

Acts Chapter 2

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[0 : 0 0] Today, we are going to be looking at the subject. Yes, I am. For the undertaking of Acts chapter 2 and the content that is before us, I want to emphasize something that I talked about last week.

And I cannot stress the importance of this. You're going to be hearing it time and again. Again, you're going to think that Marv is on a hobby horse or this is a broken record or whatever.

But I have come to this appreciation about, well, I guess about 30 or 35 years ago.

And I have been so enamored with it because of how it has served me in the understanding of the Bible that I just have to punch it every time the occasion arises.

And that is this. The Bible, for the most part, is a Jewish document. And we do our Lord a great disservice when we try to Christianize everything in the Bible.

[1 : 1 2] You've got to remember that Judaism is the cradle of Christianity. That biblical Christianity was born out of Judaism.

Now, most Christians have no difficulty in seeing the Jewishness of the Old Testament because it is so very apparent. But we make a quantum leap that is not justifiable when we come to what is called the New Testament.

And the tendency is to take the Old Testament and say, OK, that's Jewish. But the New Testament, that's Christian. Well, fellas, only a part of it is.

There is a transition from Jew to Gentile and Jew. It isn't a transition actually from Jew to Gentile.

It's a transition from Jew to Jew and Gentile. And all I'm saying is this. In the beginning, all of these things were Jewish, starting all the way back with Genesis and what Moses recorded.

[2 : 3 0] But when you come into the New Testament, what is commonly referred to as the New Testament, when you come into the Gospels, despite the fact that there's four centuries that have lapsed between the closing of the Old Testament and the opening of what we call the New Testament, the Jewishness is maintained.

It does not somehow morph automatically into Christianity with Matthew 1.1. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are a continuation of the Old Testament.

The confusion arises because of there being four centuries in between. And as you open what we call the New Testament, you've got to be reminded that Jesus our Lord functioned, was born under, lived, functioned, and died under the Mosaic Law.

That was that which was in place during the earthly ministry of Christ. That's why he was circumcised on the eighth day. He was a Jewish baby.

That's why he kept the Sabbath. He was a Jew. That's why he observed everything that the law required, because Jesus was a Jew.

- [3 : 55] And if you lose sight of that fact, you are going to have insuperable problems in interpreting the Scriptures. As you move from the Gospels into the book of Acts, as we shall see, the book of Acts, for the first several chapters, is all Jewish.
- The second chapter begins with the day of Pentecost, which is a Jewish feast day. It isn't for Gentiles. It's for Jews.
- And as you move on through the book of Acts, you will find nothing but intense Jewishness. And when the first non-Jew is introduced into the scene, it caused a big uproar.
- That isn't until you get to Acts chapter 10. And his name is Cornelius. He is a Roman army officer. He is not a Jew.
- And consequently, that's what caused all the fuss. You'll recall in the book of Acts that when Peter was called upon to go to the house of Cornelius, he didn't even want to go.
- [5 : 15] He refused to go. And the reason he did was because Cornelius was a Gentile. He wasn't a Jew. And Peter was convinced that he shouldn't have anything to do with these people.
- Well, he went, and as a result, they believed the message that Peter preached, and the Spirit of God fell on them, Gentiles, just as he had on Jews on the day of Pentecost.
- And Peter was dumbfounded. He was amazed. He said, what is this? This can't be. And later, Peter was called on the carpet by his fellow Jews for going to Cornelius, who was a Gentile.
- And Peter's only defense was, what was I that I could withstand God? I didn't want to go. It wasn't my idea. And the text says, and then they held their peace.
- It means they stopped berating Peter, and they said, well, then, God has also granted repentance unto the Gentiles?
- [6 : 30] Can you believe that? That's how Jewish this thing is. And, fellas, if you do not read the New Testament, and particularly the book of Acts, against that backdrop, I can assure you you're going to reach all kinds of wrong conclusions.
- The Mosaic Law was given for the Jew. And we'll look at that in a minute. Question, Scott? How could Peter tell that the Spirit fell on the Gentiles?
- What exactly happened? Well, it was obvious. We won't go there now. But in Acts chapter 10, you can look at it at your leisure. The Spirit of God came upon them, and they spoke in languages they had not learned.
- So it was a repeat, almost, of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, except the really dynamic factor was, in Acts chapter 2, the Pentecostal experience and the speaking in other languages was exclusively Jewish.
- But in Acts chapter 10, these are Gentiles. And I am convinced that's how God revealed to Peter that this thing was real, and that he was doing something with the Gentiles.
- [7 : 48] And just one other aside I want to drop here. When Christ gave to Peter in Acts chapter 16, what he said was, the keys of the kingdom, this is Peter using that key.
- He is announcing the availability of Jesus the Messiah to Gentiles. And using the key, the key, fellas, is a symbol of authority.
- It's a symbol of the ability to unlock or to lock. And Peter effectively unlocked the door to Gentiles in Acts chapter 10.
- It's a tremendously pivotal chapter. I can't wait until we get there, but it'll be a little while. So, that is very, very important. Now, let me make this case as clearly as I can.
- When, well, let's go to Exodus chapter 20. Exodus chapter 20. And, by the way, when I say that these things were all Jewish, excuse me, I need to make a clarification because what we regard as Jewishness and as Judaism did not really begin.

- [9 : 19] Boy, I've got a frog in my throat. Won't quit. Sorry. Did not really begin until, well, thank you, Dan.
- That might help a little. Let me qualify something about saying all of the Old Testament is Jewish because that's actually not correct either.
- As Genesis opens with the creation account, there does not exist at all what we would call Gentiles and Jews.
- There is just humanity. And that which is going to become Hebrew or Jewishness doesn't really begin until we get to Abraham.
- And that's in chapter 12. And Abraham, of course, will beget Isaac. And Isaac will beget Jacob. And Jacob will beget his 12 sons.
- [10 : 28] They become the patriarchs or the progenitors of the 12 tribes of Israel. And that's where Israel really begins.
- Actually, it is kind of birthed in a foreign land. It is birthed as a nation out of their land in captivity in Egypt.
- And while they are there, they multiply into a considerable number. And then God brings them out under the leadership of Moses. And they come out into the wilderness.
- And they encamp at Sinai. And in a very real sense, this is the beginning of Judaism. But the beginning of the Hebrews starts with Abraham.
- And Abraham, the word Hebrew, as far as we can determine, the word Hebrew comes from the word Habiru.
- [11 : 28] H-A-B-I-R-U. Habiru. And Habiru means one who crossed over.
- We believe, and most scholars are of the opinion, that Abraham got the designation the Hebrew or the Habiru because he crossed over the Euphrates River, came all the way from Ur of the Chaldees, which is located in present-day southern Iraq.
- That's where Ur of the Chaldees was. And that has been verified archaeologically. And he traveled north when God told him to leave his land and his family, etc.
- Traveled north up to Haran. And then crossed over the Euphrates River and came down into the land of what's going to be called the land of Canaan or the land of Israel.
- And when he arrived there, all of the locals regarded him as a foreigner, as a stranger. This is Abraham who crossed over. This is Abraham the Hebrew, the one who crossed over.
- [12 : 44] So that's how the Hebrew got their name. And for all practical purposes, Jewishness began with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- And if you do the chronology or the genealogy, you will realize that Abraham was a descendant of Shem, one of the sons of Noah. So we've got Noah, Shem, his various sons.
- And then eventually it came to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. Now, what we would call Judaism didn't actually begin until you arrive at Exodus chapter 20.
- And this has to do with the giving of the law. And if you're looking at that, boy, I'd like to trade this fruit in for another one. In Exodus chapter 20, we have the account that is given.
- Well, I'm sorry. Let's go to chapter 19. Exodus 19. I got a little bit too far ahead. Exodus 19.
- [14 : 01] And let's just jump in with verse, well, let's start with verse 1. The third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day, they came into the wilderness of Sinai.

When they had set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness. And there Israel camped in front of the mountain.

And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the sons of Israel.

Now, that seems like something to be taken for granted, but it shouldn't be. Because here, God himself is particularizing his audience, his intended target.

He isn't saying, He isn't saying to Moses, Now, Moses, I want you to give this information to the whole world. He's not saying that. He's saying, The information I am giving you is designed for a select group of people.

[15 : 23] They are the house of Jacob, the sons of Israel. Now, those are synonymous. Yes, the house of Jacob is the sons of Israel.

I trust you understand that. The house of Jacob simply means the relatives. Like the house of David. It means all who are directly related to David.

And this particularizes the audience. So, to whom is the law given? It's given only to these people.

It's not given to the Babylonians. It's not given to the Assyrians. It's not given to the Egyptians. It is given exclusively to the descendants of Abraham.

Now, when this takes place here, Abraham has been dead and buried for 400 years plus. So, these are all his descendants. And you yourselves, verse 4, have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

[16 : 34] Now then, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own possession among all the peoples for all the earth is mine.

Do you not see the specificity here? The exclusiveness? How that these people are being singled out among all humanity for this special favor and this special position.

And really, what is this all about? What is this coming down to? What it's coming down to is that God is raising up a nation to be the vehicle through which the appointed Messiah will come.

He is preparing a whole people, all of these twelve tribes, because one of these tribes will be the royal tribe.

It will be the tribe of Judah, the fourth-born son of Jacob. That will be the royal line, and through Judah, a thousand years later, David the king will surface.

[17 : 55] And a thousand years after David the king in a direct genealogical line, Jesus the Messiah will be born of the tribe of Judah. So God is taking a whole nation and placing within that nation of twelve tribes one tribe that will be the strategic tribe, and the tribe of Levi will be the priestly tribe.

And this Judaism is going to function for the sole purpose of bringing Yeshua HaMashiach into the world, the Messiah.

It is a glorious thing. This is exclusively and strictly given to the children of Israel. and that includes all of the commandments, all of the feasts, everything.

It includes the ten commandments. You realize the ten commandments were never given to Gentiles. This doesn't mean that Gentiles have no law because Paul says, oh no, no, no.

Even though we were not given the law of Moses, including the ten commandments and all the rest, the Gentiles, Paul says in Romans 2, have the law of God written in their hearts.

[19 : 18] And that law of God written in the heart of every human being, whether Jew or Gentile, enables them to know the difference between right and wrong and good and evil.

So it is not as though we have no law. And when Paul says, for the Gentiles, who have not the law, that means they do not have the law of Moses.

Why don't they have the law of Moses? It was never given to them. It was never given to them. It never was. And this is the establishment here of the first covenant.

He says, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own possession among all the peoples for all the earth is mine. And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

These are the words that you shall speak to whom? To the sons of Israel. Nobody else. Only to the sons of Israel.

[20 : 21] Now, let's go quickly to Romans. I hadn't even intended to bring this material, but I think it's important.

Let's go to Romans. What am I looking for? Romans 9. Romans 9.

This is such important material, this background. And by the way, what I'm giving you is the basis for what divides much of Christendom, particularly regarding their attitude toward the Jew and the big controversy that's going on called replacement theology.

And in Romans 9, Paul said, I am telling the truth in Christ. I am not lying. My conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit. I have great sorrow and ceasing grief in my heart, for I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.

Now, look at this, verse 4, who are Israelites, to whom, that is, to these Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory to Israel, and the covenants to Israel, and the giving of the law to Israel, and the temple service to Israel, and the promises to Israel, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ, according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever.

[21 : 59] Now, this is all for Israel, exclusively. Well, what about the Gentiles? The Jew makes up such a tiny, tiny percentage of the world's population.

Is God concerned only for the Gentiles? Doesn't he have a heart, concerned only for the Jew, and has no heart for the Gentiles? what's the lot of the Gentiles?

Where do they figure into all this? All right, let's go to Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2.

And, got to jump in some place, so let's just, let's just begin with verse 11.

Ephesians 2. 11. Paul, remember, is writing back to these people that he earlier evangelized.

[23 : 05] He had been in Ephesus and spent quite a lengthy period of time there in Ephesus evangelizing and teaching these people and giving them the gospel.

And these people, these are pagans. They are Gentiles. They are not Jews. There might have been some Jews among them, but for the most part, they are Gentiles.

So, in verse 11, Paul said, therefore, remember, that formerly, you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by the so-called circumcision.

Now, circumcision and uncircumcision is simply a synonym for Jew and Gentile. Many times, a Gentile is referred to as the uncircumcised because, for the most part, they weren't circumcised.

But if you were a Jew, you were most definitely circumcised on the eighth day, and that admitted you to the covenant of Israel. So, the distinction circumcised and uncircumcised simply means Jew and Gentile.

[24 : 23] And Paul says, you Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by the so-called circumcision, which is performed in the flesh by human hands.

That is, it was a specially designated individual in the Jewish community who had the responsibility of circumcising Jewish babies when they were born on the eighth day.

And this guy would go around to the various households where there was a baby boy, and on the eighth day, all the family would gather around, and on that eighth day, he would usually also be named in addition to being circumcised.

And they have a big celebration, and of course the babies scream bloody murder because when you're eight days old and you have the end of your penis cut off and you don't know why they're torturing you and hurting you like that, it must have been a pretty sad thing.

But the family all rejoiced. It was a wonderful thing, great celebration, bring in all the food and drink and bring in all the relatives, have a big party because this day, my son became a child of the covenant, and it was a big deal.

[25 : 31] That was circumcision in the Jewish community. And by the way, it still is, it's very important. And it was performed in the flesh by human hands. Now, look at verse 12.

Remember, you Gentiles, remember that you were at that time separate from Christ. Christ. You were apart from Christ.

You weren't in Christ. You were separate from Christ. Excluded. That means you were on the outside. You were excluded from the common wealth of Israel, and you were strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope.

hope. And without God in the world. Do you see that? How isolated they are? How out of it they are?

How unfavored they are? That was the true plight of one who was not a child of the covenant. What avenue was left open to these who were Gentiles, and did not have the advantage of the law, the knowledge of Jehovah?

[26 : 50] Most of them were into paganism, the worship of many gods. What was their true plight? What was their status before God? And the answer is this. They are all recipients of God's pure, unadulterated justice.

God's love. And that's a bad thing to be on the receiving end of. Trust me, you do not want justice from God.

Because if you get justice, you get exactly what you deserve. And that's what God is committed to providing for every human being at the very least.

grace. And as I've said before, everyone in every dispensation will receive from God as a bare minimum perfect justice.

That is exactly what they deserve. God cannot do less, but he can do more. And the more is grace. Joe? Is that why when the Greek people went into these foreign countries and he just told them to annihilate everybody and just destroy them and it didn't matter and just seemed terrible, that they got what they deserved?

[28 : 11] That was part of it. That was part of it. Yes, that enters into it. There's a lot more involved in that and it is one of the sticking points that some have brought against Christianity is they cannot understand how God could require the annihilation of all of these people, etc.

That's another issue, but you're right, it is tied to it. Richard? So did certain decisions have anything to do with salvation? In other words, if you were a Jewish baby and were not circumcised, you wouldn't have the promise of the covenant and how much of the covenant had to do with salvation?

If you happened to be a Gentile and were circumcised, did that give you what they did?

No, circumcision didn't automatically do it. And there were other Gentiles who were circumcised, certain sects in the Egyptians practiced circumcision, and certain other peoples in pagan communities practiced circumcision too, but they did not do it for the reasons that the Jew did it, that Israel did.

For Israel, it was a sign of the covenant. It was a mark of the covenant. And it was a constant reminder to the man to whom he really belonged.

[29 : 33] and I don't want to be crass or gross about this, but it is important to understand how perpetual this reminder was, and for the Jewish man, every time he relieved himself, he was reminded that he was a child of the covenant.

Now, fellas, that's getting pretty practical and pretty plain, but that's exactly one of the reasons for it. And this foreskin was excess skin anyway.

And when it was removed, it was removed with the intent that it was a dedication to God and it was a physical, bodily, permanent mark in the body of the individual male that he would take with him to his grave.

And it was a perpetual reminder that he was a child of the covenant. And how many times do you relieve yourself during the day? You ordinarily don't think of that whether you're circumcised or not.

But if you were a Jew, you did. And it was a perpetual reminder every time whose you belong to, whose you are, and it was just a remarkable thing. Now, the Gentiles are all cut off.

[30 : 50] They are recipients of justice. And the Jew was included. He had information regarding the nature and being and relationship to Jehovah that Gentiles, of course, did not have.

And all of the law was given, all of the law was given to Israel to accomplish a couple of different things. One was, the law was a reflection of the character and nature of God.

Paul wrote to Timothy and said, the law is just and holy and good. The law, the law that God gave through Moses, the law was perfect.

The problem was, those to whom the law was given were not perfect. And that set up a problem. So, that brings into play the whole sacrificial system and the forgiveness of sin and the offerings and everything that goes along with it.

All of this is tied together. In fact, how many times have I told everything in the Bible is connected to everything in the Bible. It's all interrelated. And sometimes making the connection and connecting the dots is absolutely thrilling.

[32 : 10] Yes, Richard. Was the covenant only for that time? I'm sorry? Was the covenant only for that period of time? The reason I ask that is, in a wife's upbringing, they have babies back to show the sign of the covenant to those babies.

Yeah, yeah. So, again, the question is, was the covenant really only given for that era, that time period? Yes, it was.

And the time was coming when the covenant, the old covenant, given through Moses, was to be done away. And Jeremiah 31, 31, says, and in those days, I will make a new covenant with Israel and with Judah, not like the covenant which they broke, which I gave to them earlier, which will be, this will be a new covenant, and it is in contrast to the old covenant.

And you remember the night that Jesus was betrayed at the Last Supper, when he took the cup, and he said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood.

And the distinguishing characteristic, of course, was the old covenant that came through Moses was ratified by animal blood.

[33 : 43] Remember that? Took the blood, dipped the hyssop branch in the blood, sprinkled it on the law, and sprinkled it on the people, and ratified the covenant. And the people said, all that the Lord has said we will do.

We accept the terms, we will be children of the covenant. But Jesus owned blood, not the blood of animals, but it is the blood of Christ that will ratify the new covenant.

This is the new covenant in my blood. And that set it apart, of course, and it's a whole new thing. This is all so interrelated. Mike? This new covenant that you're speaking of, that's not to be confused with his promise that the Jews are his children people.

I'm sorry, I'm not understanding your question. you're referring to a new covenant that was given to the Jews as opposed to the old covenant.

They remain nevertheless the chosen people of God, right? Yes, yes. And the new covenant is going to be provided for the people of the old covenant.

[34 : 56] Absolutely, yes. And some are of the opinion, and I'm not sure about this, I've been on both sides of the issue, and I just don't know where this is, but some are of the opinion that we and the body of Christ are not under, we certainly aren't under the old covenant, and we're not even under the new covenant.

We're not under a covenant at all. We are recipients of grace, and this is the dispensation and the age of grace, so we are not operating covenantally.

We are operating on the basis of grace, and it is a free and open thing so that you are, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond or free, male or female, you are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, justified by grace, by faith.

Yes? This might be a silly question, but what about the women? What was there? Was it because the man was the head of the household, and the wife automatically came under his jurisdiction salvation as a recipient or a member of the covenant?

Yes. Okay, well, we've just, believe me, we will get to Acts 2 eventually, we'll get there, but I just wanted you to see the Jewishness that is involved, and fellas, trust me, this does not take a thing away from Christianity.

[36 : 22] What it does is it puts it in its proper perspective, and it will give you an even greater appreciation for the faith that we call Christianity.