

“Coincidence, Accident or Plan?”—Acts 2:22-24

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Coincidence, Accident or Plan?”, is Acts 2:22-24 → *Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Picture living in the days of Jesus’ earthly public ministry. The chances of you hearing about this man performing deeds which defy the natural order—that is, miracles—would be pretty good. Matthew 4:24-25 does say that *His fame spread and people brought Him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and He healed them. And great crowds followed Him.* You might be one of those who would seek Him out for help or at the least hope that by some chance of fate He would come to your part of the world and you would meet

Him. If He did, would you consider it coincidence, accident or plan?

It would be hard to imagine receiving the blessings of Jesus through such miracles being interpreted as coincidence where your life coincided with His by accident. After all, it did appear that Jesus was very intentional about traveling from town to town performing all these miracles and that His purpose was to deliver people from these ailments. How could they do anything but walk away healed with praise and thanks to God for their physical deliverance? Yet, we are told of only one out ten lepers whom Jesus healed returning to thank Him! (cf. Luke 17:12-19) Why? Could it be that while basking in the blessing they failed to see God's plan for them in the sign which the miracle contained?

In the conclusion of Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost he connected the receiving of the Holy Spirit to God's plan for our lives specifically in the Person & Work of Jesus, the Christ. Having explained the Biblical reason for their speaking in tongues by the power of the Holy Spirit he went on to tell them about the Lord's revealing Himself in *Jesus of Nazareth*. Notice how he referred to Jesus: *as a man attested to them by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him in their midst*. It is possible some standing there may have experienced these *mighty works and wonders and signs* first hand!

Those *mighty works and wonders and signs* served a greater purpose than simply physical deliverance and relief of affliction for people. While deliverance and relief of pain is the primary focus for suffering, it is possible to experience the work of Jesus in your life and completely miss God's plan in it all. Just think of how many times people cry out in the midst of distress, pain, suffering and affliction with prayer as they seek God's help. Now think of how many of those same people continue their seeking Jesus in faith once deliverance and healing has taken place. You will discover that our sinful, selfish human nature is very fickle and leaves trust and commitment behind once we have received what we wanted. This does not happen by accident. It happens by choice—the choice to refuse to see God's greater plan for your life in the Person & Work of Jesus. It's one thing to thank God and quite another to plead for His forgiveness.

These works of Jesus were “signs” that He truly was the Christ—the Messiah Whom God had promised to send according to Old Testament prophecies. Isaiah 35:5-6 described the Messiah's works this way: *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.* Isaiah 61:1 described the Messiah this way: *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to bring good news to the poor; He*

has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound. At the outset of His public earthly ministry Jesus read these words “in church,” sat down and said, *“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”* (cf. Luke 4:21)

Peter revealed God’s plan for us in Christ even in the midst of those peoples’ plans which led to His suffering and death. He said in verse 23 of our text: *This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.* In other words, while Judas was making his plans to betray Jesus and the Jewish leaders were making their plan to get rid of Jesus and the disciples were making their plans to protect Jesus and Pilate was making his plans to not to deal with Jesus, God was at work in it all to work out His plan of salvation for us all! Coincidence? Certainly their plans coincided but it was no accident. God’s worked His plan in it all and even beyond!

Jesus’ crucifixion, which they thought would be the end of Jesus because they did not like how He condemned their sinful hearts and lives, was actually the start of a new life for all people through His resurrection!! Peter continued in verse 24 → *God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it.* The plans that were really thwarted here were the plans of the devil who holds people captive to sin.

Amidst the many experiences which you encounter throughout a day can you see God's plan in all of them? It's there. This doesn't mean that everything which happens in your life is God's will. You make many choices in your life which are outside of God's will when you give in to temptation and sin. While there may be many dynamics and outside influences which come to play in your temptation you are still ultimately the one responsible for your sin. God's plan for you in the resurrected Jesus is at work there too. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says: *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. Your way of escape is always Jesus, Who escaped the snatches of the devil and death so your sins can be forgiven and you can live eternally!*

Many physical afflictions are not simply accidental or coincidental. They can be a direct result of not-so-smart activity choices which are even planned out in advance. How many times have people been crippled because of such choices? Some people refuse to label them as accidents because they were a choice. God's plan for you in the resurrected Jesus is at work there too. In the midst of the change in your quality of life Philippians 4:19 reassures you that *God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in*

Christ Jesus. Jesus is God's *supply* for your *every need* and He carries you through those changes and challenges.

However, other physical afflictions are simply there with no explanation. They too challenge our faith and make us ask about God's plan for our lives. Here too satan strives to get a foothold to lead us into despair and unbelief. We come up with just as many answers to our "Why?" questions as Job received: none. Yet, like Job, God's plan for you in the resurrected Jesus is at work there too. Remember that 2,000 years before *God raised Jesus up, loosing the pangs of death* Job confessed: *I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.* You see, **all** who turn to the LORD in repentance and believe in Jesus as *Lord and Christ* will view their lives in connection to God's plan for them—not just a life of unrelated circumstances or accidents!

The Holy Spirit is the active presence of Jesus in your life! It is He Who gives you a constant trust in Jesus through all the circumstances, choices and plans in your life. It is He Who brings to your remembrance God's written Word to bring God's plan and assurance in Jesus to your life situations. It is He Who brings you here to worship where you receive forgiveness through

God's means of grace—the Gospel, Confession and Absolution and the Lord's Supper—as your faith simply clings to the promise of God's Word. It is not coincidence or accident that you are here. It is God's plan for you in Jesus, Whom *God has made . . . both Lord and Christ!* Amen.

*Many are the plans in the mind of a man,
but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.*

(Proverbs 19:21)

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