and poor.

- c. God pours out His Spirit with very special gifts...

- the gift of prophecy: proclaiming and predicting the truth (see *Prophecy*, 1 Cor. 14:3). Note this gift is given to both men and women. This was part of the Scriptural promise.
- the gift of seeing visions, especially among young men. The Greek word *visions* (*horaseis*) means appearance (Rev. 4:3) or an ecstatic revelation (Rev. 9:17). In Scripture the Greek word is used for both what a man can envision (see, imagine, think, cause to appear) within his own mind and what is given him by God through a special revelation (Rev. 9:17).
- the gift of dreaming dreams, especially among older men. The idea is that a dream is given by God.

Thought 1. Note a crucial fact: history has shown and Scripture warns that spiritual gifts are often misused and abused, tragically and destructively so. (See notes, 1 Cor. 12-14.)

- 1) We must guard against accepting every dream and vision as being of God. God's Word is the revelation of God. What God wants to reveal to us is therein. We must stand upon God's Word and measure every vision and dream by God's Word.
 - 2) A study of the visions and dreams in the Book of Acts shows that every one of them had to do with witnessing, with reaching people for Christ. Not a single dream or vision had to do with *personal edification* or with *boosting self to be spiritually superior*.
- d. God pours out His Spirit only upon His servants, "both men and women." This is the emphasis of this verse, the reason for repeating what has just been said. Note that the verse is a summary statement: no one receives God's Spirit, no one, not until they become His servant.
- e. God gifts His servants, "both men and women" with one very special gift — the gift of prophecy. Again, the point is primary, to stress what is so important. The gift of prophecy, of proclaiming that God's very own Son has come into the world to save sinners, is the primary gift of God's Spirit. Every one of God's servants are gifted to prophesy.

Thought 1. Note the devastating blow to the ego of *professionalism* and to the practice of so many of us.

- 1) So many of us leave proclamation, that is, witnessing, up to others, using the flimsy excuse that we are not capable nor gifted to witness.
 - 2) Too many enjoy the prestige of a *professional gift* and a *professional ministry*, minimizing the lay ministry and the layman's gift to proclaim Christ. And although there are *measures* or degrees of gifts, the great need of the hour is for every believer to proclaim the living Lord.
2. The last days include the days of terrible judgment at the end — the Day of the Lord (see *Day of the Lord*, Acts 2:19-20).

3. The last days include the days of great salvation. Throughout the last days, during the whole period, man can be saved by doing two simple things:

=> He has to *call*: to sense the *need* to be saved.

=> He has to call upon “the name of the Lord”: to know and believe that Jesus is the Lord and to be ready to submit to His Lordship, to serve Him as Lord.

Rom 10:13 For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Rom 10:9-10 That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

ACTS 02:19–20 DAY OF THE LORD (JEHOVAH)

I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. Acts 02:19–20

In the simplest of terms, the Day of the Lord is the Day when Christ returns to execute judgment upon the earth. It is a definite Day that is coming upon earth, and note: it is coming at the end of the *last days*, at the end of the present age. (See notes, Mt. 24:1-25:46.) Note two points.

1. The Day of the Lord is to be characterized by several things.
 - a. *Wonders (terata)*: marvels, signs, happenings, portents in heaven above, that is, in outer space; happenings and marvels that point to something unusual about to happen.
 - b. *Signs (semeia)*: events and happenings on earth given by God to warn that the end is at hand.
 - *Blood and fire and billows of smoke*: terrible bloodshed and explosive fire that causes...
 - mushrooming billows of smoke
 - the sun to be turned into darkness and blotted out
 - the moon to be turned into blood

Thought 1. It is thought-provoking when we consider how closely the language resembles atomic warfare.

2. The events to happen in the Day of the Lord (as revealed by the whole of Scripture) seem to be fourfold. Note: no attempt whatsoever is made to put these events in any specific order. There are two reasons for this.

=> There are so many divergent opinions.

=> More importantly, Scripture does not give a complete list of last events.

Throughout Scripture, four events are discussed as happening in the Day of the Lord: the return of Christ, terrible tribulation, judgment and the remaking of earth.

a. A terrible period of tribulation (7 years). This includes the last half of the period known as the great tribulation (3½ years). This is the fulfilment of Daniel's "seventieth week" (Dan. 9:27). (See notes, Mt. 24:15-28.)

b. The return of Christ as sovereign Lord. He shall rule and reign in glory upon earth (the Millennial reign of God's Son, Rev. 20:4-6).

c. The resurrection and final judgment of all. This includes...

=> men who are described as sheep and goats (Mt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15).

=> the Beast or the antichrist, the false prophet and their followers (Rev. 19:11-21).

=> Satan and his angels (Rev. 20:10).

d. The destruction and remaking of the earth and heavens (2 Pet. 3:3-15; Rev. 21:1; see Isa. 65:17; 66:22). □

III. Acts 02:22–24 Day of God's Saviour: Jesus Christ

This is the day of God's Saviour, Jesus of Nazareth. Peter drove the thrust of his message home. He shouted out: "Listen to this"...

- the "last days" have been launched by Jesus of Nazareth.

1. "Jesus of Nazareth...a man accredited by God." The word *accredited* (apodedengmenon) means to point out, display, show, attest, accredit, sanction, certify, endorse. God put His stamp of approval upon Jesus, demonstrating and showing to all men that Jesus is *perfectly acceptable* to Him. Jesus of Nazareth had God's *approval*, His *perfect acceptance*.

There is proof of this, the proof of His miracles and wonders and signs.

- a. They were the works of God, the kind of works that only God could do. God Himself was working through Jesus of Nazareth.
- b. The works were done (through Christ) "among you," in the very presence of people. They were not done in secret. God attested and demonstrated to the world that He was working through Christ. The miracles, wonders and signs were done both *for* the sake of the world and *before* the world.
- c. "You yourselves know this." Man knows, for God has clearly shown that Jesus is approved by Him. The evidence abounds in the lives of those who have *truly* followed Christ down through the centuries, in the presence of the living Lord who has dwelt *within* their very being.

2. The death of Jesus of Nazareth was planned by God due to man's wickedness (see *Jesus Christ, Death*, Acts 2:23).
3. The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth ended the agony of death (see *Jesus Christ, Resurrection*, Acts 2:24). ■

ACTS 02:23 THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. Acts 02:23

This verse is saying a most significant thing. Jesus' death was planned by God *due to man's wickedness*. God planned Jesus' death, planned for Him to die upon the cross, but He planned it *because of man's wickedness*. Note two points.

1. Jesus was crucified and slain by wicked hands. Men are sinful, wicked, depraved and selfish.

=> They want to go their own way.

=> They want to do their own thing.

=> They want to control their own lives.

Therefore, they rebel and fight against God, against surrendering to God, against...

- following God's way • doing God's thing
- allowing God to control their lives

It was this corruptible nature of man that rebelled against God's Son and crucified Him.

2. The "set purpose and foreknowledge of God" saved man. God knew man, what was in man (see Jn. 2:23-24). He knew exactly what men would do to His Son. He knew they would kill His Son. But in the counsel and advice of His knowledge — in consideration of all the possibilities — God knew something else as well: the way of death, the way of the cross was the best way to save men. And being God, He was bound to choose the best way. So God determined to use the best way possible, the death of His Son to save the world. (See *Death of Jesus Christ*, Acts 2:23; *Foreknowledge, Predestination*, Acts 2:23; notes, Mt. 17:22; 17:23; *Death of Jesus Christ*, Mt. 20:18.)

John 3:14-16 *"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

Rom 5:6 *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.*

Rom 5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Gal 1:4 *Who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.*

Heb 9:28 *So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

1 Pet 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

1 Pet 3:18 *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.*

Another way to say the same thing is that God foresaw sin even before the creation of man; so He, in love, planned beforehand that Christ should die for sinners.

John 17:24 *“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.”*

Eph 1:4 *For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love.*

1 Pet 1:20 *He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.*

Rev 13:8 *All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast — all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. □*

ACTS 02: 23

FOREKNOWLEDGE, PREDESTINATION, SET PURPOSE OF THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. Acts 02:23

The word *foreknowledge* (prognosis) means to see before; to know beforehand; to see and know the future; to foreordain.

God is God; therefore He sees the future. No matter how far a person looks into the future, God sees it. God knows...

- exactly what *will* happen, every single event and its consequences.
- exactly what *could* happen (but will not), every single possibility and its consequences.

Therefore God knows...

- exactly what man *will* do, every single act and its consequences.
- exactly what man *could* do (but will not), every single possibility and its consequences.

God is God. He is eternal and omniscient (knowing all). He knows the past, the present and the future. And note: He knows it all eternally, forever. God knew...

- every event of world history before the *foundation of the world*.
- every event of a person's life before the *foundation of the world* (see Eph. 1:4).

Now in light of this, a question arises that is extremely important. If God knew all the terrible consequences of evil and death that would enter and overtake the world, if He knew the world would even kill His Son, why did He go ahead and create the world? Why did He not choose another way to do things? In the simplest terms possible, there are at least two reasons.

I. God wanted a creature, a being with free will. God created man because God willed to have the *presence* of a being who could *freely choose*...

- to love and worship Him
- to obey and fellowship with Him
- to serve and reign with Him

In His foreknowledge, God knew that some would choose Him and some would reject Him. But He was willing to face...

- the pain and hurt to His heart,
- the abuse and shame to His person,
- the rejection and rebellion against His will.

God was willing to face all this in order that some might know His glorious mercy and grace and experience all the glory of Himself and heaven. (See note, Rom. 9:22-24; Eph. 1:5-6; 2:7.)

2. God did not choose another way to create and deal with man...

- because the way God created man was the best way: perfect, in a perfect environment, with free choice and will, and in perfect fellowship with God (see Gen. 2:16-17).

- because the way God deals with man is the best way: in love, in the mercy and grace of His Son. Love is the greatest force on earth. It is the very nature of God Himself (1 Jn. 4:8). Love will change and transform, help and give, win and conquer when nothing else will. Love will cause a person to reach out and help another and even cause a person to sacrifice his life quicker than any other force on earth (Jn. 3:16; 15:13; Rom 5:8).

Note one other point that is critical, a point that stresses the glorious love and care of God: it is the set purpose of God (see Acts 2:23).

The word *set* (*horismenei*) means predetermined, appointed, decreed, ordained, planned, purposed. It is a plan set within bounds, within a certain boundary. It is a purpose that is set, marked out, determined, decreed to happen.

The word *purpose* (*boulei*) means to advise, counsel, design, will; to give a piece of advice. It carries the force of being willed and determined. Since God knows exactly what *would* happen in every situation, He plans for the best thing to happen. God takes counsel, puts all things under advisement and chooses the best way.

We may not understand some things that happen nor why they happen the way they do. We may think something else or some other way would have been better. But we must remember two things.

1. We cannot see into the future. No man can. We cannot know what would have happened if another way had been chosen. We cannot know what would have happened...

- to us
- to others
- to the world

In every situation or event there are many other things that could have taken place. This is true of every situation, whether we call it *good or bad*. Think for a moment.

=> What would have taken place if the situation had been replaced by some other happening?

=> What would have taken place if another way had been chosen?

=> What and how much would be changed for the worse eventually, if not now?

We cannot know. But we can know this: God knows, for He deals with the future as well as the present. God deals with eternity, with the whole view. Therefore, another situation, another way could have changed things for the worse. Simply stated...

- God knows the future, everything that could happen as well as what is best and should happen.
- God takes counsel, purposes, determines, plans and chooses the best thing to happen.

2. We who love God and are called according to His purpose know that all things work together for good. How do we know? Because we *do* love God and *are called* according to His purpose.

God knew that we would say “Yes” to Jesus, that we would love and follow Him. Therefore, God called us.

Rom 8:29 *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

Note why we are predestined. This is the key: “that he [God’s Son] might be the firstborn among many brothers.” God has determined that Jesus will have many brothers, many who will live and fellowship with Him as the first Person, the preeminent Person throughout the universe.

This is the reason God chooses the very best events and the very best way for us. It is the reason He works all things out for good for believers. God knows all the possibilities; therefore, He is able to take counsel and determine, to plan the very best for us. *Believe and trust the glorious truth.*

1 Cor 2:9 *However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.”*

Rom 11:33-36 *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?” “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.*

Eph 3:20 *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.*

Phil 1:6 *Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Psa 31:19 *How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.*

A STUDY OF SOME SCRIPTURES DEALING WITH GOD’S SET PURPOSE AND FOREKNOWLEDGE

(A study giving comfort and security — God is in control.)

1. The Scripture dealing with God’s foreknowledge.
 - a. God’s foreknowledge concerns Christ.

Acts 2:23 *This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.*

1 Pet 1:20 *He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.*

- b. God's foreknowledge concerns believers.

1 Pet 1:2 *Who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.*

Rom 8:28-29 *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

(Note: These two verses actually show that God acts or predestines on the basis of His foreknowledge, of His counsel.)

- c. God's foreknowledge concerns Israel.

Rom 11:2 *God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah — how he appealed to God against Israel:*

2. The Scripture dealing with God's set decree.

- a. God's set decree concerns Christ.

Acts 2:23 *This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.*

Luke 22:22 *"The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays him."*

Rom 1:4 *And who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Acts 10:42 *He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.*

Acts 17:31 *"For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."*

- b. God's set decree concerns salvation and security for believers.

Heb 4:7 *Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” (see 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 13:8)*

3. The Scripture dealing with God’s purpose.

a. God’s purpose concerns Christ.

Acts 2:23 *This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.*

Acts 4:28 *They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.*

b. God’s purpose concerns believers and salvation.

Acts 13:36 *For when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed.*

Eph 1:11 *In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.*

Heb 6:17 *Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath.*

c. God’s purpose concerns God’s plan for the world.

Acts 20:27 *For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.*

d. God’s purpose concerns those who reject Him.

Luke 7:30 *But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God’s purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John. □*

ACTS 02:24 RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. Acts 02:24

This is a great verse dealing with the resurrection of Christ. Note three points.

1. God raised up Christ. God knew that the very best way to save man from death was through the resurrection of His own Son from the dead.
2. The resurrection of Christ freed “him from the agony of death.” The word *agony* (*odinas*) means birth pangs. For the unbeliever, there is great pain in death, pain such as that experienced by a woman in giving birth. But man no longer has to suffer the pain of death nor fear suffering through it. Christ has conquered and

abolished death, made it completely harmless. Death is actually the most glorious and joyful experience for the believer, an experience that simply explodes human imagination. (See Jn. 5:24; Heb. 2:14-15.)

3. It was impossible for death to hold Christ. Why? There are several significant reasons.
 - a. There was God's set purpose and foreknowledge. God knew that the way of the cross and resurrection was the very best way to save the world. Therefore, nothing could stop God from following through with the death and resurrection of His Son. (See Acts 2:25-28.)
 - b. Jesus was approved by God. He had God's approval, sanction, accreditation and endorsement. Jesus Christ was perfectly acceptable to God (see Acts. 2:22-24).
 - c. Jesus' resurrection was foretold by Scripture, and Scripture must be fulfilled.
 - d. Jesus was *Life* itself. He possesses the very *being, essence, quality, substance* and *energy* of life. He is *The Life*, Life itself; therefore, He is the source of all life. All life finds its source in the energy and being of Christ Himself. Therefore, being Life, death could not engulf Him any more than darkness can engulf light. (See Jn. 1:4-5; Jn. 14:6.)
 - e. Jesus was sinless. Death exists or happens because everything is short of perfection — short of what it should be — short of *God's glory*. This is true of man. Man dies because he falls "short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Sin is...
 - falling short
 - missing the mark
 - transgressing God's glory

And it is sin that causes death. Therefore Jesus Christ, being sinless, did not have to die. He died because He *willed* to die for man.

The point is this: Jesus was sinless and perfect and righteous (Jn. 8:46; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 1:9; 2:22). He was the Ideal Man, the Sinless Man, the Perfect Man — the Ideal Pattern for all other men. Therefore, when He died for men, He died as the Ideal Man or the Ideal Pattern. And death cannot hold the Ideal Man, for the Ideal Man came short in nothing. He was not short in life; therefore, He was destined to live forever. He was Perfect Life and Perfect Man. As the Scripture says, "It was impossible for death to keep its hold on him." (See Rom. 1:4.) □