

"HIS PLAN, HIS PEOPLE, HIS POWER"

(Acts 1:1-14)

(Chuck Swindoll)

God has a plan for redeeming the world. It's not a new plan; it existed in the mind of the Creator before the first humans committed the first sin. None of what's happening surprises Him. He established a covenant with Abraham and his descendants, the Hebrews, calling them to teach the Scriptures, model obedience to the Law, and become an example of living faith in God. He strategically placed the nation of Israel on a narrow land bridge, through which the great civilizations of the region had to pass when conducting trade or making war with each other, so that all could see the shalom (peace and wellbeing) of Israel and learn of their God. The plan of God had always been to send His Son, who would succeed where Israel had failed, suffer on behalf of His people, and conquer death on the third day. Remember, God had always called people to repent of sin, receive His forgiveness, and trust that His grace is sufficient to save. The city of Jerusalem had always been the Lord's intended light on a hill (see Ps. 43:3; Matt.5:14), and in the days of the apostles, it would finally become the starting point of world evangelism (Isa. 43:10; 44:8; Acts 1:8).

Now we are a part of His plan. We, like the disciples, do not know when the kingdom will come (1:6-8). At the present time, we know only that God has called us to join Him in reclaiming creation from evil by our witness to the resurrected Messiah. He's given us a genuine stake in the plan's fulfillment, and there is no "Plan B." As I consider what the Lord is doing and how He has involved us, I have two observations.

First, to carry out the plan, people must be infused. You'll never advance the healing power of Christianity in a sick, dying world if you stay away from those infected with sin and error. Christ made consistent contact with His disciples, those disciples made consistent contact with their generation, and the world was infused with the antidote to sin and death. To implement an effective plan, we must infuse people with the cure of the gospel. Remember, this is about truth incarnated, divine truth in human flesh. It's not theoretical truth floating around on the pages of books that saves people. It's one life affecting another.

Second, to impact a rapidly changing world, the power of the Holy Spirit must be released. I am amazed at how few Christians really know the dynamics of the Holy Spirit. Truly amazed. All the power it took to raise Christ from the dead—not loud power but silent, effective, dynamic power—has been given to us. But we know so little about the potential energy of having the presence of God within, how to let Him fill and control us, and how to transform that power into positive change in the world.



Many years ago, I gave the closing message at a conference. Just as soon as the last words of my prayer slipped out of my mouth and we had a little music, a couple came right down front. "You talked about the Holy Ghost today," they said. (They used the archaic expression "Holy Ghost," which made me curious.)

"Yes," I said., "I mentioned the Spirit."

"We read that in the Bible and we don't know about that. What is it like?" This told me right away they had never been taught about the Holy Spirit. So I gave an impromptu lesson that took about twenty minutes, and their mouths literally stayed open as they heard for the first time the truth concerning how the power of God, in the control of the Holy Spirit, can literally take them through life. They had never heard it, yet they had been Christians for many years.

Unfortunately, most believers don't really know much more—we have good theology, but no practical wisdom. If we pay attention, the book of Acts will fill in some deep gaps in our understanding of the Holy Spirit. I urge you to make the Holy Spirit a subject of intense study, not only to gain theological knowledge, but to discover how to release the incredible power of God residing within you.