

# The Jewish Final Solution to the World's Problem - Peter's Message / Israel's Response Part 4

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[ 0 : 00 ] to turn to the 13th chapter of Luke. And we'll be looking at the first nine verses of Luke 13.

Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

And Jesus said to them, Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate?

I tell you, no. But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or do you suppose that those 18 on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?

I tell you, no. But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. And he began telling this parable.

[ 1 : 21 ] A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard. And he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any.

And he said to the vineyard keeper, Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any.

Cut it down. Why does it even use up the ground? And he answered and said to him, Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer.

And if it bears fruit next year, fine. But if not, cut it down. This is one of, I believe, what were 33 different parables that our Lord gave during his earthly ministry.

Actually, he may have given a whole lot more than that, but we have only 33 of them, I think, actually recorded in Scripture. And when you come to the Bible, as you are reading through, you really need to learn, if you haven't learned it already, you need to learn to ask questions of the Bible, because therein you will find some of the greatest information.

[ 2 : 50 ] And a very pertinent question to ask in connection with any and all of the parables given by our Lord is this. Why did Jesus give this parable?

Why did he give this parable at this time? Why did he give this parable to this audience? And I dare say you will not find any greater aid in being able to interpret the parable than in asking and answering those questions, because I can assure you that our Lord never went about just spouting random parables, just because he liked to talk in parables and he just gave them out wherever for no particular occasion, kind of willy-nilly.

Not so. Our Lord's parables were always pointed. There was always something that he was getting at. And he used the parable as a means of illustrating or driving home the truth he was talking about.

And here in the midst of this situation that we have, developing in Luke chapter 13, the text says, Now on the same occasion, and of course you have to ignore the chapter division here, and back up a little bit, which we will not take time to do because the essence of what we want to address is before us, but it was at this same setting, when Jesus was in the same place with the same audience, that this subject came up.

There were some present who reported to him. In other words, they came up to Jesus and gave him some of the latest news. And it had to deal with the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

[ 4 : 41 ] This was like an atrocity. It was like carnage. It was like a massacre. This involved a number of Jewish individuals who were in the temple area conducting the ritualistic business of the Mosaic Law.

And they were beset by an armed group of Roman soldiers who, for whatever reason, attacked them. Apparently they thought there was some kind of an insurrection brewing, or they were going to head something off, or there had been some kind of an offense committed.

And in the midst of the animal blood that was available there, which the Jewish priests had shed in connection with the sacrifice of the animals, the soldiers of Rome added Jewish blood to the animal blood.

And no doubt it flowed freely there upon the cobblestones on the base of the Temple Mount in that particular area. And the phrase says that Pilate had mingled those Galileans' blood with those sacrifices.

And he answered, this is Jesus' response to it, He answered and said to them, Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate?

[ 6 : 06 ] In other words, it's almost as if he's saying, Do you think that somehow God had it in for these particular individuals because of the great amount of their sin that he saw fit to make them available for their blood to be shed in this manner?

And of course the answer is negative. And the point that Jesus is getting at, which is very, very important, which is one of the heartbeat situations of the whole Bible, is the subject of repentance.

And he is here laying the groundwork for it, because he is going to call those who are hearing this parable to repentance. And let me just inject something here, if I may.

Repentance always has to do with facing an issue where you discover you are wrong. It could be about anything.

About anything. It doesn't even have to be necessarily a moral issue. But you have gotten additional information that causes you to recognize that the position you held previously about whatever it is was wrong.

[ 7 : 16 ] It's just wrong. So you need to repent. You need to change your mind. And the change of mind always comes about as a result of added information.

It is data that you didn't have before or didn't know before. And this new data is what convinces you that you've been wrong all along about this thing. So you need to reverse yourself.

That's the point that he's making here. This is going to be the principle message delivered to the nation of Israel. Which message in the main they will reject.

The first one who will come upon the scene with this message is John the baptizer. And he preaches, repent to the nation of Israel.

These are all Jewish people. Repent. And the reason you should repent is because the kingdom of heaven is at hand. You need to prepare yourself morally and spiritually for the coming of the king.

[ 8 : 19 ] Because it is right around the corner. You need Israel. You need to get your act together. Because it certainly wasn't together when John began preaching. And as a result, many did.

Many did repent of their sin. And many were baptized by John. But the really important point that you've got to note here, never lose sight of, is who wasn't baptized by John.

And we are told that it was the chief priests, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, who rejected the counsel of God against themselves, not being baptized of John.

They rejected John. Rejected John's message, which was repent. Their attitude, no doubt, was, Who are you telling to repent? Do you know who we are?

We are the people with all the right answers. We have no need of repentance. And they rejected John. And when Jesus came preaching, what's going to be his message?

[ 9 : 35 ] Identical. Same thing. He will be preaching the same message that John the Baptist preached. And he commissioned his twelve to go forth in teams of two and preach the same message all over the land of Israel.

Repent. And the reason you should is because God's kingdom is at hand. It's right around the corner. One gets the impression that the realization of this kingdom was all contingent upon the nation of Israel repenting.

And that is precisely the point that needs to be made. But they didn't. Common people heard him gladly. Perhaps thousands of Israelis repented.

But a greater number did not. And chiefest of all, the shakers and movers, the hoi polloi, the ones who were actually in charge of Israel, religiously, ceremonially, or the other way, rejected the counsel of John, rejected Jesus as the Messiah, refused to repent, and, in fact, were instrumental in the crucifixion of our Lord.

This is very, very key to keep in mind. It is absolutely essential. So he goes on to say, unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or do you suppose that those 18 on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were the worst culprits and all the men who live in Jerusalem?

[ 11 : 13 ] And what he's talking about here is a well-known construction accident that happened, probably in connection with some scaffolding collapsing, because they build up the scaffolding so as to be able to get the elevation and complete the work that they want to.

And there was a tragic accident. Something gave way. Something broke. 18 men were killed. And Jesus asked the question, do you suppose that those 18 were somehow especially guilty and especially culpable, and they were somehow singled out for death at that site?

Of course not. That wasn't the issue at all. And everyone realized, as does our Lord in this text and all the people around them, that we live in a cause and effect world, and that God does not suspend the law of cause and effect, but he rather allows it to run its course, sometimes he intervenes and interrupts the principle of cause and effect.

And when he does, it's very noticeable, because it's a miracle. And only God can bring that about. But more often than not, a miracle is not forthcoming.

And when something that is suspended up and holding 18 men up to a certain elevation and gives way, they fall to the ground, and you've got 18 fatalities, and who knows how many more were injured.

[ 12 : 46 ] And verse 5, the conclusion is, I tell you no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. And what he is saying is this. Every single human being is a candidate.

For repentance. Because to begin with, we're born wrong. So from the very get-go, just by being born, we are a candidate for repentance.

And repentance has to be realized before the new birth or salvation can take place. So repentance is always in order. And we almost always think of repentance in terms of something religious, having to do with the faith.

And more often than not, it is, especially the way we use it. And it is usage that has pretty much limited to the religious use. But really, in actuality, the word repent, metanoia, as you know from times past, simply means through the mind.

It is a mental process. It is, it is receiving information, evaluating the information, you mull it over, you think about it, you process the information, and you reach a conclusion based on the information you've gotten.

[ 14 : 05 ] It may be a conclusion that is identical to the one you've always held. in which case, you don't do anything about it. You just affirm it.

It may be completely contrary to what you've believed before. And now you discover for the first time, you know what? I've been wrong all along about this.

I've been wrong all along. And a lot of people have this kind of a reasoning process when they come to faith in Christ, and they hear the gospel and understand it for the first time.

I remember lots of people that told me to whom I've had opportunity to present the gospel, I've never thought of it that way. I've never heard it that way. That's not what I've always believed.

Well, you have to evaluate. Is it true? Is it worthy of changing your belief about it? Because that's what repentance is. You reverse yourself. And as regards the person of Jesus Christ, that was Peter's message on the day of Pentecost, when they actually agreed that they were culpable in crucifying the Messiah, the one for whom we as a nation have waited for 4,000 years.

[ 15 : 23 ] And when he came, we crucified him. And the audience to whom Peter was speaking on the day of Pentecost, I'm sure these people looked at each other with their mouths open and said, he's right.

He's right. That's exactly what we did. And we can't, we can't do anything about it now. We're sorry we did it. But there's nothing we can do about it now.

What shall we do? And Peter said, you've got to repent. You've got to change. You've got to acknowledge and admit you were wrong.

Are you big enough to do that? This is the difficult part of the gospel. The easy part is believing on Christ. The difficult part is coming to grips with the reality that you need to because you are deficient in and of yourself.

That's the hard part. The easy part is applying the remedy. So, what this is all about is repentance. And he says, certain man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard and he came looking for fruit on it.

[ 16 : 41 ] Did not find it. Now, isn't that a rather logical thing to be doing? You plant a fig tree, you expect the thing to produce figs. And he came to it and looked for figs and nothing.

So, that went on for three years. For three years I've come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down.

Why does it even use up the ground? It's worthless. Now, ask yourself the question. Let me ask it for you. Why did Jesus give this parable?

What's this fig tree thing got to do with anything? Did he just pull this out of the blue? I have a cute little story I'd like to tell you about. No, no, no, no. There was something that precipitated this.

There was a reason why he is telling this story at this time. And three years. Let it alone, sir.

[ 17 : 44 ] For this year, too. until I dig around it and put in fertilizer. And if it bears fruit next year, good.

But if not, then we'll cut it down. Let's give it one more chance. I cannot escape what I think are obvious implications here. In other passages of Scripture, Israel is likened to a tree or a fig tree that the Lord has planted in his garden.

It's an Old Testament kind of thing. But here, it is carried over. And it is no coincidence that Jesus ministered as the Son of God, Son of Man to the nation of Israel for approximately three years.

Not four, not two, three years. That's significant. Now, the parable, the parable isn't real. The parable is just made up. Jesus is just making up the story about this scene regarding this fig tree.

That's the made up part. But the part that isn't made up is, of course, what this fig tree represents. And when you look at the three years or three years plus that our Lord ministered to Israel and then you extend that another year, you come very closely to Acts chapter seven.

[ 19 : 15 ] Acts chapter seven chronologically is approximately one year as best we can determine following the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

So, it is almost, if we are reading this correctly, and could I be wrong about this? Oh, absolutely. I could be wrong about a whole lot of things. But all I'm saying is, this really seems to fit the narrative.

And what Jesus is saying is, despite the fact that Israel will have been instrumental in rejecting me and demanding my death, the opportunity for them to repent is going to be extended an additional year.

They're going to get a reprieve. And if my understanding of this is correct, that extends up to Acts chapter seven with the stoning of Stephen.

And that's something that we must consider. Before we leave the text, however, I want to suggest the remedy is let it alone, sir, for this year too until I dig around it, that is, aerate it, give it air, and put in fertilizer.

[ 20 : 45 ] I cannot escape the notion, what would the ordinary fertilizer be? Well, ordinarily, it would be dung, animal dung. That's what they would use for fertilizer.

In this particular case, and I don't know that I'm carrying the analogy too far, but there is going to be something that is going to fertilize this tree, and I think it's nothing but the blood and death of Christ.

That fertilizer will be an additional incentive for this nation to come to grips with who Jesus really is. And whereas many of the Jews were convinced that Jesus couldn't possibly have been the Messiah because God would never allow the one he sends to be crucified, yet at the same time, when you add to the crucifixion the resurrection, that changes everything.

So, let's go to that passage, if we may, in Acts chapter 7, and we'll be spending just a few moments here, and I really would like to have a Q&A; this morning.

I'm a little reluctant to do that because I walked right out of the house and forgot my hearing aids, but we've got a microphone back there, so I should be able to hear you anyway. After Peter had delivered his message on the day of Pentecost, he had opportunity to virtually reconnect with the audience and deliver a similar message in Acts chapter 3, and that was in connection with the man who was healed, who had never walked the day in his life, he was born lame from his mother's womb, he was over 40 years of age, and he was healed by Peter and John, miraculously gathered a huge crowd, and Peter and John preached to them the same message that was preached on the day of Pentecost, to an exclusively Jewish audience.

[ 22 : 42 ] How do I know they were all Jews? Well, one reason I know is because Gentiles were not even allowed there under penalty of death. This was strictly Jewish territory in connection with the Jewish feast, and that which followed, so it would have been completely inappropriate for anyone other than Jews to have even been present.

Then, in Acts chapter 4, we see that he has a run-in, Peter and John have a run-in with the authorities again, and by the way, let me inject this, if I may, because when we're talking about authority in Israel, you need to understand the chain of command here.

The absolute ultimate authority from a human standpoint, in the nation of Israel, during the time of our Lord's ministry, and after for several years, was the Roman government.

They were in charge, and the Jews were able to carry out only those privileges that Rome would allow them to. So, the leadership of Israel, which consisted of the high priests, the Sadducees, the chief shakers and movers, they were actually in cooperation with the Romans.

For the simple reason that they saw it in their best interest not to oppose the Romans. You go along to get along. And there were a lot of things about Rome that the ruling class of Israel hated with a passion.

[ 24 : 11 ] But, nonetheless, they knew that they were powerless against them. And if Rome wanted to, they could just easily wipe them out. So, they cooperated to the extent that they had to.

And all the while, they hated the Romans for being there. But, at the same time, they cooperated with the Romans because it was in their best interest to do so.

And the Romans allowed the chief priests and the Sadducees, etc., allowed them to remain in a position of authority, and religious authority at least, over the people.

Because they recognized that if they gave them a certain amount of latitude and a certain amount of authority, they would be easier to govern and less likely to rebel.

So, it was kind of a cooperative. Some of you are old enough to remember. Many of you aren't. the Vichy government in France. These were Frenchmen, born and reared in France.

[ 25 : 14 ] And many of them were in positions of government control and authority in France in 1940, I think 1940 or 41, something like that.

Hitler had already conquered the Sudeten land and was gobbling up things. And the next thing you know, Nazis are marching into Paris.

And the French government collapsed, the nation collapsed without even firing a shot. And immediately, the Germans put into control and into positions of authority, French men, but who would be loyal to and take orders from the Nazis.

How did that make the rest of France feel? They hated them with a passion. Called them turncoats, traitors, you sold us out, and all the rest of it.

And they were right. It was called the Vichy government, V-I-C-H-Y. The Vichy government. And the people of France hated them and they aroused themselves to start a movement that became known as the French underground and they sabotaged the Nazis and they did everything they could to oppose them.

[ 26 : 38 ] You've got a similar kind of situation here. Of course, there are a lot of dissimilarities, but by and large, the Jews are using, the Romans are using the Jews who are in a position of religious authority and they are using them as puppets, kind of like a puppet government and they went along with being used because they had a cushy job, responsibilities, they maintained their perks and benefits and all the rest, and all we have to do is just play like we're going along with Rome, even though we hate them, we'll have to do what they say because our survival depends on.

And with this government, with the Jewish government, there was no such thing as church and state separation.

The religious was the political, the political was the religious. In some regards, it was almost similar to what you have in Islam today, where the Islamic religion prevails in a given country.

You will not have a secular state that exercises political authority while the Muslims are acknowledging and exercising religious authority, and the two are different.

They are not different. They are together. And it is the imams, for instance, in Iran that are both the political and the religious head. So there is no distinction.

[ 28 : 12 ] And you have to keep that in mind because that's the kind of situation that existed in Israel. Even though there was a king on the throne who exercised a certain amount of political authority, you could not separate the religious from the political.

And this, of course, was something that Americans detested. And when our nation was founded with our Constitution, we made sure that we were going to have a separation between the church and the state, not like it was in England, where the church was the state and the state was the church.

church. So we still enjoy that to this day, and it remains highly controversial. So what we've got here is a situation that is developing in connection with the proclamation of the gospel and the opposition that these are going to receive for having done so.

And in chapter four, Peter and John are arrested. And Peter's response in verse nine is, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, be it known to you all, to all the people of Israel, by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by this name, this man stands here before you whole.

And he delivers that powerful message, capsulated with verse 12, there's salvation and no one else, no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.

[ 29 : 42 ] And what is their response to this? Well, they couldn't answer them publicly, so they ordered Peter and John and the other apostles, you step over there, step aside, and we're going to convene a meeting and we're going to talk about this situation, you stay right where you are, we're going to discuss this.

So, we are told in verse 15, they ordered them to go aside out of the council, and they began to confer with one another.

And here's how the conversation went in their group. What are we going to do with these guys? The fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, we cannot deny it.

We can't say there's nothing to it because everybody already knows better. Too many people have seen and witnessed this man healed, jumping up and down, walking about. We can't say it never happened.

How are we going to explain it? We can't. But I'll tell you what we can do. This thing is starting to grow like a cancer.

[ 30 : 57 ] And we've got to stop it cold right now. So let's call them back in. And so that it doesn't spread any further, let us warn them. We'll try to intimidate them into silence.

We'll threaten them and we'll say, terrible things are going to happen to you if you don't shut up, stop this preaching. So they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

And Peter said, Peter and John answered, whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God.

That's something you'll have to decide. But we've already made up our mind and it is this. We have to do what God tells us, even if it's contrary to what you tell us.

Because there is an authority that transcends your authority and that's the one that we are responsive to. You know, this is the same kind of situation that existed in Nazi Germany in connection with the Nuremberg trials.

[ 32 : 08 ] Those Nazis that were put on trial for their atrocities and their involvement in the prison camps and their brutality and everything, they had one defense. Only one. The only one anybody could muster.

It's the only one that any defense attorney would offer on their behalf. And that was this. They were simply following orders. That's all they were doing. How can you fault these men of military rank for doing the very thing that the military is supposed to be best known for of all?

And that is following orders. That's all they were doing. Following orders. How can you fault them for that? And the consensus of the judges at the Nuremberg trial was maybe they were following orders, but they were following orders from the wrong source.

Now I don't know what would happen today, because then in 1946 there was at least an implicit reference to the idea that there is an authority that transcends human authority.

I'm not sure they would reach that conclusion today, given what's going on in our culture and in Europe. That might not be the best argument or the best answer.

[ 33 : 30 ] But at any rate, Peter and John says, listen, if it comes down to our being called on the carpet by God as opposed to being called on the carpet by you for not doing what we were told, we would much rather be called on your carpet than we would on his.

We're going to do what God tells us to do, and you'll just have to deal with it. And here is a difference, by the way, between being obedient and being submissive.

Christians have a responsibility to be disobedient to the powers that be. When they ask something of you that is contrary to what God requires of you, you are obligated to disobey.

there is a big difference between being disobedient and being submissive. You can disobey and still be submissive because in the disobedience you do not have to fight back, you do not have to retaliate, you submit to the authority, but you will not obey the authority.

Here we have a clear-cut example of this very thing. Peter and John, were not unsubmitive to the authority. They didn't fight them. They didn't try to run away and escape when they threatened to put them in jail.

[ 34 : 58 ] In fact, they did put them in jail. They weren't trying to break free. They weren't resisting authority. They complied. They submitted to the authority. We've got the same principle in the Old Testament with Daniel and with the three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

They were disobedient. They refused to render the worship to the king that was required. He said, we can't do that.

We won't do that. Well, then we'll put you in this fiery furnace. Well, then you'll just have to put us in the fiery furnace because we're not going to run from you. We're not going to try to escape the fiery furnace.

We're going to let you do with us whatever you want, but we will not obey what you ask us to do. We can't. we have a higher authority. We must be obedient to that.

This is the basis for peaceful resistance. This is the basis for non-violent resistance.



[ 36 : 01 ] You simply will not comply with what the authorities require, but you still submit to their authority. That is a valid distinction, and it is an important one, and it's one that you better keep in mind because you're going to need it.

Disobey, but be submissive. So they threatened them, and the threat after the prison is opened and they escape, they threaten them again, and in chapter 5, it is more rejection, more threatens.

Gamaliel enters the picture in chapter 5, they get together and they're going to, verse 29 of chapter 5 sums it up, Peter and the apostles answered and said, we must obey God rather than men, and verse 33, when they heard this, they were cut to the quick.

what that means is, it really got to them. They are livid with anger, and they were intending to slay them.

These men will not listen to reason. They will not listen to our reason, or our demands. We have threatened them, we have put them in jail, they will not comply, the only thing left to do is kill them.

[ 37 : 41 ] And that we will do. But, they've brought it upon themselves. It didn't have to be this way, if they would have only listened, so we'll kill them.

A certain Pharisee named Gamaliel stands up, and I'm not going to read the whole passage, but the essence of it is, Gamaliel says, you better really be careful what you do here, because even though we don't think these men are operating under orders from God, if they are, you will not be able to defeat it.

And if they aren't, it will fizzle out and come to nothing anyway. So my advice to you is, just take hands off. Because if this thing is from God, don't get me wrong, I don't think it is, I'm pretty sure that it isn't, but just in case, just a real long shot, that it is from God, you won't be able to stand against it if God is behind it.

And if God isn't behind it, it won't succeed anyway. So the best advice is to just back off and don't do anything. Just let things take their course. And they decided to do that.

I want you to notice verse 40. They took his advice and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them.

[ 39 : 09 ] That doesn't sound like he really took his advice. He said, let these men alone. Let them go. They just couldn't resist making this additional statement.

They flogged them. Now, when you flogged somebody in the Jewish economy and history, you gave them 13 lashes.

And the instrument that was traditionally used was like a whip. It had a handle on it about 12 inches long and extending from the handle were 13 separate strands of rawhide.

13 of them. And the rawhide had inserted into it, these strips of rawhide had inserted into it bits of metal and bone embedded in the rawhide strips.

And when you lash that across the man's back, you gave him these three strands, you gave him three lashes with one swing.

[ 40 : 33 ] And when you gave him 13, you given him 39 lashes, three times 13, each strand counting as a lash.

And 13 of those with the thing, having three in it would be the equivalent of 39 lashes. The law prescribed that you could not administer more than 40.

So when you gave him 13 lashes, you were giving him 39 and they stopped there. This was the flogging. This is the similar thing that Jesus underwent before he was crucified.

God. And then they released him after giving them his final orders. And they went on their way from the presence of the council rejoicing.

Can you imagine anybody rejoicing after having been beaten and lashed like this? This is not a time for rejoicing. This is a time for questioning and doubting God and saying, why did you let them do this to us?

[ 41 : 42 ] What did we do to deserve this? We're out here preaching and proclaiming this information that you've given us and this is the thanks we get for it and you let it happen.

Where were you when we needed you? Why did you let him do this to us? I suppose that might very well be the reaction of a lot of people today. Why does God permit evil kinds of things to happen to me when I certainly don't deserve it?

Where is God in my hour of need? No indication that such a thing even entered their minds. They are rejoicing. Rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for his name.

what an incredible attitude. Where did they get that kind of an attitude? What was it that made them react that way?

It was just one thing. Just one thing. They knew what they knew. And they knew it was true. And they were prepared to undergo whatever it takes.

[ 43 : 03 ] Doesn't make any difference. And if my life is taken from me in the process, so be it. That too is within God's prerogative.

And I'm not about to question it. This is a kind of commitment that is so rare but so necessary for today.

And you know what brings out this kind of thing in people? It's always extreme circumstances. circumstances. And we may very well be headed for some extreme circumstances.

These are the kind of things that produce these kind of people. Stand the test. Incredible. And every day in the temple from house to house they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Come over if you will to a couple of pages to chapter seven and with this we conclude because this to me seems to be the coup de grace for the nation of Israel. And I am not at all clear.

[ 44 : 06 ] I do not understand as well as I would like exactly what was God's cut off point for the nation of Israel and the beginning of what we know as the church, the body of Christ.

And I'm not prepared to give you an answer on that because I just don't know. I know there are a number of brethren in the grace movement who have defined it very closely and very emphatically and they're very definite that what we call the body of Christ began with the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

Others think that it began with the stoning of Stephen. Others think that it began in mid-Acts. Others think it began at the end of Acts. I don't know when it began.

All I know is this. Even after the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the opportunity for Israel to embrace Jesus as their Messiah was not withdrawn.

They still had that opportunity. That's why Peter preached what he did on the day of Pentecost. That's why he preached what he did in chapter three. That's why Stephen is preaching what he does here as he recounts the whole history of the nation of Israel, and he is extending to Israel once again a plea to repent.

[ 45 : 31 ] And I want you to notice, because this is very, very important, I want you to notice who his subjects are, who's in the audience when Stephen is preaching this message, giving a history lesson about the whole nation of Israel and God's faithfulness to Israel in it all, and bringing them right up to the point in time where their Messiah was crucified.

All of that is leading to one more grand rejection on the part of Israel, but the really important thing that sticks in my mind is that this audience was the Sanhedrin.

This audience was the council. Listen, the people who are going to stone Stephen to death, are not your ordinary people of Israel.

These are not the day laborers. These are the up and outers. These are the chief priests, the scribes, the Pharisees. These are the shakers and movers.

These are the decision makers for the nation of Israel in all matters of religion. This council represented the supreme body of the nation of Israel apart from, of course, the Romans and any of their influence.

[ 47 : 00 ] This is strictly a Jewish thing. And I cannot escape the idea that this was kind of like a final message from the official leadership of Israel regarding the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Call it, if you want, Israel's final answer. And yet, make no mistake about it, the apostle Paul goes on after this event with the stoning of Stephen, preaching to the Jews, explaining to them the kingdom of heaven.

And when he is transported to Rome as a prisoner, while he is there in his own hired house, he invites local Jews who are living there in Rome.

And we're not told how many there were, just that there were a lot of them. Paul was living in a villa. He was living in a condo. And the Roman government allowed him to do that, even though he was a prisoner of Rome, he had not had his day in court, and he had a Roman soldier handcuffed to him 24-7.

He was enabled to invite people in, and he made contact with the local Jewish leadership, and invited them to come to his villa there in Rome, and he explained to them the person of Jesus of Nazareth, what happened, who he was, why he came, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the whole nine yards.

[ 48 : 37 ] And the last chapter of the book of Acts gives us a very brief rundown on that. They had a day-long Bible conference. Paul contacted the leadership of the Jews there in Rome, and the word was, listen, I'd really appreciate it if you and the brethren would get together and come to my place, and I'll explain to you why I'm here, what Jesus of Nazareth is all about, I'll explain it all.

So they come. The text tells us that they appointed a day, and I can just hear them now looking at their calendar saying, well, that's not a good day for me. Well, my wife is going to be gone, I can't make it that day. Well, what about Thursday?

Yeah, well, we can do Thursday. Okay, would you pass the word, and everybody be here a week from Thursday, and I'll explain all of this, so all of them come in. We aren't told how many.

Could have been eight or ten, could have been thirty. They could have been hanging all over the place, standing in the balcony out there, on the patio, we don't know. And we're from morning until evening.

I'm sure somebody served them a nice buffet lunch, too. And they talked about all of this. And the end result was, the text tells us, that some believed, and some believed not.

[ 50 : 01 ] Isn't it always that way? Some believed, and some believed not. And when they would not be persuaded, and decided to go their way, they are walking out of Paul's condo, arguing, debating among themselves, as they go, and the last couple of verses in the book of Acts, says that Paul says, I've got one final word for you.

And this he is addressing, as it were, to the whole nation of Israel. As they're ready to part company, Paul says, by the way, before you leave, I've got one more thing to say.

Okay? What is it? Paul said, actually, it's something that Isaiah said about your ancestors hundreds of years ago.

Here's what he said. you will keep on hearing, but will not understand, and you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive.

For the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and I should heal them.

[ 51 : 42 ] You just won't do it, will you? Stubborn to the core. No wonder God spoke of our fathers, and you're just like them.

Surely this is a stiff-necked and stubborn people. let it be known. And here is where many say the transition took place from Jew to Gentile.

I'm not saying that, but this is what many say. I don't know exactly when. Was there a given point of time at twelve midnight on such and such a day when God says regarding the nation of Israel, okay, that's it for you, you're set aside permanently, no.

But you're set aside. Some want to make it permanent. We are convinced that it's a temporary setting aside. But was there an actual time on the calendar that could be specified that here is where the time and opportunity for Israel ended, and here is where the time and opportunity for the Gentiles and the body, which is the body of Christ, had its beginning.

Was there a precise time? Probably was. Probably was. In the mind and heart of God, a probable time on the clock and the calendar that could be specified, but I have no idea what it was, and I'm not about to say.

[ 53 : 13 ] But, he did say this, be it known to you, therefore, and remember, he's in Rome now, he's not in Jerusalem, he's in Rome, and he says, let it be known to you, therefore, that this salvation of God, has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will also listen.

Well, it was sent to the Jew first, and Paul recognized that order, it is to the Jew first, and also to the Greek, or the Gentile, and it has been to the Jew, and it has been to the Jew, and it has been to the Jew, and the Jew, continues to reject, nationally, and most of them, individually.

So, Paul says, all right, the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will also listen.

Now, you and I need to be really grateful for that statement, because it is through the unbelief of Israel that the opportunity was extended to us. And when he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, look at this, having a great dispute among themselves.

I can see them arguing with the guy next to them as they're walking away, and somebody shaking their head no, and the other guy is saying, I tell you, it all fits, he's connected the dots, we blew it, and somebody else is saying, this is all crazy, this guy's a renegade, he doesn't know what he's talking about, and the debate was hot and heavy, as they were arguing, walking down the streets of Rome, leaving the condo of Paul.

[ 54 : 56 ] So he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters, and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

Rome never opposed his message, didn't believe it, but they didn't oppose it, he was a Roman citizen after all. Quick question or comment, anyone? We got a roving mic out there, is there a comment or question?

Where we are headed with this, let me just give you a heads up, where we are headed with this is we are going to see the early response of Israel after a couple of centuries are underway, and after the body of Christ, the church is underway, then we will move into the Roman persecution during the dark ages and the middle ages, and some of this will be more historical from secular sources, but it will give you an idea of how Israel has been, the position that Israel has been in for these many years, and we'll see how that culminates too.

Yes. Okay. Just want to put a plug in for the TV series, AD, the Bible, on Sunday nights. It's been really good, and it started Easter, and it's right along with where we are right now, with this morning.

It's been really good. Okay. When is it on? On Sunday? It's on Sunday nights. Do you know what channel? Okay. Sunday night. Channel 2. Okay. Thank you.

[ 56 : 36 ] I remember seeing a TV series that was called AD probably 20 years ago. I don't know if it's the same one rerun, or if it's a different one, but it picks up after the crucifixion.

So, yes? This is a continuation and it's about the apostles. Yeah. Picks up like on the Acts of the Apostles as opposed to the Gospels. Yeah. Okay.

Well, you might want to consider that on a Sunday evening and check your local newspaper or channel listings for time and channel. Anything else? You touched on a concept, I think, is difficult and the difference between disobeying and submitting.

And maybe next time we could spend a little more time on that because I think that's a difficult concept. You're right. It is a difficult concept. And I'll tell you what, just for starters, and we can talk about it next time, but this is pretty much what Martin Luther King Jr.

was all about. And they called it civil disobedience.

[ 57 : 46 ] And they were disobedient to the powers that be. And they paid a price for it, too. Some of them were actually killed. And they had dogs sicked on them, and they had hoses turned on them, and they had all kinds of things when they conducted these marches.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s role model was Mahatma Gandhi. And it was through civil disobedience that Gandhi organized that actually broke the political stranglehold that Great Britain had on India that resulted in India's independence because they were under the authority of Great Britain for many, many years.

So there is a very legitimate place for civil disobedience, and some Lutherans experienced that during World War II, and Hitler put them in jail.

And you're all familiar with Martin Niemöller, and a couple of other names slipped my mind out. I'll close with this brief anecdote, but it tells you something about standing for what you believe.

Martin Niemöller was in Hitler's prison, and he was a Lutheran pastor, and he didn't know whether he was going to be executed or not.

[ 59 : 11 ] I think eventually he was, but a friend, a clergy friend, a fellow pastor, came to call on Niemöller when he was in prison because he had preached against the Nazi regime and would not comply with it.

And this clergyman walked up to Niemöller's cell and shook his head and said, Martin, Martin, what are you doing in there?

And Niemöller looked back at his friend and called him by name and said, and what are you doing out there? There are things worth standing up for.

We are engaged right now in a struggle and a climate in this nation that we have never faced before.

And that is part of our difficulty. We've never been here before, so it's difficult for us to know how to react and opinions that you get from people.

[ 60 : 23 ] Christian people are all over the map because we don't have an experience for having to contend with some of the things that we're contending with now. And the indication is that it's not going to let up.

It's going to intensify. And I am not saying that we are now living in the last days. I am not saying that, but I am saying this, it sure does look like it. It sure does look like it.

You know what, though? Greater is he who is in us than he that is in the world. And we are called upon of God to be salt and light for a world that sometimes doesn't appreciate it, but that doesn't absolve us of the responsibility of being a salt and light, even though the world doesn't appreciate it.

And what's more, we should be surprised if the world did appreciate it, because it's a fallen world out there. And those of us who aren't fallen, because we're redeemed by the blood of Christ, we can expect, and should expect, a natural kind of conflict to be set up between us and them.

That's the way it is. There are those of the world, and there are those who are of Christ. And the difference is becoming more and more striking, and more and more obvious. So, aren't you glad to just remember who is really in charge?

[ 61 : 42 ] Let's stand, please. Father, we are so thankful for what you've been pleased to reveal, and we recognize that as we try to put these pieces together and extrapolate even into where we are today, there is so much that we don't understand and so much that we miss.

But the truth claims are there for what's really important and for what's obvious, and we want to gird up our loins and be prepared to stand for the truth and to stand for what we know is righteousness despite what the world thinks.

We recognize that the world is just like we were when we were part of it, didn't know any more than they know, and we are so grateful that we heard a gospel that we were able to respond to, that absolutely changed our lives and made us new creations in Christ and put us on the other side of the world.

And we recognize that and we want to remember that those who are not with us are not the enemy, they are the captives of the enemy, and we are called upon to reach out to them in love and compassion with the gospel that we received that changed our lives.

Thank you for the glorious privilege in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Synergy GHON  
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