

# The Jewish Final Solution to the World's Problem - The Transition Truth Within the New Testament - Acts Part 5

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[ 0 : 00 ] As is sometimes the case, I do have some preliminary propositions that I would ask you to consider before we actually get to our text in the Acts of the Apostles and the further consideration of the transition that is involved.

This is very, very key material. I will move through this as rapidly as I can with the intent of having a Q&A; at the conclusion. I can't promise you that we'll do that, but that's my intent as of now.

So let's get underway with these particular clarifications at the outset, if we may. From the outset of this special series that we have titled, The Jewish Solution to the World's Problem, we have stressed the strategic nature of the people of Israel and the plan and program of God.

We will continue in this vein until we have dealt with what the Jewish revelator, John, while exiled on the Isle of Patmos, reveals as the Second Coming.

And it is, of course, the personification of the solution to the world's problem, namely Jesus of Nazareth, crucified, risen from the dead, ascended into glory, and Redeemer of mankind.

[ 1 : 14 ] We have already noted, at least briefly, how that the entirety of what we call the Old Testament is so thoroughly Jewish.

There is little or no dispute about that. The prominence of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their twelve sons, comprising the nation of Israel, is patently obvious even to a superficial observer.

Further, we have noted that despite an interruption of the 400 years between the Old and New Testament, the emphasis upon things Jewish persists, and is the unmistakable focus of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

These Gospels are so very Jewish in every way that Gentiles, who do appear occasionally in those Gospels, are merely incidental.

Nothing has changed as we enter the Acts of the Apostles. All things Jewish remain very much in place. The prominence given to Israel on the Feast of Pentecost in Acts 2 is unmistakable.

[ 2 : 32 ] This was, after all, a regularly scheduled annual event in the Jewish calendar. But, this particular day of Pentecost would be decidedly different from the hundreds that preceded it on their annual dates.

This Pentecost, in Acts 2, is identified by the Apostle Peter as being in reference to what the prophet Joel was referring to.

This was not, as is traditionally taught, the birthday of the Christian Church. It was, in fact, the beginning of a promise being fulfilled by God to his chosen people as revealed by the prophet Joel hundreds of years earlier.

Peter reminded his exclusively Jewish audience there attending an exclusively Jewish celebration in an exclusively Jewish temple that God was now prepared to make good on his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

3,000 responded. Peter says, It is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ that is accomplished, and Israel is now in the position to embrace this crucified and risen Christ whom they earlier rejected.

[ 4 : 03 ] What say you, sons of Abraham? Will you have this man, Jesus of Nazareth, to be your Lord and Messiah? 3,000 said yes.

The remainder said no. And, the Jewish people nationally still say no to this invitation. The process would be repeated one chapter later in Acts chapter 3.

The same invitation is extended by the same apostle Peter. And rather than the nation of Israel embracing Christ as their Lord, the Jewish establishment, headed by the high priest and chief priests, continued their rejection of Jesus and actually orchestrated persecution upon their fellow Jewish people who did ascribe loyalty to Christ.

The chief interrogator and persecutor of his own fellow Jews was a Pharisee by the name of Saul of Tarsus.

In their stubbornness and unbelief, it became apparent that the official position of Israel was not to change. But God knew this full well in advance.

[ 5 : 29 ] It had always been God's intent for Israel to be a light, a spiritual light, to the Gentiles.

That is, an instrument to bring non-Jews into a relationship with God. a relationship that for them was never before enjoyed.

Ephesians 2 and 3 provide more insight on this and describe the forlorn condition of the Gentiles, pagans, heathen, outside of Christ.

It will be through Israel's rejection of their Messiah, not their acceptance, but their rejection of him that will bring Gentiles to faith.

In fact, God is going to provide an entirely never thought of concept to reach out to the Gentiles.

[ 6 : 30 ] Never lose sight of the fact that when the scriptures say that Jesus came unto his own, in John chapter 1, his own, is his own covenant people, Israel.

They rejected him. Jesus came to Israel, but he came for the whole world. God is going to now provide an entirely never thought of concept to reach out to the Gentiles.

It will be called a mystery, a secret, never before revealed, that will actually marry Jew and Gentile together into a whole new organism previously not existing called the spiritual body of Christ.

So revealed in Ephesians and Colossians in particular. The likelihood of Jew and Gentile in anything together was extremely unlikely, if not even impossible.

Yet, this was what God had planned all along. And now, he is using Peter, the chief spokesman of the apostles, to bring it to pass.

[ 7 : 58 ] we introduced this concept involving Cornelius in Acts chapter 10. And I would encourage you to turn to that portion now, if you would, please.

Acts of the apostles chapter 10. This great sheet that is let down from heaven that we considered in our last session together so utterly confused Peter.

And it is the key. This is a very dramatic vision that God provided for Peter. And it is going to be so confusing and so confounding to Peter.

He just doesn't get it. And God repeats the process with this sheet three times before Peter is actually willing to comply.

He just can't believe that the message is what it is in this sheet let down from heaven. And Peter is struggling and wrestling within himself saying, this can't be.

[ 9 : 01 ] This is crazy. This can't be happening. This can't be what it means. But it was. This sheet in a vision, remember, this was not a literal thing.

This was a vision that God was providing for Peter. He was seeing it and it was very real to him as much as you and I are real to each other.

This is what Peter was seeing. This sheet contained all kinds of animals. Clean and unclean. Clean meant acceptable for sacrificial offering and acceptable for Jewish consumption in their kosher diet. But among the clean animals were the unclean.

Animals that could not be offered in sacrifice to Jehovah and animals that could not be consumed in the Jewish kosher diet. Bottom line for all of that is when Peter was told, rise, kill and eat, Peter said, well, no way, nothing doing.

[ 10 : 18 ] I wouldn't consider that for a moment. I've never eaten anything unclean. How dare you? I'm a Jew, remember? We're under certain requirements, dietary regulations.

I couldn't do that. And the voice came to Peter, that which God hath cleansed, call thou not common or unclean.

And if you do not see this aspect of it, then you miss the whole picture. This is not about animals.

The animals are merely given to illustrate the point, because the distinction between clean and unclean animals was very, very clear.

this was not about animals. This was about people. And the people are Jews and Gentiles. The animals that Peter saw in that vision, the clean animals represent the Jew.

The unclean animals represent the Gentiles. They were the dogs. Very often, that's how they referred to Gentiles, as dogs. And why did they call them dogs?

[ 11 : 29 ] Well, one reason they called them dogs is because these Gentiles, they'll eat anything, just like a dog. And sometimes they referred to them as the uncircumcised.

Now, every Jew knew that when the male Jew was born, eight days of age, he was circumcised. And that was a sign, that was a permanent branding, a sign of the covenant that existed between that individual and God.

But Gentiles, they weren't circumcised. Probably most of them thought it was a rather barbaric practice to subject an eight-day old baby to an ordeal like that.

So, they were frequently just referred to as the uncircumcised. And you and I have no idea how much contempt the average Jew of this day had for the Gentile.

I shared with you before a frequent prayer that a Jew would recite in the morning when he said, Oh God, I thank thee that thou hast not made me a woman, a slave, or a Gentile.

[ 12 : 37 ] How's that for chutzpah? Arrogance. Sometimes, you know, Jewish people can excel at chutzpah. That's nerve, brass. They just, perhaps the greatest definition that I've ever heard came from a Jew as to an expression of real nerve, chutzpah, I guess you would call it, is the Jewish man who murdered his own mother and father, and then when he was brought to trial, he threw himself on the mercy of the court on the grounds that he was an orphan.

That's chutzpah. And the Jews do not have a corner on chutzpah because there is plenty of Gentile chutzpah out there also.

So we are dealing with something here in the Acts of the Apostles that is often overlooked, sometimes just not understood, but it is monumental in its significance.

Up until this time with Cornelius, this guy who is a Roman army officer, obviously praying for some information, and God sends Peter to him, and, well, as we concluded with chapter 10 in our last session, we noted that Peter had witnessed these Gentiles receiving the Spirit of God, and he administered water baptism to them, which of course was nothing more than John's baptism, with which everyone was familiar, and he saw no reason to withhold it because they had joined this happy band of new believers in Christ, even though they were not Jews, they were Gentiles, and Peter is just dumbfounded, because why would God be doing anything with Gentiles?

He cares only about Jews, he doesn't care anything about Gentiles, right? No, you're wrong, Peter, God cares about everybody, and God's intent from the beginning was to provide something for everybody, and when the voice in the vision said that which God hath cleansed, call thou not common or unclean, what that is referring to, I am confident, is the fact that Jesus Christ died for everybody, no exceptions, Gentiles, as well as Jews, and in that, he provided a redemptive feature for the entirety of mankind.

[ 15 : 21 ] I've tried to make it clear in the past, this does not mean everybody is saved, but it does mean because Christ died for the sins of the entire world, there being no exceptions, everybody is savable.

No one is beyond the grace of God because Jesus Christ has paid the price for them, but in order for them to personalize that, in order for them to appropriate that truth, God requires repentance from the individual and faith toward Jesus Christ as your personal substitute.

That is your response to God's gracious act of redemption in Christ. That's how you personalize it. That's how the grace of God gets from him to you.

It is through this pipeline called faith, and faith is nothing more than your belief, your commitment, your entrusting of yourself to the person of Jesus Christ.

That's what personalizes the redemption that God made available. And that is an individual act. You do it with your will. Apparently, that was involved with Cornelius, and it's really interesting here because he tells them that when Cornelius comes, when Cornelius sends for Peter, and when he comes, he will tell you words.

[ 16 : 48 ] He will give you information by which you may be saved, delivered, rescued, born again, regenerated, however you wish to put it.

That was the information that Cornelius was lacking. That's what he was praying about. I suspect that's what he was praying about. And the angel said, you send for Peter, he's right up the coast, he's in Caesarea.

This was about 40 to 50 miles north from Joppa. And they had to go up to Caesarea, or from Caesarea down to Joppa to find Peter, bring him back up to Caesarea.

It's about 100 miles round trip. And when he gets here, he will tell you everything you need to know. And nobody is more surprised about this whole thing than Peter.

And we read at the conclusion of verse 28, that he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and they, that is, Cornelius and his friends, asked him to stay on for a few days.

[17:56] My, you can just imagine what those conversations were like. They had all kinds of questions for Peter. I mean, after all, here is someone who had spent three to three and a half years with Jesus of Nazareth, and had seen him for almost six weeks after he was resurrected from the grave, can you imagine the questions that they would have?

My, that must have been a time. Now I want you to keep right on going, ignore the chapter divisions, let's not disturb the continuity, slip right into chapter 11. Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. Wait a minute, what's that? Why would they receive the word of God? Why would it even be made available to them? But word got back to them, and we read in verse 2, that when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised, who were they?

They were fellow Jews. They were fellow Jews. Those who were circumcised took issue with him. Peter, say it isn't so.

Do you know what we've been hearing about you? Why, we can't believe it that you would do a thing like that. Saying, you went to uncircumcised men, and ate with them.

[19:37] Surely, you wouldn't do such a thing as that. This is just an ugly rumor and has no truth to it at all. Right, Peter? Tell us that there's no truth to it. And Peter said, well, he began speaking and proceeded to explain to them in orderly sequence, saying, hey, let me tell you what happened.

I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain object coming down like a great sheet, lowered by four corners from the sky, and it came right down to me.

And when I had fixed my gaze upon it, and was observing it, I saw the four-footed animals of the earth, and the wild beasts, and crawling creatures, and the birds of the air, must have been a veritable zoo that he saw there.

And I also heard a voice saying to me, rise, Peter, kill and eat. But I said, by no means, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth.

But a voice from heaven answered a second time, what God has cleansed, no longer considered unholy. Peter said, and this happened three times, and everything was drawn back up into the sky.

[21:01] And behold, at that moment, three men, these were the three men that Cornelius had sent, three men appeared before the house in which we were staying, having been sent to me from Caesarea, and the Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings, and these six brethren also went with me, and we entered the man's house.

I can just see Peter standing there, kind of on the carpet before this inquisition, and they're trying to figure out what's going on here, and Peter has got three of the fellows who went with him on this side, and three of the fellows who went with him on this side, and he's saying, these guys were all with me, and they're all, yeah, yeah, we were there, we saw the whole thing, yeah, they're backing all of this up, and he reported to us how he, that is Cornelius, had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, send to Joppa, and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here, and he, Peter, shall speak words to you, by which you will be saved, you, and all your household, assuming, of course, that they believe too, and Peter says, and as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as he did upon us, at the beginning, now I want to make a really, really important point, what is the beginning that he's talking about here, Pentecost, and the miraculous manifestation of languages spoken of that had never been learned, that's what he's talking about when he says, the Spirit fell on them, just as he did upon us, at the beginning, and what did they do on the day of Pentecost, those who received the Spirit of God, were then water baptized in the name of Jesus, for the repentance and remission of sins, that's the same message that John the Baptist had been preaching, that's why Peter followed up with the same procedure for these Gentiles, here at the household of Cornelius, and what you perhaps do not understand is, the day of

Pentecost, at the beginning here, that Peter is talking about, was a full eight to ten years previous. Now, in case anybody is saying, well, so what? Well, this is a huge so what? Do you realize that during those eight to ten years, from Pentecost up to this present time, and the admission of a

Gentile?

[ 24 : 15 ] Everything was Jewish? Does that not make the case and put a stamp upon it? Jewish, Jewish, Jewish, no Gentile involvement to speak of at all.

This is all Jewish. So, if you want to talk in terms of a church beginning on the day of Pentecost, the very most you can say is that this was some type of a Jewish assembly.

It was not the church which is the body of Christ that we know of today. And the word church literally means assembly, a gathered out number for any particular purpose.

So, we cannot assign what is known today as our Christian church or the church which is the body of Christ and say that it began on the day of Pentecost, despite the fact that almost everywhere you go, you will hear everybody knows the church began on Pentecost.

Well, not this church, which is the body of Christ. It is Jew and Gentile together. That's the dynamic of the body of Christ. It is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free, male nor female.

[ 25 : 23 ] You are all children of God by faith in Jesus Christ and has nothing to do with skin color, language, anything else. If you have a faith in Jesus Christ, you are a member of that body. That would not and could not begin until it was made up of Jew and Gentile.

And so far, all we've got are Jews. so I remembered the word of the Lord, how he used to say, John, that is John the Baptist, baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. And this too is different. We need to note not only who the objects of baptism are, but who the baptizer is. And in the case of Pentecost and in the case of Cornelius, it was they were being baptized by the Holy Spirit.

They received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was baptizing by the Holy Spirit. That's made quite clear. And he even prophesied that.

But when you come to the concept that is the body of Christ, Jesus is not the one doing the baptizing. it is the Spirit of God baptizing into the body of Christ.

[ 26 : 49 ] For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body. It is the Spirit who is the agent, and we are baptized into the person of Christ. So we become one in union with him.

There's a distinction there. And the difference counts. The difference is there because it is intended to be made. And then Peter's conclusion is this.

If God therefore gave to them, that is to the Gentiles, Cornelius and his family, the same gift as he gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, Peter says, who was I that I could stand in God's way?

What? Pray tell me. What did you guys want me to do? You want me to tell God he can't do that? I couldn't do that. This was God's decision. It was his doing.

It was a puzzle to me, but all I could do was go along with it. I didn't understand what was happening. And look at verse 18. And when they heard this, they quieted down.

[ 27 : 58 ] You know, we could say they backed off. They stopped really coming after Peter and blaming Peter. Now they've got an explanation, and it makes sense. and they are struggling with it.

They are not fully compliant themselves, and I'll show you why. The conclusion is, well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.

Well, who would have thought? can you imagine that? God has granted to Gentiles? What is going on?

What is happening here anyway? This has never been done. God's never done anything like this. We have never been here before. We don't know how to handle this or what to make of it.

It is amazing. You talk about slow learners. learners, hey, to some degree we're all cursed with a little slow learning. I've certainly logged my share of slow learning in the past.

[ 29 : 09 ] Sometimes I've even gotten accustomed to it. But look at verse 19. So then, those who were scattered because of the persecution, and this is talking about Jews who had embraced Jesus as their Messiah, the heat was on.

And they were being persecuted, and they were being persecuted by fellow Jews. That arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, or what are those places?

Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. they're all 99% Gentile. This is pagan territory.

This is out of the land of Israel. These are Gentiles. And because of the scattering and persecution, the Jews fled Israel for their life.

and they went to different locations all throughout the Mediterranean world, settled in there, started life all over again, anew. And some of them had gone to Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch.

[ 30 : 38 ] So, look at what the text says. They were speaking the word to no one except the Jews alone.

what is that about? I mean, we've already seen the door of opportunity opened to Gentiles. And Cornelius and his family were among the first. But now, when these go out with the message proclaiming, one would think they say, hey, everybody, this is great. We're going not just to Jews, we're going to everybody. no, no, no, no. Proclaiming the word to Jews only.

May we suggest that some of these just didn't get it? Or, that maybe some of them thought, well, this thing with Cornelius, we don't know what's going on there, but that is purely an isolated incident, and that cannot be the pattern, and that cannot be the way things are, but it was the way things were going.

[ 31 : 45 ] Listen, this is a whole new order that is being birthed right before our eyes, and these didn't even realize it.

And let me tell you something. Two thousand years later, there are many among us called evangelicals who still don't realize it.

They've never picked up on it. They've never made the distinction. They've never seen the differences. They just try to throw it all together and make a mishmash of it, and it does not compute.

This is groundbreaking stuff. It was for me when I saw it. The Bible started coming alive and started fitting like it never fit before when I came to see this.

I'm excited to share it with you. And there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.

[ 33 : 04 ] And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. and the news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem.

And they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. Hey, Barnabas, we've been hearing some reports that are really, really, wow.

You need to go up there and get the scoop on this and find out just exactly what's going on, because we're getting all kinds of confusing signals about Gentiles. And we don't know what to make of it.

And Peter was involved. So we read, and when he had come, that is, when Barnabas had come, and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them, all with resolute heart, to remain true to the Lord.

For he was a good man, Barnabas, and full of the Holy Spirit and the faith, and considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. And verse 25 is really easy to overlook, but it's very important.

[ 34 : 15 ] And he, Barnabas, left for Tarsus, to look for Saul. Why would he be looking for Saul?

Saul had already been designated as the apostle to whom? The Gentiles. Barnabas, is saying, hey, this is right down Saul's alley.

He's got to get in on this. This is something. I'm not real sure just what's happening here, but I know that Saul of Tarsus needs to be right in the thick of it.

And precisely, that's what's going to happen. He found him, he brought him to Antioch, and it came about that for an entire year, they met with the church, and taught considerable numbers, and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

What we are reading now, be reminded please, is about ten years after the day of Pentecost.

[ 35 : 29 ] Christ. So, what has that first decade consisted of all the way from the crucifixion up to this point? What has it consisted of? Exclusively Jewish.

You really need to understand that. And it's not a case that's difficult to make. I think it becomes very, very obvious. Now, we are arriving here, chapter 12, Peter is going to be arrested, miraculously delivered, and you know something?

Peter, chief spokesman of the twelve, groundbreaker for Cornelius, he's going to fade away. He's going to be off the scene.

And someone else is coming to the fore. And that will be Saul of Tarsus, who will be Paul the apostle to the Gentiles.



But the 12 got too antsy and excited and they ran ahead of the Lord and they went ahead and selected Matthias and they should have waited and God would have plugged in Paul. That is totally erroneous.

Totally erroneous. because the 12, including Matthias who replaced Judas, were geared specifically to the nation of Israel. And Paul, let me put it gently, Paul, the Apostle Paul, was a real oddball.

[ 42 : 59 ] Nothing else you could call him. He calls himself one born out of due time. And he had to fight for his apostleship almost everywhere he went because they didn't think that he was one of the original 12.

And he wasn't. And he never claimed to be. In fact, he wasn't even qualified to be one of the original 12. He was lacking credentials. But he had a different set of credentials.

And those were the ones that God was interested in. And the contrast is dramatic. We'll explain that later. Was there another question or comment? Joe? the church is mentioned in verse 22.

It's referring to an assembly of believers, the church of circumcision. Sure. And it's just an ekklesia. That's the word in the Greek, the ekklesia.

And it is translated church. And it's even used in reference to the whole nation of Israel in the Old Testament. It's called the church in the wilderness. And actually what it was was an assembly in the wilderness and it was the Jewish people.

[ 44 : 05 ] And in Acts chapter 19, there is a mob that is virtually on the verge of rioting in Acts 19. And guess what they're called?

They're called a church. Well, all that does is give you an idea of the meaning of the word. But when we use the word church, we almost always think of the same thing. And yet, it's a term that has to be determined by its context.

This was a mob rule that was threatening to take over things and they were referred to as a church, an ecclesia, an assembly. Is there another comment or question before? John had one here.

This will be our last. first. When the sheet was lowered three times and the three men showed up, it really wasn't about what he ate, but it was about the three men, right?

I mean, if I understand it right. Well, it had nothing to do with food. The animals were just an illustration. And the point that was really being made here was that he's using clean and unclean animals to demonstrate that God has broken down the barrier between Jew and Gentile.

[ 45 : 14 ] And what those animals in that sheet really depicted was the distinction between Jew and Gentile. And that was just earth breaking. I mean, shattering. I get excited about this stuff.

I wish we had another hour because I know what I want to give you and yet I can't expect you to sit there and listen to it. But anyway, thank you for your kind attention.

Would you stand please and we'll be dismissed. Father, we are so grateful for what is clearly laid out in Scripture here and we need to offer some kind of an apology for not really paying closer attention to the simple things that the truth, that the text is telling us.

And we believe that you've revealed this information so that we can not only be enlightened by it, but be blessed by it. and see this incredible thing you've put together called the drama of redemption and how you choose to apply it.

And we are so grateful that we are recipients of that redemption. And dear friend, if you are here this morning and for whatever reason you've never personalized the work of Jesus Christ on your own behalf, you're invited to do that even now.

[ 46 : 36 ] and all that is required is one savior and one sinner who's willing to be honest and acknowledge that you're just like all the rest of us.

You're in need, you're flawed, you're imperfect, you're failing, just like we are. And this is why Jesus died for us.

Because we could never make it on our own. And if you, in this closing moment, if you would be willing to say right where you are, Lord Jesus, there's a lot about this I don't understand.

But I understand enough to know that I'm in need and you are the only one that can supply that need. And I want to put my faith and trust in you, whatever that involves.

I want you to be my savior and I want to acknowledge my sin and the fact that you died for my sin because you love me so much. Enable me to understand what I need to know and use it to provide for me the freedom and the enjoyment of the forgiveness of sin.

[ 47 : 49 ] Thank you for being the savior you are. And thank you for being my savior. In Christ's name. Amen.