

The Acts: Its Continuity to the Gospels (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] In this current series of studies, we have followed and traced the proposition that the plan and program of God is not revealed in its entirety in any one given place in the Bible.

Rather, the plan and program of God is gradually unveiled in an ongoing progressive fashion throughout the whole of Scripture.

We have now come into the New Testament, and in our treatment of the Gospels, and thus far in our treatment of the Acts, which will be continuing for a couple of sessions, we have noted that this progression is very obvious and very dominant within those books.

We would refer to the Acts of the Apostles as a book of transition. I have explained in the past, for those of you who were here, and you will remember it, this is one of the things that makes the book of Acts so controversial and so difficult to understand.

It is a book that will not hold still. It is rapidly moving and developing, and the doctrinal information is gradually unfolding and changing and progressing.

[1 : 14] And if you do not go with the flow of the book of Acts, you'll find yourself trying to apply things that are not directly applicable to you at all. It leads to enormous confusion and frustration, as is evidenced by the fact that whole denominations have come into being based upon their understanding of the early chapters of the book of Acts.

It is indeed one of the most controversial portions in all of the Word of God. And I think it is safe to say that the early chapters of the book of Acts constitute the most controversial portion in all of the New Testament.

What transpires in these few chapters and the manner in which it is interpreted has probably been responsible for more division and more difference within the body of Christ than anything else in all of Scripture.

I am sorry that that is true, but that is the way it is. Specifically, we have taken the theme of redemption as it was revealed in its earliest setting, that of the Old Testament.

We saw how that redemption was something that God promised, and He promised it because it was needed. And we moved on through the Gospels and saw how man's redemption was accomplished.

[2 : 34] It was accomplished through the finished work of Jesus Christ. Now, as we are in the Acts of the Apostles, we are still seeing how it is that people at that time related to that great theme of redemption.

And let me park here for just a couple of moments, if I may, and elaborate a little bit on this word redemption. To redeem means to obtain again.

It means to buy back. It has the idea of capturing something that was once possessed but was then lost.

And when it is redeemed, it is brought back into its original station. The word redemption presupposes a couple of things, as does the term redeemer.

For instance, and this to me is just so patently obvious, and yet it is amazed how people still become offended at this. Deeply offended. Do you realize that the whole theme of redemption presupposes lostness?

[3 : 49] Presupposes a moral problem. Presupposes human sin and failure. If there is no such thing as sin and failure and wrong, who needs a redeemer?

The whole concept of redemption goes right out the window if we do not have a problem with sin. Redemption says there is a problem. A redeemer says this.

Not only is there a problem, but you can't fix it. You can't correct it. You can't change it. You cannot rise to the occasion.

That's why you need a redeemer. That's why God provided a redeemer. God doesn't do anything that's unnecessary. Some people almost give you the impression that God has provided a redeemer not to redeem a cursed and fallen humanity, but God has provided a redeemer because some of you people are really nice and you don't need a redeemer.

You're fine the way you are. Some of you are not so nice. You've got a lot of room for improvement. Some of you are downright rotten. You need a redeemer.

[5 : 09] Now that's precisely the way the whole subject comes across to a great many people. This business of sin and salvation and being born again and a redeemer and all the rest of it, that's great for some people because I know a lot of people that really need that.

Boy, do they ever need it. I'm sure glad that I don't need it because I'm nice. I don't need that. That's for bad people. That's precisely where many, many people are coming from.

And if you even so much as intimate that they have a personal need because of personal sin, they tend to think that you are categorizing them with some kind of reprobates who are made of slimy stuff down in the gutter somewhere and they back off in horror and defense and say, now wait a minute, I'm not one of them.

I mean, I'm not as good as I could be, but I'm a lot better than most people. And we are going to see how this is played out in the New Testament, how it simply is reiterated throughout the Old Testament and how we are inundated with it today.

And it hasn't changed because they are people who respond in all of these cases. And the human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked who can know it.

[6 : 30] And it has been that from Genesis 3 on even to this present time. It is because man, in general, has a basic lack of understanding regarding these principles of sin, of a righteous and holy God who will not in any wise clear the guilty.

It is because of a basic misunderstanding of what they really are and how God views them through His eyes of holiness and righteousness that they're very indifferent to the concept of a personal redeemer, a personal savior.

As one fellow put it, what do I have to be saved from? Do I look like I'm drowning? The truth of the matter is we are drowning. We are drowning morally and spiritually.

We are drowning. We are overwhelmed. But our problem is we don't sense that. We don't feel that.

We don't know that. It is incredible how great our ignorance can be. We can be in very peril of our lives but not know that.

[7 : 53] And the reason we don't know it is because we don't feel anything. We have no problem feeling physically. If somebody touches a match to our arm, boy, we feel that and we pull away.

We know we're in danger. And the truth of the matter is there is a spiritual danger that threatens every moment that you are alive.

And that spiritual danger is every bit as real as a physical match put to your physical arm. But we don't feel it in the same way.

We don't have a compelling sense of need. What do I need? I've got a good job.

I make a good living. Nice family. Nice home. Nice family. I don't need anything. What do I need? I'm relatively satisfied. Oh, granted, there are some mountains I haven't climbed.

[8 : 53] And there are some dreams that I haven't fulfilled. But by and large, yeah, I'm doing okay. I don't need anything. It reminds me of the church described in Revelation.

Thou sayest that I am rich, filled with goods, and have need of nothing. And thou knowest not.

Thou knowest not that thou art poor and blind and wretched and miserable and naked. Hey, man, you talk about hitting the skids. That's pretty low.

And John in Revelation says that you who are so self-sufficient and so self-satisfied, you think you've really got the world by the tail and everything is great, but you don't know what the real score is.

And the real score is you're poor and wretched and blind and miserable and naked. That is not pretty. Now, how are people going to learn about what their true state really is?

[9 : 59] I can promise you this. I can promise you this. It just won't come to you. You won't be just sitting around sipping lemonade on your patio one day and all at once feel, out of the blue, that you are under this great spiritual sentence of death, and that your soul eternally is greatly imperiled.

Oh, woe is me! What can I do? It just doesn't happen that way. It just doesn't come upon us. We don't figure it out for ourselves. How is it that God is going to get this information if it is this desperately needed and this important?

How is God going to get it to people? And the answer is, you're going to love this. Preachers. Preachers.

It pleased God through the foolishness of the thing preached to save them that believe. There was a man sent from God whose name was John.

The same came for a witness, and so on. God raises up preachers to tell people that they are sinful, that they are estranged, that they are alienated from God, that they are undone before a holy God, that they have nothing with which to commend themselves nor to recommend themselves to God.

[11 : 24] They are moral, spiritual reprobates. And you know, people just love that. They just love to hear that.

And they say, oh, send us more preachers. My only regret is Sunday morning is the only time I get to hear this. I just love. You know, we don't love it, do we?

We are offended at it. I have heard lots of people say, don't preach to me.

I don't want anybody preaching to me. I've heard a lot of people say that. I've said it too. But I've never heard anybody say, preach to me. Give it to me.

Let me have it. I want it. It's music to my ears. Don't do that. Preaching has always been an uncomfortable kind of occupation.

[12 : 32] One reason that I don't like it is because, and those of you who know me better understand this, but those of you who don't, when you have to deliver a thus saith the Lord, it puts you in the uncomfortable position.

And the only way you can get away from it is by a disclaimer, and that's what I'm giving you now, a disclaimer. But it often puts you in the uncomfortable position of giving the impression that I am okay.

But you really need what I have to say. So you listen up. And everything is wonderful with me. And because my backyard is so clean, and my life is so wonderful, and so exemplary, and I am such an outstanding model, this gives me the right to tell you how to do it.

Now, none of that nonsense is true. I have failed the Lord more times than I care to tell you about. I've had people tell me, and some of the thoughts I've had, you probably wouldn't even want to preach to me on Sunday.

And I said, and I said, well, if you knew the same thing about me, you probably wouldn't want me to preach to you either. I am not coming from a position that, folks, I've got it all together.

[14 : 11] My life is wonderful. I have no shortcomings, no faults, no failures, and that makes me an expert, and I'm going to tell you how it's done. Now, you just listen. I am a fellow struggler, and a fellow sinner, and a fellow failer, and a fellow one who comes short, and I've got some of the same kinds of problems and hang-ups that you all have.

And I am not giving you, thus saith Marv, I'm giving you, thus saith the Lord, and what I give you applies to me just as much as it applies to you.

So please don't think that I've put myself up somewhere and I am preaching down to you. I am preaching to all of us. And what we have to say, sometimes, is not all that much fun, and it's not all that popular, and it isn't all that well received.

Do you know, as you look at the Old Testament, who do you think of as the great prophets of God? The word prophesy is another word for preach.

It doesn't mean to predict the future, but it means to deliver a message. You know who the great prophets of God are? Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, stalwart men of God.

[15 : 37] Every one of them was despised, hated, stoned, beaten, persecuted, buried alive, sawed asunder, you name it.

Never appreciated them. They were hostile toward them. Jeremiah got to the place one day where he was so sick and tired of the negative response of the people. I mean, the man preached his heart out.

He was called the weeping prophet. He wept over the sins of his people. He wept over what he knew was to be their impending captivity. And he was a heartbroken man. And everywhere he went, he tried to give them the word of the Lord.

They didn't want the word of the Lord. People have never wanted the word of the Lord. What we want is our own word. Don't want anybody to preach to me. I don't want anybody to tell me what to do. Perfectly natural.

We're all like that. It's a flaw that goes with the territory of the fallen Adam. I want my own will and my own way. I want to do my own thing.

[16 : 42] I resent somebody telling me there's something I have to do. And there is something within me when someone says, this is what you have to do. There is something within me that says, oh yeah?

Watch me. I don't like that. Jeremiah got so fed up with his negative response everywhere he went. I mean, here was a man, listen, he didn't preach for a lot of money.

He had no fringe benefits, no retirement program, no automobile allowance, no nothing. He preached to a bunch of people who didn't appreciate it and who responded with persecution and all kinds of ill treatment.

And finally, he got to the place where he was so fed up, he went to the Lord this is in Jeremiah 9, he went to the Lord, poured his heart out to the Lord, he told God off, he says, you're a miserable employer.

You call me to be your prophet and then this is the way the people treat me and this is the way they act. And I made up my mind. You'll have my resignation on your desk come Monday morning. I quit.

[17 : 48] That's it. I quit. Gonna hang it up. Get somebody else to do your dirty work. I'm through preaching to these people. And the next verse says, But his word was as a fire in my bones and I was weary with holding it in and I couldn't contain it any longer.

So I have to preach. Woe unto the preacher who preaches because he wants to preach. At least if this is your content.

Preachers ought to preach because they have to preach. Not because they choose to. Especially when this is your content. Boy, you've got to be motivated by more than a want to because I don't particularly want to preach this kind of thing and I suspect that in many ways Peter did not.

The promise and the fulfillment of a redeemer is all on the basis of God's grace. God has chosen to treat sinful fallen man in grace because he is a gracious God.

We have sinned against him but he has not responded with judgment. He has responded with grace and forgiveness and compassion and mercy. Never lose sight of the fact that God had no obligation to bestow grace upon us at all.

[19 : 18] God has but one obligation and that is to be just and righteous and true to himself. That's his obligation. And when he provided a sinless substitute to die on behalf of the guilty that enabled him to remain just and still be the justifier of them that have faith in Jesus.

That's an incredible, incredible concept. He began in Genesis chapter 3 by promising a redeemer. Adam and Eve were clothed by the hand of God when he slew the animals in sacrifice and provided a covering for them.

Then we see the institution of a sacrificial system and a Levitical code and the redeemer is presented throughout the Old Testament in type and shadow.

He is seen in the tabernacle in the items of furniture in the functioning of the tabernacle. He is seen as symbol in the Old Testament. And all the way through from Genesis to Malachi we keep seeing these pictures of the promised one who is coming.

He is coming. God has promised him. And in the Gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John the message is here he is. The promised one has come.

[20 : 31] He is on the scene now. This is the one of whom Moses and the prophets did speak. He is on the scene. And he is preaching repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

But to emphasize to you if I may the progressive nature of this revelation and how it was not appreciated nor really understood let me remind you of this.

nobody even had a clue as to what the Messiah was really going to accomplish. They simply had no understanding of it.

It wasn't revealed in the clear fashion it was revealed in type and prophecy and symbol and so on about the Messiah coming about him being smitten about him being wounded for our transgressions and so on but they really didn't pick up on that.

And please understand if you will that when Jesus Christ was on the cross dying for the sins of the world being separated from God and alienated from God forsaken of God nobody standing around the cross there knew what was happening.

[21 : 48] They didn't understand it. They saw a tragedy unfolding it's a terrible thing for a man to die a physical death of crucifixion it's just unspeakably excruciating.

They knew that there was a lot of pain and suffering they knew he was a good man they knew he was a righteous man they knew he didn't deserve to be there they had no idea what he was doing when he was there on that cross.

He was completing a great transaction he was fulfilling the promise of the Father regarding the redemption of a lost and fallen humanity.

Nobody understood that. Peter didn't understand it. Mary the mother of Jesus didn't understand it. Nobody understood it. Because it wasn't clearly revealed after the fact sure they all understood it.

They picked up on it. And that brings us to the Acts and that's where we want to turn to right now. Acts chapter 2 prior to the death of Jesus the kingdom was repeatedly announced as being at hand.

[22 : 59] John the baptizer the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Jesus repeatedly said the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Now that does not mean the kingdom is here. It doesn't mean it's here.

It means it is near. It is close by. It is not far away. There are two things that must occur before the kingdom of heaven can be established on the earth.

And please never ever lose sight of this. This is an important key to understanding the whole of God's revelation. Two things must occur before the kingdom of heaven can be established on earth.

Number one is the death of Jesus Christ must become a reality because it is in his death that the transaction of redemption is accomplished.

And when man sinned and became alienated from God through his disobedience that brought the totality of the curse down upon man. So man has been born under the curse and he has lived under the curse and death and dying is a testimony to the reality of that.

[24 : 05] Disease is a testimony to the reality of that. War and hunger is a testimony to the reality of that. Folks, we can't govern ourselves and do a just job of it.

Man is incapable of governing himself and doing a just job of it. I think there's a better job being done right here in the United States of America than there is in any place else on the face of planet Earth and it's miserable.

It falls far short of what it ought to be. We see inequities and injustice on every hand and this is the best there is. So when Jesus Christ died, he in effect reversed that curse that was imposed because of Adam's disobedience.

For as by one man sin entered the world and death passed upon all men in that all have sinned, so through the obedience of the one shall many be made righteous.

Romans 5. And the second thing that has to occur before the kingdom of heaven can be established on earth is this, super critical. The nation of Israel, to whom or through whom the kingdom was originally promised, must receive Jesus as their Messiah and as their, now here it is, as their national official redeemer.

[25 : 37] They've never done that. They still haven't. So part of what is necessary to realize the establishment of the kingdom of heaven on earth has already been fulfilled in the death of Jesus.

And what are we waiting for? That's the second half. Come if you will please to Acts chapter 3. I want you to see this. Acts chapter 3.

Look at verse 17. Peter is preaching his second sermon, not to be confused with the Pentecostal address, but similar to it. And Peter says by way of conclusion in verse 17, and now brethren, talking to fellow Jews.

By the way, when he uses the word brethren here, he is not talking to Christians. He is not talking to fellow believers. He is talking to fellow Jews.

They are brethren after the flesh, in that they are all out of the loins of Abraham. And now brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also.

[26 : 49] But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he has thus fulfilled.

That's it. First half of the program is out of the way. The half that remains. Repent, therefore, and return as a nation, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus, the Messiah, appointed for you.

And what is their response? Well, some believe, but most do not. Come back, please, to Acts chapter 2. I want you to note, beginning with verse 15, where Peter provides the answer to what everybody is wondering, what in the world is going on.

We've got 12 apostles and another 120 brethren, well, I guess the total is about 120, another 108 or so, gathered together in the temple, in the upper room of the temple.

But they are in the temple area. And please understand this setting, if you will, physically. Down below, the temple is a huge structure. This is not a little building.

[28 : 10] I mean, you could take the totality of Grace Bible Church and put it in one corner of the courtyard and have acres of space left over. They had a court of the Gentiles, they had a court of the women, they had a court of Israel, there was a court for the priests, and these were huge, huge open areas, big spaces.

And they could accommodate thousands and thousands of people to be in there at one and the same time milling around. And on the days of feasts, there always were.

There are 3,000 who are going to respond. My guess is there are between 12,000 and 15,000 people there. And that's just a guess. But I'm suggesting there were many, many more there than 3,000.

And we know that the space would accommodate a great number more than 3,000. It's just the 3,000 that responded positively. There was a greater number that responded negatively.

And all of these people, thousands of them are milling around. The apostles and 120 faithful believers are in this upper room. Must have been a pretty good size upper room. Bigger than your kitchen.

[29 : 19] We're talking about 120 people. And all at once, they hear this sound. this noise. Like a rushing mighty wind.

And I would suggest that the noise was so overwhelming and so obvious that all of the thousands of people milling around down there in the courtyard, they heard it.

And their attraction is drawn up there. And they are saying, listen, did you hear? What was that? What is it? What is it? And this, I don't know what it sounded like exactly. It must have sounded like a whole squadron of B-52s coming over.

Rushing. Whatever it was, it got their attention and everybody stopped whatever they were doing and said, what is this? What's going on? And then, these people gathered from all over the world.

They're pilgrims, that's what they are. They're conducting an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem. And they are listed here in the latter part, well, beginning with Acts 2 and verse 9, all of these different geographical areas that these people are from.

[30 : 29] They're all Jews. That's why they're there, because they're Jews. But they all speak different languages. Which is Aramaic? They don't speak that.

They speak the language wherein they were born. It was Cappadocian and Mesopotamian language, Parthian and Median and Elamites and so on.

And there's a real language barrier. And when these twelve begin speaking, they hear them speak in their own language and they are able to understand perfectly everything that's being said.

And they are absolutely awestruck. They are just dumbfounded. They say, what in the world is this? What's going on anyway? What's happening here? I've never seen anything like this. What is this?

And one person who looks like he knows what he's talking about stands up. And everybody gets quiet. I believe you could have heard a pin drop. Peter stands there, holds his hands up, gestures to the crowd, quiet down, quiet.

[31 : 29] Everyone looks up at Peter and he says in verse 14, Men of Judea, all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you.

Give heed to my words. He's talking to thousands of people. Benjamin Franklin calculated the number of people who heard George Whitefield speak in Boston Commons.

Given to science and mathematics the way he was, Ben Franklin went around the perimeter of the crowd and actually measured the distance that was taken up by the crowd and then he assigned a certain amount of space to each person in the crowd, calculated that George Whitefield stood and addressed 25,000 people without any amplification at all, just open air.

here. And this probably was a much more conducive kind of setting. And Peter stands and preaches and he says, These men are not drunk as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day.

I'll tell you what this is. This is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel. Joel prophesied this hundreds of years ago.

[32 : 46] And you are the privileged generation that is experiencing its fulfillment. Oh, you talk about electrifying it just isn't every day of the week that you are sitting in on a situation where you're seeing prophecy fulfilled firsthand.

This is exciting. And he says, It shall be in the last days. When is that? There's a lot of confusion that just evolves around that word, last days.

Because, listen, if the last days here means the last days, we've got a problem. Because that happened 2,000 years ago. If these were the last days 2,000 years ago, what are these that we're living in now?

And the simple truth of the matter is, and it is a simple truth, the last days does not mean two weeks prior to the coming of Jesus in the second coming. the last days means everything that is on this side of the cross of Christ.

The former days is everything that was on the other side of the cross. And Jesus Christ and the cross split all of human history so that everything that involves humanity happened in the former times or in the latter times.

[34 : 02] We live in the latter times. The latter times have been in existence for 2,000 years, and we don't know how long they are going to go on, but that is all the last days from the time of Christ on. And Peter is saying what Joel prophesied is beginning to be fulfilled.

Now not all of it has been fulfilled because the system was short-circuited and shut down when Israel was set aside in unbelief, and even though the kingdom mentality began and started to develop, it got short-circuited and was postponed, and it has not been on the scene since.

It isn't on the scene now. Now notice verse 19.

I will grant wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth beneath, blood and fire and vapor of smoke, the sun shall be turned into darkness, the moon into blood, and so on. That's never happened. That's never happened.

Because the program never got that far. And the reason it never got that far is because Israel's rejection of Jesus as the Messiah continued and grew in intensity until finally God set them aside in unbelief.

[35 : 30] But the thing I want to point out that is so absolutely critical to this is simply this. You must understand that God's gracious invitation of the kingdom to Israel is now being offered.

Could anything be clear but what Acts 2 and Peter's message and Acts 3 and Peter's message are both invitations, invitations to Israel?

Israel? Yes, you did crucify your Messiah. Yes, you did reject him. But I want you to know something. The grace and mercy of God continues to be extended to you.

And now, whereas before we had to say the kingdom of heaven is at hand, now we can say this is it. Israel. The kingdom is available.

It is yours for the taking. If you as a nation will repent and embrace Jesus as the Messiah, God has done his part through his finished work.

[36 : 35] Now, you get on and respond to what God has done and you receive Jesus as a nation and this thing of the kingdom will continue right on and will flourish and will prosper.

Well, they didn't. Peter extended an invitation. Nothing could be clear. In verse 37 of chapter 2, when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, brethren, what shall we do?

And Peter said to them, there isn't anything you can do. It's too late. You're set aside. God's finished with you. He's had it with you. Not at all.

This is a gracious continuation. Let me put it this way. The early chapters of the book of Acts is not an account of the beginning of the New Testament church. It is an account of God setting Israel aside in their unbelief.

And the fact that the word church is used in some of these passages really throws people and they just automatically assume that that's the church of today, which is the church that is his body. Because there it is, C-H-U-R-C-H, the church, that's the church, this is the church, that's the same thing.

[37 : 52] Consequently, if this is the pattern for the church, then this is what we ought to be doing. Therefore, we should be speaking in tongues, we should be performing miracles, we should be doing these healings, we should be all of these things, because that's what the New Testament church is supposed to be.

The pattern for the New Testament church is in Acts chapter 2. I heartily disagree with that. That is not true. This is a Jewish church. It is not the church which is his body. This is a Jewish constituency.

And the thing that makes this so confusing is the fact that in this transition period, the kingdom is still being talked about. The kingdom is being offered. It's available.

Here it is. Take it. Receive Jesus as your Messiah. Do you know what they did? Some of them really got with the program. Look, if you will, beginning with verse chapter 2, verse 42.

After 3,000 were saved and baptized, which by the way was water baptism, which was with the baptism of John, and that's the only baptism they knew. And it was all they needed at that time.

[38 : 52] They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship and to breaking of bread and to prayer, and everyone kept feeling a sense of awe, and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

Well, of course they were. They were supposed to. Jesus commissioned the apostles to do the same miracles that he had done, and they're doing it. They're doing it. They're also doing something else.

Look at the next verse. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common. What does that mean?

Well, it means that they all were in harmony and that they got along well. No, it doesn't. They did that too.

But these people began pooling their resources. They began selling their homes, liquidating, selling out everything.

[39 : 51] And they brought the money that they got from it, and they brought it in and laid it at the apostles' feet and said, here is everything that I got. Give it to whoever has need.

Folks, this is communism. You realize this is the basic principle upon which communism is founded?

It means to have things in common. It means nobody owns anything. Everybody owns everything. Do you realize that this is the very thing that communists claim that they are going to accomplish?

Polish? This is why their things are referred to as the people's. You know, this is the people's truck. This is the people's farm. This is the people's Kremlin. This is the people.

No person owns everything. Everything is owned by everybody because under communism, everybody is equal. Although, as one wag put it, and some are more equal than others because they haven't arrived either.

[40 : 52] But any communist worth his salt will tell you that what he is laboring for is through government and political processes and through education and through understanding, they are going to produce a utopian society here on the earth.

And communism is the only thing that can do that where there will be no unfairness, no inequity. Everything will be owned by everybody. There will not be any unemployment. There will not be any starvation. There will not be any problems like that.

Everything will be equitable. And there is only one thing that they forgot. And that is the basic nature of the human being with which they have to work. Totally militates against the success of communism.

Communism will never do it. And let me tell you something else. Neither will capitalism. Jesus Christ will do it. He is the only one who is able to affect that.

And he will. These people are getting with the program. Look at verse 45. They began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all as anyone might have need.

[41 : 56] Why don't we do that? Why don't we do that? It is remarkable the number of people you can find.

Oh yes, if you're not speaking in tongues, you're not baptized with a... Why don't they do this? Oh well, you're not supposed to do that. What that means is you're supposed to be willing to do that. Well listen folks, they did it.

They did it. Why did they do it? Because that's what the kingdom is all about. There is going to be complete equity and complete fairness.

There won't be any unemployment. There won't be any starvation. There won't be... They are just getting with the program. That's all they're doing. Remember when the rich young ruler came up to Jesus and said, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

And Jesus said, well, you can keep the commandments. You can start there. Oh, I've done that. I've kept all the commandments from my youth up. One thing thou lackest.

[43 : 05] Sell all your possessions, give the money to the poor, and come and follow me. And he went away sorrowful, for he had many goods.

I can't entertain the interpretation of that that a lot of people give to it. Some people say, well, what Jesus is saying there is not that he wants that young man to sell his goods and give his money to the poor and come and follow him.

What he wanted that young man to do was to be willing to do that. And if he had said, all right, I'll do it, Jesus probably would have said, well, now that's not necessary.

I was just testing you. Just all that's nonsense. It's nonsense. He told him to do that because that's what he needed to do. Under the kingdom and anticipation of it, it was a very legalistic type thing, very much works oriented, much more so, totally different from the dispensation of the grace of God with which we're familiar.

And do you know the disciples were standing there listening to all this? And Peter, you can always count on Peter to say something when everybody else is just thinking about it.

[44 : 18] Peter walked up to Jesus and said, Master, we heard what you told that young man. We did that. We did that.

We gave up the fishing business. Matthew, Levi left the tax collection business. James and John, they gave up their interest in their father's fishing business. And we've signed on to follow you.

What are we going to get? Jesus said, you who have followed me, you 12, in the regeneration, you're going to sit on the 12 thrones of Israel, judging the 12 tribes.

Jesus, very literal, very earthly, very physical kind of thing. They simply met the conditions that Jesus laid down. But they were kingdom kind of conditions.

And folks, the reason why we don't all say, now listen, I want everybody, hey, if you got your house paid for or if you don't, if you've got some equity in it, see what you can sell it and get it out and get out of it.

[45 : 16] Sell your car, sell your beach home, sell your color TV, sell everything that you can sell, and you bring all your money here and lay it down at the feet of the elders. And we'll take care of it.

Are there any takers? Well, if we're going to be consistent and say this is the modus operandi for the church, folks, you don't take part of the package and leave part of the package.

These people were not out of line with what they did. They were right on target. They are operating under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

And they simply see the program as unfolding and they are complying. They are getting with the program. Now, later on, when the program is short-circuited and the kingdom is not developed, do you know what Paul spends part of his time doing in Macedonia?

He is taking up a collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Who do you think those poor people are? At least some of them were probably these people who sold all their possessions and gave their money to the poor.

[46 : 31] And now they are the poor. And a different program is instituted with a different game plan and a different modus operandi, which is not to be confused with the anticipation of the kingdom.

There is but a tiny percentage of Israel that responded favorably. As you read chapter 3, we find another sermon that is given by Peter. And in chapter 4, we get the response.

Look at this. They heal this man. Peter and John are out at the temple of the gate beautiful and this beggar is sitting there. Alms, alms for the poor.

This guy had this choice spot. You situate yourself, if you are a beggar, right near the main temple gate that is most frequented because if people are ever going to feel generous, it is when they are coming in and going out of the temple.

Hit them right there. They knew something about marketing and impulse sales and impulse giving. And this man had been a permanent fixture there for years. Peter and John come by and he says, alms, alms, and he looked up expecting to receive something from them.

[47 : 38] And Peter, broke as he always was, says, I fell. I'm sorry. I don't have a penny to my name. Silver and gold have I none. But I'll tell you what I do have. And such as I have, give I unto you.

In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he reached down and grabbed that man by the hand and yanked on him. And he came right up. But when he got up, he didn't collapse.

He stood on two legs that he had never stood on, impotent from his mother's womb. Stood upright.

I suspect all this man could do is stand there and look at his legs. He'd never seen them from that angle before. He'd stand there and look at his legs.

And then he starts moving up and down. And then you look at him and he's jumping and running and leaping. Read the account. It's electrifying. People are standing around saying, what is this?

[48 : 38] What's going on? Hey, that's old so-and-so. He can't walk. What's he doing? What's happening here? Man, it's fantastic. You talk about getting people's attention. That really got their attention.

Why did Peter and John do that? Because that's what Jesus would have done. Why did Jesus do that? Because the prophet Isaiah said, one of the things that's going to happen when the kingdom is introduced is the lame man will leap like a deer.

Boy, here he is. Incredible. Now, folks, let me tell you something. That should be enough to make a believer out of the most hardened, confirmed antagonist that Jesus ever had.

That should be enough to make people say, I give up. He really has to be the Messiah. I'm convinced. I didn't believe before.

I believe now. I believe now. I'm convinced. Well, did they? Chapter 4 says, As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came upon them.

[49 : 53] Who is this crowd? Same ones who ordered the arrest of Jesus Christ. Same ones who set in trial and condemned him before Caiaphas and Annas.

Same ones that turned him over to Pontius Pilate for trial and execution. Same people, greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day. Negative response. I want you to keep in mind who these people are and let's close with Acts chapter 7.

Acts chapter 7. Verse 1. Terrible place to interrupt without establishing the context, but Peter has given, Stephen has given a sermon and the high priest said, Who's the high priest?

He is the ultimate religious authority in Israel. The high priest said, Are these things so? And Stephen begins to respond.

[51 : 09] It is tremendously significant to understand that when Stephen gives his defense, he recounts the whole history of the nation Israel and he tells them repeated instances wherein their forefathers have rejected the prophets and murdered those that God sent to them.

And what Stephen is getting at is this. This is the history of Israel. God graciously sent men to you to warn you, to preach to you, and to tell you what the way of truth was.

And what did you do? You persecuted them. You murdered them. You put them to death. Now the question is this. Now the question is this. Is that what you're going to do?

Are you going to perpetuate that syndrome? Are you going to go the way of your fathers? Or are you going to turn an attention to the voice of God?

And not only is what Stephen said significant, but to whom he said it is tremendously significant. His audience is comprised of 70 of the grand old men of Israel.

[52 : 20] This is the Sanhedrin. Who sits on that august body? Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees. The chief priest, the high priest was the chairman of this body.

These are the most respected, revered men in the whole nation of Israel. Of course they're all Jews. They have all the clout. These are the shakers and movers. These are the people who could lead the nation any which way they wanted.

And they were already leading it the wrong way. And Stephen comes to the conclusion of his message, which is a rehash of the history of Israel. And he comes down to verse 51, which spells his death.

You men, you men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears. Do you get that? Look at that phrase.

Uncircumcised in heart and ears. Oh, I know you're circumcised. Where all Jews are supposed to be circumcised. You've got that badge of identity.

[53 : 22] No doubt it was done on the eighth day too, just like the law prescribes. But it is only the circumcised heart and the circumcised ear that will be obedient.

You can cut on the flesh of your foreskin all day long. And that won't make it. You uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit.

Look at this. Look at this. You are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who had previously announced the coming of the righteous one, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become.

You who received the law as ordained by angels and yet did not keep it. You who should have known better than anyone else. You who had more light than anyone else.

And what did you do? You did the same thing your fathers did. We don't want anybody preaching to us. Why? Because we are just fine the way we are.

[54 : 37] When somebody preaches to you, that's telling you, hey, you're wrong. There's some changes that you need to make.

Do you know that's what repent means? It means you've got changes to make. Now, God isn't going to make you make them, but He's going to tell you that you need to. Do you know what the response is when we hear something that we don't want to hear or that we can't refute or that just really makes us uncomfortable?

Do one of two things, and we've got the book of Acts here as a precedent for both of them. You go positive or you go negative. You get right or you get mad.

Hmm? When my wife and I have an argument, which isn't near as often as it used to be because she's more reasonable now than she used to be.

But when my wife and I have an argument and she comes back with something that just absolutely blows my case all to pieces, it leaves me without a leg to stand on.

[55 : 46] I don't have anything to come back with. I don't have an argument. I don't have a reason. I have no leverage at all. There isn't anything left for me to do but get mad.

When you don't have an argument, get angry. That's what these did. When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, 3,000 got right. 3,000 said, Listen, I know it hurts.

I know it makes us look terrible. I know it makes us murderers. We crucified the Messiah. But do you know, this man's right.

He's right. And I'm not going to deny it any longer. I'm not going to deny Jesus of Nazareth being the Messiah any longer. This man has put together a case.

This Peter, this ignorant fisherman who's never been to any of our rabbinical schools, he has put together a case that is absolutely undeniable. And 3,000 people said, We agree. We repent.

[56 : 46] And they were baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins. They were positive. These 70 old men who were so jealous of Jesus and so jealous of John and so jealous of Stephen, they could not withstand his arguments.

They couldn't refute him. When you can't refute somebody and they won't shut up, you've got to shut them up. You've got to kill them. John the Baptist, kill him.

Jesus, kill him. James, the brother of John, kill him. Stephen, kill him. You can't afford to leave people around like that. Murder them.

If you can't kill the man's argument, kill the man. It's always been that way. And if you're not going to get right, then you're going to get mad.

That's the way people are. I dare say everybody that leaves here this morning is going to be right with God or mad at me.

[57 : 56] But if being mad at me is a price that has to be paid for eventually you getting right with God, then you can just turn all the anger you want towards me.

That's all right. My shoulders can handle it. These are going to be right with you. And I'm not prepared to say exactly when that was.

But I do know that the curtain is ringing down on the nation Israel. And in accordance with what is upcoming in the book of Acts, it will not be long until God is going to set them aside.

And we find the historicity of that recounted in Romans 9, 10, and 11, where Paul makes that very clear that Israel has been set aside in their unbelief.

But here in the early chapters of Acts, God's gracious opportunity is still available to the nation and they continue to reject. God's gracious opportunity is available to us today.

[59 : 04] We can take the information that we have received and we can go positive with it. We can repent and say, I don't like this. It's painful to me to consider this.

But it's true. It's true. I'm going to own up to it. I'm going to confess my sin, acknowledge the fact that I am a sinful being like everybody else is.

And I'm going to embrace Jesus Christ as my Redeemer and Savior. And if you don't do that, then you'll go negative. There is no neutral.

There's no fence to straddle. You're on one side or on the other. May God enable you to see the importance of that.

And the principle applies to any and all dispensations. It knows no boundaries. May we pray. Father, if there are any here this morning struggling with the reality of sin and the necessity of redemption and salvation through Christ alone, we can't make it as clear as we would like.

[60 : 10] We can't speak of it as plainly as we wish. We are dependent upon the Spirit of God taking the truth of God and applying it to human hearts. We are indeed a people who are undone, unworthy.

But you, in your great act of love and grace, have extended yourself and your salvation toward us, making it a matter of grace.

We do not deserve it, but we can receive it. Thank you for this gracious provision for each and every one here this morning with an opportunity to apply it.

If anger is a price they must pay, then so be it. Give them no peace and no rest, we pray, until they come to find it all. And the one who is altogether lovely, Christ Jesus our Lord.

In his name we ask it. Amen. You're dismissed. Amen.