

Chronology, Ethnicity and Transition, Part 2

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[0 : 00] It is Chronology, Ethnicity, and Transition, Part 2. And for the scripture this morning, I would like you to turn to the book of Psalms, to Psalm 100.

And Psalm 100 is a psalm for thanksgiving. Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before him with joyful singing. Know that the Lord himself is God. It is he who has made us.

And not we ourselves. We are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving.

And his courts with praise. Give thanks to him. Bless his name. For the Lord is good. His loving kindness is everlasting.

[1 : 25] And his faithfulness to all generations. What did he know?

And when did he know it? That is a question that is being bandied around Washington right now. And I well remember when it was a burning question.

When President Nixon was in the White House. And the Watergate fiasco was on the front page of the newspapers every day. And the question that virtually everybody wanted to know as regards to what extent or if President Nixon was involved in the Watergate fiasco was, What did the president know about the Watergate break-in?

And when did he know it? And the reason that those questions were so important was because it would either indicate his knowledge and involvement of the same, Or his complete disavowal of the whole thing, And didn't know anything about it.

It has become popular in some cases for someone in authority to be accused of being involved in something or knowing something about it.

[3 : 04] And their response is, I didn't know a thing about it until I heard it on the news or saw it in the newspaper, just like everybody else.

And I suspect that sometimes that may be true. And sometimes it may not be true. You will all recover, those of you with sufficient years on you, which is some of you at least, How that with President Nixon, What turned out to be the greatest issue in the whole thing was not really the break-in, But it was what?

Yeah, it was the cover-up. That was what eventually resulted in his feeling the necessity to resign. And I am struck by how pertinent that question and answers to it are when you come to the scriptures.

For instance, What did Peter know? And when did he know it? What did Paul, the apostle, know? And when did he know it? Issues of not only who, but when, are matters of chronology that become very important.

[4 : 26] And make no mistake about it, chronology is very, very important when you are studying the book of Acts. Because not only was what happened really important, but when it happened, and who the principles were involved in it, also become very important and very key.

I don't know how many times I have been struck by the fact in reading the Acts of the Apostles, and all 28 chapters you can easily tuck away in your mind in maybe 30, 45 minutes without too much difficulty.

But one has to be reminded as you read through the Acts of the Apostles that we are talking about 30 years of history.

There are three decades consumed in the content of the book of Acts. And all too often we tend to just read it as a closely gathered narrative that just took place in a relatively short period of time.

It doesn't take all that long to read it. But there's a tremendous length of time that is involved. And let me say this. We've touched on this before. So say I now again. The book of Acts represents a

time of great confusion, difficulty, turmoil, and transition.

[5 : 58] The book of Acts, more than any book in the Bible, represents the development of doctrine in an ongoing, unfolding way.

It is doctrine that won't stay put. It keeps progressing, developing, and involving new areas and new issues that were never thought of before.

And principle among those, I think without any question, is as you read and examine the early Acts, and I'm thinking particularly in connection with the ascension of our Lord that's recorded in chapter 1, and then the monumental record of the day of Pentecost that took place in Acts chapter 2, and to realize that all of the principles involved, without exception, all of them, were Jewish.

There are no Gentiles involved. They had no business being involved. There was nothing there for them. They were not included. They were not intended to be. And these events all took place in a Jewish setting regarding a Jewish feast in the Jewish temple that was open exclusively and solely for Jewish people alone.

Gentiles were not even permitted to be there. Under penalty of death, by the way. So we've got this enormous impetus and interest given to the Jewish people, and as you read chapter 2 and that long list, which I won't take time to go to now, but there is a long list of people who were present at this Jewish feast of Pentecost from all over the Mediterranean world.

[7 : 44] And they had just one thing in common, and that's why they were there. They were Jews. And this was a Jewish feast. And the law of Moses prescribed attendance for male Jews, 20 years of age and upward, to attend as many of these feasts as they could.

And there were three of them. The Feast of Pentecost, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Feast of Passover. And these were not optional things. Well, they were optional as to whether you could be there, but they were not optional as to who could attend them.

It was exclusively Jews. And as you move on through the book of Acts, we find the Jewish emphasis exclusively.

Gentiles, as I mentioned earlier, did not even get involved in the picture at all until chapter 10. And do you realize that this was a full seven to ten years after the resurrection of Christ, so that all of the early believers were Jews?

And these Jews did not somehow mysteriously become Christians, but what they did become was believing Jews.

[9 : 01] They did not lose their Jewishness. They never considered abandoning the temple or the synagogue. They continued to attend and go through the Jewish rituals just as they always had.

Yet, something really dramatic had happened as regards Judaism that was not at all understood by those who were involved.

And that is the whole scheme, plan, details, requirements, everything regarding Judaism, all its practices, animal sacrifices, Sabbath keeping, circumcision, kosher diet, all the rest of those things had suddenly gone south.

They're over. That's the end of them. They are no more. Judaism and all that involved it was now defunct.

When did that happen? It happened when the veil in the temple was torn in two at the crucifixion of Christ, making the way of access to the Holy of Holies open for whosoever will may come.

[10 : 23] It's no longer just a Jewish thing, because Jesus Christ reconciled the world unto himself, not just the Jew, but everyone.

And this provided a good news for all of humanity. But all of humanity didn't even know that. They didn't recognize that.

And they wouldn't until some years later. This is why when you turn to Acts chapter 2, and if you would do that, please. I remember the first time this was pointed out to me.

I just looked at it in stark unbelief. I just could not accept it. I just said that that can't be. That can't be. And I learned a principle then that I have somewhat taught since, and that is this.

It is a whole lot harder to unlearn what you think you know, but turns out to be untrue, than it is to just learn something new.

[11 : 30] Because what you've got to do is replace the old and reject what you thought was true, but turns out to be untrue, was something new.

And trust me, that is a painful proposition. And it was painful for me when I had to go through this as a young pastor some years ago.

It led me, when I first heard this, to just completely reject it. That can't be true. One reason I knew it wasn't true was because that's not what I'd always been taught. So, so much for that.

But anyway, here in Acts chapter 2, I want you to just look and see what Peter is saying. He tells them when everybody is absolutely amazed as to this people speaking in languages that they've never heard.

And you see, if you will begin looking, just, I'm not going to read them, of course, the list is actually too long. Beginning in verse 9 of Acts 2, we're told all of the geographical locations from which these people who were attending the Feast of Pentecost had come.

[12:35] And they had one thing in common, and that was their religion. That's why they were there. But they couldn't communicate with each other, except those with whom they came, because they all had language barriers.

And what the Spirit of God did, of course, was simply reverse the Tower of Babel principle that confounded all the languages and allowed these people to communicate. And when they did, they got the message, and of course, they all returned home when the pilgrimage was over after the feast, and they took the truths that they had learned there at the Feast of Pentecost with them. And that way, the gospel was disseminated as well. But what was the gospel at this point in time? What did it consist of? There was just one single burning issue before Jesus was crucified and after he was resurrected, and it was not to change for years.

And that one central burning issue was this. Was Jesus of Nazareth the one that was promised by Moses and the prophets in the Old Testament or not?

Absolutely everything hinged on that. Because if he was indeed the one spoken of by Moses and the prophets, then God sent him.

[13:57] And you better get in line with the program. Because he comes with the authority of God himself. And to reject Jesus or to refuse Jesus and his teachings would be tantamount to refusing God himself.

So everything, and I do mean everything, in the Jewish mind and heart hinged upon that one issue, the identity of Jesus of Nazareth. And you know what? It still does.

It still does with the Jewish people. Because if he was the one sent by Moses and the prophets, then that not only legitimizes his ministry, but it also gives credence to the fact that God raised him from the dead.

And that changes everything. And either he did or he didn't. You cannot have it both ways. Decision has to be made.

Either he did or he didn't. And someone said, well, Jesus did rise from the dead. Kind of. Nonsense. Kind of.

[15:05] He either did or he didn't. That became a burning issue. And it still is a burning issue. You know, there are Jewish people today, and I've talked with some, and I've heard some give their expressions, et cetera.

And I've heard some say something like this. You know, really, as Jews, we don't have that much of a problem with Jesus. I mean, we recognize him as a great, respected rabbi.

He taught many valuable truths, and he obviously lived by such great morals, et cetera. So we don't really have too much of a problem with Jesus.

One we have a problem with is Paul. Think about that. One we have a problem with is Paul. And why do they have such a big problem with Paul?

Well, one reason is because Paul removed from the Jews their exclusivity in their claims to God.

[16:14] because Paul is saying, there is therefore now no difference for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God so that there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave or free, male or female.

You are all children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. are you kidding me? You are suggesting that Jew and Gentile are on the same plane?

And what about the Jew and being the chosen people and the most favored nation status? What about that? And Paul is saying, that has all come to an end with Israel's rejection of their Messiah.

And God has set Israel aside in unbelief, Romans 9, 10, and 11, until the fullness of the Gentiles come in. And I've explained to you before, it is just as if God took the Jewish nation and the Jewish people who were the focus of everything that he was doing and he set them aside.

He removed them from center stage and he put them in the wings. Out of sight and back behind the curtain. And what he did was he brought this new entity out and put it in the center stage and it's

called the church.

[17 : 49] Which is comprised of Jew and Gentile in the same body whereby he has made the twain one new man and put no distinction between them.

That's what God has done. And this bombshell hits the first century and there are people who are going to reject it automatically because it removes that exclusivity from the Jew.

And by the way, the Jew was raised up of God. Israel was raised up of God to be a light to the Gentiles. But they weren't doing that. And by the way, God has raised up the church for the same reason to be a light to the Gentiles to the world.

And you know what? Our missions program worldwide is not really all that hot. We haven't done a whole lot better job than what the Jews did. So, we can't fault them.

this transition time, this time of change is a time of turmoil and confusion and rejection and belief and unbelief and conflict and persecution.

[19 : 06] And the persecution that is going to arise will be Jew or Jew. It won't be non-Jews persecuting Jews. It will be Jews persecuting Jews.

And the chief persecutor is the one who's going to become the chief proclaimer. That will be Saul of Tarsus who will become Paul the Apostle.

So, some of our Jewish friends that say they have no problem with Jesus, they just have their problems with Paul. Well, let me tell you, if they were to read the Gospels, they would have plenty of problems with Jesus.

They just don't know it. Because for someone to say, I am the light of the world, I am the bread of life, I am the water of life, he who drinks of the water that I give him shall never thirst.

For one to say, I am the door by me if any man enter in, he is the same one who said that before Abraham was, I am.

[20 : 07] And you don't have a problem with that? And you are talking about a different Jesus. The Jews have a big problem with Jesus, they just don't know it because they will not allow themselves to read the New Testament since they do not consider it authoritative like they do the old.

So, we are going, as we go through this subject matter in the book of Acts, we are going to look at what was said and what wasn't said and what is assumed and what is what I think was a faulty assumption and when these people in Acts chapter 2 are looking for an explanation because they are amazed, they are just absolutely dumbfounded, they can't believe what's going on, what, what, these people, they can't speak my language but they are speaking my language, I am hearing them speaking, what is this, what is happening anyway?

And someone proposed a ridiculous idea, oh well, these guys are just drunk and Peter, Peter, the spokesman of the 12, Peter stands up and says, men and brethren, these men are not drunk as you suppose, that's not what this is about at all, what you have witnessed here, what is taking place is the very thing that Joel was speaking of hundreds of years ago when he recorded in what God revealed to him what this was all about, and verse 16 says, this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel and then he goes on and describes that, but the thing that is missing here, that once you understand that it is missing, it starts putting everything in a different perspective as to who knew what when, and let's see what Peter says, verse 22, verse 22, listen to these words, Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through him in your midst, just as you yourselves know.

This man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you, you, you, you, you, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put him to death and God raised him up again putting an end to the agony of death since it was impossible for him to be held in its power.

[23 : 05] Now, he concludes in verse 29 by saying, brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that's about his soul not seeing corruption, that he both died and was buried and his tomb is with us to this day.

So, what he was talking about here in the Psalms, beginning with verse 25, and we won't take time to read it, but it is very important that he is quoting this from David from the psalmist, and he's saying David wasn't speaking of himself because we know David the king wasn't talking about himself because we know where David's buried and I can take you to his gravesite right now.

So, of whom was he speaking? He was speaking of the Messiah, Jesus. He did not see corruption. He did not have a body that underwent decay. He was raised from the dead after the third day. And what Peter is preaching to these people is not what we consider to be the gospel, the good news of

salvation.

It isn't that at all. And I remember hearing this for the first time and I thought, well, I never heard of anything so ridiculous. That's exactly what he is preaching. No, he isn't.

[24 : 33] Look at it and read it very carefully. What Peter is doing, he is delivering to his audience an indictment, an accusation, charging them with the responsibility for the death of the Messiah.

There is nothing here in Peter's message about Jesus Christ reconciling the world to himself and providing salvation for all humanity. That comes later.

It's not revealed here. Peter. So what he knew and when he knew it becomes very critical. And Peter is not going to be aware of this information until later on down the line.

And who will be the very first one to receive information regarding this situation? It will be Paul the apostle.

Peter is not going to know about it. And the reason he isn't going to know about it is because he isn't supposed to. It wasn't revealed to him. What I am telling you and this is so critical is that God through the risen Christ after he ascended God is going to reveal through Christ from heaven information to Saul of Tarsus who will become Paul the apostle and it is an updated information as to what was received while Christ was here on earth for those three years and it is completely different.

[26 : 10] And what he revealed before including the great commission all of this was intended for the Jew and the Jew alone and this is why he says I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and that all involved this thing called the kingdom and by the way let me insert here because this is really important the kingdom is the bigger picture.

That's where everything is going. That's where everything is all about. The church which is the body of Christ is a parenthesis. We are sandwiched in between the 69th and the 70th week of Daniel and we've gone through the book of Daniel and we have seen how that the 69th week revealed the end of the Messiah's earthly ministry.

That's when he was cut off. He was put to death. And the 70th week has never gotten underway. It has never yet commenced. We are not in the 69th week.

It's over. We are not in the 70th week. It hasn't begun yet. We are sandwiched in between the 69th and the 70th week as explained by Paul in Ephesians chapter 3.

We are parenthetical and we don't belong to either of those. The 69th week and the 70th week. They're all Jewish, Jewish, Jewish. We are the Johnny come lately.

[27 : 37] We are referred to as the mystery that was never revealed before. And as you read Ephesians chapter 3, Paul makes it very clear that he had become the apostle to the Gentiles, a minister to the body of Christ, making the two one new man, and that there is therefore now no longer any difference or any distinction.

It is a brand new message that he is preaching, and let me tell you this, it is going to be a hard sell. And do you know who never really bought it?

The nation of Israel. Israel, the ones who rejected Christ before his crucifixion, will reject him after his crucifixion.

And Israel remains in a rejection mode today as regards Jesus being the Messiah of Israel. They still don't believe it.

Now the time is coming when they most definitely will, but it hasn't happened yet. Happy to say that over the last 10 or 20 years, there have been more Jewish people who have come to faith in Christ as their Messiah than perhaps there have been in the 50 years preceding that.

[29 : 01] So there is activation and there is interest more and more, especially among Jewish young people who are beginning to recognize that maybe there is something there. Maybe Jesus really was the Messiah, and many of them are thinking about it.

And you know Friends of Israel and Arnold Fruchtenbaum and his group with Ariel ministries have tremendous outreach to Jewish people, and they've won countless numbers of them to Christ. But as of now, this is still an issue that Paul is revealing a new thing, and it is going to strike like a thunderbolt.

And we will see more implications of this as it unfolds, because folks, this is really dramatic and important stuff. And I am amazed how much of Christendom has simply missed it.

It was men like, well, if I begin naming them, I probably would run out of time, but I already have?

[30 : 08] Okay. Well, okay. I must be a dutiful husband, and I tell you folks, this stuff, I trust you will give this sufficient time and interest, and if you will, I can promise you this, there are going to be those proverbial light bulbs going on all over the place.

things coming together and fitting and making sense in a way that they perhaps never had before. That was certainly my experience, and I can't tell you how excited I am to share it with you.

And before I open it for Q&A, I want to remind you, there are some literature items back there on the table, and one of them very, very well written. It's a huge, huge area of controversy that a lot of people don't understand, and it's called, do we exalt Paul?

You really ought to read that, because that's an accusation against grace people. Well, you make too much of the apostle Paul. Listen, the reason we make so much of Paul was because nobody made so much of Christ as Paul.

Wow. So, anyway, I'm not finished, but I quit. Okay, Q&A, who's got a question, a question, an observation, an objection?

[31 : 38] That's fine. I'd be glad to entertain whatever you have for us. Anybody? Okay, my darling daughter over here.

I remember sermons being taught, and I don't know if it was by you or pastors I heard on the radio or something, but I remember being taught that when Jesus died on the cross, he was abandoned by God for us and went to hell for three days, or maybe it was Hades for three days until God raised him up from the dead.

Do you remember that? Is that something that you taught, or did I hear that somewhere else? Well, that's a really controversial passage, and I've been on both sides of that issue, and I'm not sure where I stand now.

Scripture does talk about him descending into Hades, where he made a proclamation, he preached to the spirits in prison, but that is such a troublesome and problematic passage of scripture, I've never been able to get a sufficient handle on it, so I just don't teach it with any kind of dogmatism. I'm sorry, I can't give you a better answer on that. I wish I had a better answer, but I just don't. Years ago, I had answers to all these things, but as I grew older, I discovered that a whole lot of things, you know, like, who was it Josh Billings says, I'd rather know a few things for certain than a whole lot of things that aren't so.

[33 : 14] And as we mature in Christ, I think someone has said, we learn more and more about less and less. And it helps us to focus on what really matters, and the rest is a lot of minutia.

I'm sorry, dear, that I can't give you a better answer. The reason I asked is because when you were reading in Acts 2, 31, what Peter is saying, he says about Christ, he was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh suffer decay.

We know his flesh didn't suffer decay because he rose, but it says that he didn't go to Hades and that he wasn't abandoned. So I just, I had never read that verse and thought of it that way.

Yeah, well, your question is indicative of a thinking fertile mind, and as your father, I deeply appreciate that. Okay, Joe up here has a comment or question.

Just a comment on the same question, inquiry. Jesus on the cross said to one of the thieves there, you will be in paradise with me today.

[34 : 23] Today, yeah. So I think, you know, he did Hades with two sections and two parts. It was hell and paradise. And if you were a believer, you went to paradise in Hades, and if you weren't, you went to hell in Hades.

And there is no paradise any longer because of his risen, we all go directly to heaven now. Yeah, this is predicated on Luke chapter 16 and the rich man and Lazarus, and scholars are still divided over whether that was an actual parable or whether it was an actual occasion.

I mean, Jesus was just using it as a parable, or was it something that was real that he was recording historically? And the jury is still out on that, too. There are good arguments on both sides. So I've learned to just, you know, not be dogmatic about some of these things because there are good theological brains on both sides of the issue.

And who else has a comment or question? Okay, Roger in the back. It was explained to me that Jesus went to paradise, explained what he had done on the cross, and the other side of whatever you call it, the bad people, heard the same message, and then he took captivity captive and took them to heaven with them souls.

[35 : 48] So paradise is empty. Yeah, okay. Well, that's one of the positions that I mentioned. I appreciate that. But that, too, has its problems, and we won't go into them, but it may very well be that.

I just can't be, like I said, I can't be dogmatic about it. Other thoughts or comments? Okay, Dan up here has a comment or question.

question. I've often wondered, Paul's credibility you were talking about, I've, I had a superintendent of schools once telling me a leper doesn't change the spots.

So here we have a person who was persecuting Christians and then turns around and does exactly the opposite, becomes an apostle, the greatest spokesman that Jesus Christ ever had.

What do you think or what is your opinion of his past as Saul of Tarsus had an impact on his effect?

[37 : 05] Oh, it had an immeasurable impact upon him as a person and upon all of the world, in fact. I have often described, I have often described Paul the apostle as having lived the second most important life that was ever lived.

And that was because of the first most important life that ever lived. And that was Jesus Christ. And you can search the scriptures and you will not find anyone that has so wonderfully and so carefully defined Jesus Christ and who he was and what he actually accomplished than Paul the apostle. And he didn't preach that right at the first. We will see next week when he goes to the synagogue while he is still there in Damascus.

And this man has come to the light of Christ no more than a couple of days earlier. And we are told that he goes into the synagogue, the Jewish synagogue, where, by the way, he would have gone to look for the people who had fled from the authorities in Jerusalem, 90 to 100 miles to the south, and he'd come all the way up to Damascus out of the country in Syria, a foreign country, because he had heard that there were Jews that took it on the lamb from Jerusalem and they were hiding out in Damascus.

And he went there for the express purpose of putting them in chains and bringing them back to Jerusalem and making them stand trial because they were regarded as a cancer that was growing on Judaism.

[39 : 00] And he accepted it as his responsibility to stamp it out. And that's exactly what he was doing. And after his conversion account and his three days of blindness and eating and drinking nothing, we are told that, what does he do?

He heads for the synagogue, probably the very first Friday evening, and he preaches a message that is the total opposite of what he had in mind when he came to Damascus.

Now he's going to be the chief promoter of Jesus of Nazareth instead of the chief persecutor. There has never been such a dramatic about face in the history of humankind as what was evidenced with Saul of Tarsus.

And he calls himself, he calls himself, less than the least of all apostles to me was this grace given that I should make Christ known, preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentiles.

And he says, I was before injurious and a persecutor. I did it ignorantly and in unbelief. And Paul had to live the rest of his life with having okayed and approved of the stoning of Stephen.

[40 : 24] And I wonder how many times he replayed that in his own mind, how wrong he was. Oh my. And this is, this is really something. And the stir that this caused, these people are going to be amazed.

And some, some of the Jews are going to find it so unbelievable that Saul of Tarsus has reversed himself that it's a trap.

he's just faking it. And all he wants to do is gather all of these believers in Jesus together so he can arrest a whole bunch. And that's exactly what they thought it was.

A great conspiracy. And there was only one man who believed him. And he turned out to be his partner. His name was Barnabas. We'll talk about him later. Well, anything else before we close?

I just opened so many different avenues here. Folks, this thing is big. I mean, this is really, really big. And I just so desperately want you to grasp these things and the implications thereof because it will shed more light on your story and your knowledge and your appreciation and understanding and your index appreciation for Jesus Christ is going to go sky high.

[41 : 40] And it will be the Apostle Paul that will put it there. Wow. Oh. I wish I had three hours for one of these sessions.

Would you stand, please? Our Father, we know there is so very much here that needs to be said, that needs to be appreciated and understood so we can see this magnificent program that you have put together for Jew and Gentile that was completely unimagined, unthought of, unheard of before you as the risen Christ reveal these truths to Paul.

We are so grateful for the contribution that you used him to make to make to this world. And thank you for sending him to Europe where many of our ancestors were exposed to the gospel, made it available for us generations later to be able to hear it and to believe.

We recognize that there are so many implications to this and so many things we don't understand but we want to and we look to you for future direction and enlightenment that only you can give.

Thank you for the presence of each one here today for what we expect to unearth in the future and be able to enjoy and appreciate in Christ's name we pray. Amen.