

FRIDAY 03 June 2022 "Who killed Jesus?" (Acts 2:22-36)

Hello my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

I'm sure you've had the experience where in the middle of a story, you are asked to wait, maybe an extended time, for 'the rest of the story'! Well, I know that's how I left you yesterday my friends, as we were in the middle of a confused, somewhat agitated crowd, in Jerusalem about 2000 years ago.

The story is in Acts 2. Jerusalem was packed to overflowing with people from all over the known world who had come for the annual Pentecost Festival. A strong wind sound, like a tornado, had beckoned a huge crowd to gather in one part of Jerusalem. Some of the friends and followers of Jesus had come out from one large house, into this crowd, all excited and amazingly jabbering in foreign languages! *Even more amazing was that many of these travelers from other parts of the Empire were so excited because they recognized these languages as being the languages and dialects spoken in their part of the world!!*

Peter, the flamboyant fisherman disciple of Jesus had stood up on something, perhaps a barrel or maybe even a table, and he was calling out for everyone's attention. As they quieted, he began to explain that this phenomenon was God fulfilling the words spoken by the Hebrew prophet Joel 800 years before!! ***"In the last days', God says, 'I will pour out My Spirit on all people..."*** (Acts 2:17) Yesterday I helped you dig into the very powerful prophetic message Joel had given and what Peter wanted these people to understand that it meant in their day. Peter had explained JESUS had been a God sent man, accredited by God through the miracles He performed. So now, let's put ourselves back in the crowd and look, over there... bold, brash Peter is waving his arms and talking again.

Peter continued... "This man Jesus 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 2:23) Oh my! It was like everyone in the crowd was just punched in the face! Heads jolted back, people took deep breaths, faces grew angry! Again, while most people in the crowd may not have been there that dreadful day, 50 days ago on Passover weekend, they'd all heard about what was done to Jesus! *I'm sure all of them had declared in their minds that they were innocent of any involvement... but the truth is Jesus was brutalized.* He'd been arrested in the middle of the night, over there in the garden of Gethsemane, while He was praying with His friends. He had been beaten, flogged and eventually the Jewish crowd, including the religious leader, had screamed, demanding His crucifixion, the day Pilate asked them ***"and what shall I do with Jesus?"*** (Matt. 27:22)

But did you notice Peter was explaining GOD had allowed this to happen? In fact, it was all according to **"...God's set purpose and foreknowledge..."!** Now I have to ask you a very important question, my "Walking with Jesus" friends? **WHO do you hold responsible for the brutality against Jesus and His eventual execution by crucifixion?** Look again at the words Peter used: **"...God's set purpose and foreknowledge..."!** On several occasions Jesus had said to His disciples that He was going to Jerusalem, to be betrayed, beaten and killed. (Matt. 16:21) They refused to hear it or believe it then... *but now, 50 days after that horrific Passover Friday, Peter was convinced!* **The death of Jesus was not an accident.** It was not an out-of-control mob. It was not jealous, hard hearted Jewish religious leaders. It was not Pilate fearful of an uprising. It was not even Roman soldiers doing their horrible job.

It was GOD Himself!! *God was accomplishing the REDEMPTION plan which God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit had developed, as the human race, made in the image of GOD, had turned away from God and invited Satan and sin to dominate this world!*

The most famous verse in the Bible, which you probably memorized as a child, says it, did you know that? **"For God so loved THE WORLD, that He sent His only Son, that whoever believes in HIM will not PERISH but will have everlasting life."** (John 3:16) There it is my friends. God's love for humanity... living and dying in their bondage to evil and sin! *God's outrageous, enormous LOVE for sinful humanity motivated God to devise the Redemption plan which would require Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to leave heaven and come here to earth and live among us... and then experience the total rejection of humanity, the unbridled hatred of Satan, and even the wrath of God the Father, poured out on Jesus... ALL so Jesus could pay our full sin price through His death, so we could be forgiven of our sin.* THAT my friends is the outrageous Gospel! **GOD HIMSELF is responsible for the death of Jesus, the Son of God!** Can you grasp that in all its enormity!? It takes my breath away... how about you?

But these people didn't understand what I just explained to you. Just look around the crowd where you are standing. Do you see the anger in their faces? Peter was accusing THEM of killing Jesus! Do you see some fists clenching? I doubt Peter paused very long... the crowd listening to him could turn violent within seconds, he'd seen it before in Jerusalem! So, Peter raised his voice again: **"But God raised Jesus from the dead, freeing Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Jesus!"** (Acts 2:24) Now that was a bold, brash, outrageous statement! Peter, of course, knew it to be true! He'd seen and talked with, and even shared meals with the Resurrected Jesus several times, during the past 40 days between that Passover weekend Sunday and 10 days ago when Peter watched resurrected Jesus elevate into the sky. Peter was certain, confident about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead... but this crowd before him? How close was this crowd to erupting into violence?

Peter waved his arms again and continued: **"I tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried and his tomb is here to this day. But... God has raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses of this fact!"** (Acts 2:29,32) Peter paused and pointed. Do you see who Peter is pointing to in the crowd? John, James, Andrew, Philip, Matthew and the other disciples who had been with Jesus. But also, he's pointing to Mary Magdalene and Mary Jesus' mother and many others, for Luke tells us there had been a group of about 120 of Jesus' friends in that house when the wind blew and the tongues of fire came into that house, and the Holy Spirit came upon them. (Acts 1:15)

Now this was a risky moment. The violent ones in the crowd might now turn on Jesus' friends, even His mother, and there could be lynchings right here, right now! So, Peter wasted no time, he waved his arms and called out again and continued: **"Exalted to the right hand of God, Jesus has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and He has poured out what you now see and hear!"** (Acts 2:33) Oh my!! Look at the shocked expressions on faces all around you! *Peter was not only claiming this crucified Jesus was raised by God from the dead, and that he and these others he has pointed to are eyewitnesses, but now Peter has claimed this resurrected Jesus has returned to heaven, to the exalted right-hand place of honor next to God!* And more than that, that God the Father has given TO Jesus the authority to send the Holy Spirit of God here, to earth, to Jerusalem, to these people who are speaking in foreign languages!!! What? How can our human minds fully understand what Peter is saying? *No person ever, through all time, has made such outlandish statements and claimed to be an eyewitness!?*

But wait, Peter is waving his arms again and shouting: **"Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ!"** (Acts 2:36) Oh my! Oh my! Peter has just claimed Jesus was God here on earth... Adonai, **'Lord'!** And more, Peter has claimed Jesus IS **'the CHRIST'**, the long-awaited Messiah!! Watch out now... this crowd won't be controlled for more than only a few more seconds. Their brains are bursting, their hearts exploding! Something has to happen here. A riot? A slaughter of Peter and those he has pointed to... right here, right now?

Can we hold our breath until tomorrow, my friends, to find out what God did in this highly volatile, extreme tension moment? For the next 24 hours I urge you to try and fully engage this scene and wrap you and me today! *Take your journal and listen to the Audio Bible link below and ask God to help you understand it all... and thank God!* And here's a powerful song of God's truth to help us all understand...

Today's Scripture is Acts 2:22-36.