

The Sermon on the Mount - Intro - Part III

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[0 : 0 0] An introduction to the Sermon on the Mount. And in anticipation of that, I'd like you to please turn to the book of Ephesians.

And this morning we'll be in chapter 2 of Ephesians, verses 11 through 18.

Therefore, remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by the so-called circumcision, which is performed in the flesh by human hands.

Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

But now, in Christ Jesus, you who formerly were far off, having been brought near by the blood of Christ.

[1 : 3 6] For he himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in his flesh the enmity, which is the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in himself he might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

And he came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near.

For through him we both have our access in one spirit to the Father. This passage really clearly delineates and explains the difference between Jew and Gentile, and how that previously, before Christ came on the scene, and a gospel was created to preach death, burial, and resurrection, the Gentiles were really in a very, very sad state.

In fact, the question might be asked as regards Gentiles and Christians and Jews, isn't it true that we as Christians are no longer under the law, but we are under grace?

Well, yes and no. Truth of the matter is, we never were under the law, and by the law we mean the law of Moses. We never were under that.

[3 : 4 4] The only ones who were ever under the law of Moses were those people to whom the law of Moses was given, and that was the nation of Israel. It was given to them exclusively.

The Ten Commandments, for instance, which represent just a very small part of the law, was never given to the Egyptians. The Assyrians were never expected to obey it.

The Babylonians never had the law, didn't know anything about it, wouldn't have wanted it. This is a very exclusive thing. God gave the law of Moses to those who were descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And the Gentiles were simply lawless. Well, in a way. They had a law of God written on their hearts. And the law of God simply was the innate knowledge that there is a God.

And Romans 1 says that man is without excuse because the things of God are clearly seen through what is made.

[4 : 54] So there is an accountability that man has just on the basis of nature that God has created. And we read that he has also placed in the heart of men the knowledge that God is.

God himself put it there. And those of you who have been with us for quite some time know that over the last 40 years that I have been your pastor, I have mentioned from time to time the lack of satisfaction I have regarding Old Testament salvation.

What precisely was it like? Here today in the New Testament, predicated upon the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have a very obvious clear-cut gospel to preach.

It is Christ died for your sins. And if you want to embrace him as your personal savior, you can enjoy the forgiveness of sins and you can enjoy the knowledge and assurance that you are a child of God.

And when the time comes for you to check out of this life, you are going to go straight into the presence of the Christ who died for you. That's a very clear-cut gospel, but you don't find that in the Old Testament.

[6 : 11] It just isn't there. While it is true that men have always, in all dispensations, been justified by grace, it is not at all clear just exactly what those elements of grace were in the Old Testament.

We know the Jews had a sacrificial system. They offered animals, etc. But we also know that it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. All those things were provided as a temporary covering and as an object lesson to the nation of Israel that would allow them to put the proper value on the one ultimate supreme sacrifice when it was made.

That was through the person of Christ. And without having installed the sacrificial system into the psyche, the national psyche of Israel, they would not have been able to connect the dots between Christ dying on that cross.

But he was there, not as an animal, but as the God-man. And the connection could be made because they had that long history of the innocent dying for the guilty.

And that's the burden of Christianity. And that's one of the reasons why it's so greatly misunderstood because people just can't get it through their heads that the innocent die in the place of the guilty where the guilty deserve to die for their own sin.

[7 : 36] But they don't. The innocent dies for them. And the benefits accrued on his behalf are placed undeservedly upon the one who believes.

That's why it's called good news. That's why it's called the gospel. It's amazing. Now, how this applied in the Old Testament, I don't know.

I still don't know. After studying the scriptures for over 50 years, it isn't clear to me, except this one thing. Nobody, nobody has ever been accepted by God on the basis of their own personal merit.

Nobody. When Adam and Eve sinned, God provided a covering for them. And that's where this whole thing started. God provided a covering for them by slaying an innocent animal or animals.

I assume he slew them. That would be the implication. Because he used the animal's skin to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve.

[8 : 51] And there, as early as Genesis 3, we find that principle of the innocent dying for the guilty. It's an amazing thing. John Newton wrote a hymn about it, didn't he?

Called it amazing grace. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. And he and his family were spared. We know that Abraham was a man of grace.

We know that anybody that God has ever saved in any dispensation has been purely on the basis of God's grace. Not on the basis of human desert.

But as I've said, here in the gospel, the gospel that we proclaim today, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, we've got a very definitive gospel. It's really spelled out.

In fact, it is spelled out so clearly and so succinctly that a lot of people reject it. And one of the big sticking points today for Christians presenting the gospel is the claim that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation.

[9 : 51] That's a major sticking point with the world. But it's true. And we have no right to water it down. It is true. And the reason it is true is because Jesus Christ is the only vehicle, the only innocent substitute that God has provided who was eligible and willing to die for the sins of the guilty.

So we cannot, we cannot put Jesus Christ on the back burner and some other Savior up front. There is no other Savior. And there is no other person who is entitled to wear the name Savior.

No one. He alone. And we ought to be careful not to ever, ever, give the impression that we are apologizing for that truth. We don't have the right to apologize for it.

So what we're trying to do is put together some understanding in these introductory segments to the Sermon on the Mount, put together some understanding that will help us interpret the Sermon on the Mount when we come to it because I am persuaded that it, along with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the first 10 to 14 pages, 10 to 14 chapters of the Acts of the Apostles all take place.

Now hear me well on this because this is going to be a bitter pill for some people to swallow. They all take place, they all take place within the confines of a long-established Judaism.

[11 : 26] When Jesus Christ came and was born, lived his sinless life for 30 years, and at the age of 30 was introduced to the Jewish community as the Messiah of Israel by John the Baptist, his second cousin, when he introduced him, all of that ministry, everything in connection with Christ, the Sabbath that he kept, his circumcision when he was 8 days old, his going to the synagogue, everything was all completely Jewish.

Nothing had changed. Nobody has any difficulty understanding that when you limit it to the Old Testament. But when you bring that over into the New Testament, ah, wait a minute, wait a minute now.

This is the New Testament. Matthew, Mark, Luke, that's the New Testament. No, it isn't. Canonically, it's the New Testament.

That's where it belongs in the canon of Scripture. But theologically and doctrinally and practically, all of the Gospels and the first several chapters of the book of Acts belong to the Old Testament order.

That's why you find Jewishness all over it. That's why you find Sabbath keeping. That's why you find the ceremonies. That's why you find certain... It's all Jewish. Gentiles have nothing to do with it.

[12 : 54] And when God used Peter to introduce the first non-Jew into this new thing that was taking place with Jesus Christ, Peter got all kinds of flack from his fellow Jews.

He wasn't even allowed to go in and eat with them. But he did. Remember Cornelius? So all I am saying is if you understand these things, you will be able to then come to the Sermon on the Mount and interpret it.

I told you at the outset that the Sermon on the Mount is one of the most popular passages of Scripture in all of the Bible. Matthew 5, 6, and 7. And you'd be surprised how many people say, oh, I live by the Sermon on the Mount.

They don't have a clue what they're even saying. They really don't. And when we get into it, you will see how law, legalistic oriented, the Sermon on the Mount is.

In complete contradistinction to what Paul the Apostle has to say later under grace. I mean, the difference is stunning. And I don't understand it.

[14 : 06] For beginners, I don't understand how I missed it. For the first 15 years of my Christian life, I just did not see this. I just bought into the standard party line because that's what everybody taught and what everybody believed.

And I believed it too. But it was dead wrong. And it still is. And I am so grateful for what light we do have. It just makes me want nothing more but more light.

So, we're still establishing this very, very valid concept of the distinction between Jew and Gentile and how that's going to play out. And I want you to look at a number of references that all will be in the New Testament.

So, let's go, first of all, to Romans chapter 2. This is really important material.

And for me, for me, several years ago, it was breakthrough material. It gave me a different pair of eyes with which to read the Bible.

[15 : 10] That's all I can say. Here in Romans chapter 2, to buttress some of the things that I've already said, Paul said, Therefore, you are without excuse every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another.

Well, for time's sake, let's skip down. Let's come down to, let's come all the way down to verse 11. There is no partiality with God.

Remember that now. That's going to come up again. There is no partiality with God. This means God does not pick favorites. God does not have pets. It is true He chose the Hebrew nation to accomplish things that He wanted a national venue to accomplish.

But this doesn't mean that God favors one man over another insofar as their intrinsic value or worth is concerned. Christ died for all. So He says, There is no partiality with God for all who have sinned without the law.

And I think the context here establishes it when He's saying the law and the fact that it's capitalized even though it isn't in the original Greek. But I think that we can safely say contextually that He's talking about the law of Moses.

[16 : 24] And that's not just the Ten Commandments. That's Exodus. Well, in a way, the law of Moses begins with Genesis even though the law was never given nor originated until you get to Exodus chapter 20.

because even the law of Moses didn't exist insofar as the code of behavior requirements, etc. until Moses went into the mount in Exodus chapter 20.

But when Jesus refers to Moses or Moses in the law, He's talking about Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Those are the five books of Moses. The Jewish people call this the Torah. T-O-R-A-H. The Torah. That's the law. The five books of Moses. And I'm confident that this is exactly what verse 12 is referring to.

For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law. That means those who sinned who did not have the law.

[17 : 32] And who might that be? All of the Gentiles. All of the Gentiles sinned, of course. We all sin. But they sinned without the law because they didn't sin under the knowledge of the law that was provided through the law of Moses as would have the Jews.

So He's talking about all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law. And all who have sinned under the law, which of course would be the Jew, will be judged by the law. For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law will be justified.

For when Gentiles, who do not have the law never did have it. They do instinctively the things of the law.

Why would they do that? Why would those who do not even have the law of Moses, and if we may just embody the law of Moses in its briefest, most distilled form, would just break it down to the Ten Commandments.

Because the first five commandments consist of man's responsibility to God. The last commandments refer to man's responsibility to his fellow man. And Christ said, when asked what is the greatest commandment, he said, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and your neighbor as yourself.

[18 : 57] And on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. That's a beautiful statement. What Jesus is saying is, what the law of Moses, all of it, what it's all about, bring it down to its lowest common denominator, sum it up, distill it as much as you can, what all this is about, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, all of those chapters, what they are all about is just this, love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and your neighbor as yourself.

That's it. That's it. That's the nutshell. That's the whole thing. And then Jesus went on to say, on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

That's all there is. That's broken down. Well, let's continue. When Gentiles who do not have the law do instinctively the things of the law, these not having law are a law to themselves.

In that, they show the work of the law written in their hearts. What is the work of the law? Its requirements, its demands, its warnings, its punishment.

That's what the law is all about. And by the way, understand this, please. God never gave the law to anyone except for the express purpose of it being a protective device and a blessing for those to whom the law was given.

[20 : 46] The law actually constituted a kind of moral, social, survival guide to the children of Israel. It taught them how to live and function in a fallen world, how to relate to each other, how to relate to God.

That's what was all about in the law. So these not, and that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness. We've talked a little bit about the human spirit and the origin of it and I am convinced that that's where these things are located and that God has programmed the human spirit so that you, through the programming you have from God, you know there is a God and you know what a human being is to be like.

You are programmed to behave like a human being, albeit a fallen human being because the programming was changed when we underwent the fall in Adam.

So we are all programmed. All of God's creatures are programmed. Whales are programmed. Chimpanzees are programmed. A rhinoceros is programmed. All of these animals receive information from God and that instinctively placed in them tells them how they are to act and behave and reproduce, etc.

That's why they act the way they do. They're programmed. We are all programmed. It's information. They show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience, that too is located in your human spirit.

[22 : 24] Nobody's ever seen one. Nobody's ever seen a conscience but you know it can do a job on you with guilt and fear and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.

All that is saying is behavior right or wrong, standards right or wrong, on the day when according to my gospel God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. Now, this is what most people had to go on up until the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

The vast majority of the world's population, probably 99% of the world's population, lived and functioned under this law.

Whether they knew it or not, whether they believed it or not, God put his law within the heart of man. And that includes a couple of things. Number one, it includes the fact that God is.

And number two, it included a basic understanding and appreciation of right and wrong. It was a moral thing that God put in the human heart.

[23 : 37] And that's what creates problems with the conscience and with guilt, etc. because guilt is produced, guilt is emotional pain that is caused by the violation of a known standard of right or wrong.

So, we've got Gentiles who, according to what we read earlier in Ephesians, are without God, without Christ, without hope in this present world.

That was their state. Now, while we're here in Romans nearby, come over, if you would, please, to chapter 9. Romans chapter 9. And I want to reinforce that distinction some more because this is very important.

And once you get a handle on this, it just makes things like the Sermon on the Mount and the Gospels, they just fall into place in a way that is just stunning and it's wonderful.

Romans 9. Paul said, I'm telling the truth in Christ. I am not lying. my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

[24 : 47] For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ, which is a tremendous statement to make, for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.

Now, he's going to tell us who they are. Look at this. Verse 4. Who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory.

What other nation in the whole world enjoyed the status of the adoption of sons and the glory? Any of you can think of?

None. Zero. This was exclusively Israel. And the covenants. To whom else were the covenants given? There is the Mosaic covenant.

Who do you suppose that was given to or by? The Jew. There was the Abrahamic covenant. What is that? That's Jewish. There is the Davidic covenant.

[25 : 55] What is that? That's Jewish. What's the Palestinian covenant? It's Jewish. What's the new covenant? It's Jewish. Jeremiah 31. It's all Jewish.

If there is any covenant that might be considered worldwide or for the whole of humanity, perhaps the Noahic covenant would qualify because it was the promise that God gave to Noah, but it affected all of mankind and it was a divine assurance that God would never once again destroy the earth with a flood.

We might say that's kind of a universal covenant, but it's the only one. Out of the eight covenants that are given, seven of them are Jewish. One is universal. That's the Noahic.

Now, that isn't too hard. Look at these words and the covenants and the giving of the law, Jewish, and the temple service, Jewish, and the promises, Jewish, whose are the fathers, from whom is the Christ according to the flesh who is over all.

God bless forever. Amen. This is all Jewish. No problem, I don't think, in seeing that. And while we are right next door, let's come to Acts chapter 10.

[27 : 15] Back just one book. Acts chapter 10. And beginning with verse 33, this is one of the most remarkable passages in the New Testament, and we have just been having a wonderful time with this.

The men's class on Thursday morning, I have just enjoyed this so much. It is just dynamite material. Acts 10, in verse 33, we don't have time to go into the whole account, so we're just going to bring you up to where Cornelius, who was a Roman army officer, a centurion, one whom the Jews would consider a pagan.

But this Cornelius was different. He wasn't your average army officer in the army of Rome. Rome, he was a God-fearer.

And a God-fearer in the New Testament is a Gentile who sees and understands the God of Israel, Jehovah, is the only true God.

And all of these false deities that all of the pagans worship, all of the idols, the statuary, when Paul went to Athens, they had a God, a deity on every corner.

[28 : 44] And he said, I perceive you are so religious, you even have a statue erected to the unknown God, just in case you left one out. You wanted him to know this was his. And it was just pure paganism.

And that's what most of the Romans were. And that's why, of course, the Jews hated them with a passion, because they didn't recognize the true God. But this guy did. Cornelius. He had a hundred Roman soldiers under his command.

And he had come to the conclusion that the God of Israel was the only true God, therefore the only God worthy of worship. And that made him a God-fearer. If he wanted to move on from being a God-fearer, he could go to a local priest and he could be circumcised.

Now, any adult man is going to have real second thoughts about that. Maybe that's why they do it with baby boys when they're eight days old and they can't protest.

But if you are circumcised and then you present yourself to the Lord with the sacrifice of an animal in the temple, then you were elevated from God-fear to proselyte.

[29 : 55] And that meant that you were now a legitimate Jew, afforded all the rights and privileges of being a Jew, just as if you were born of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And there weren't a great many of these. Cornelius hadn't gone that far. But he was a man who was convinced that Israel's God was the only true God and all of Rome's gods and deities were just pagan and nonsensical.

And he was praying. And I asked the fellows on Thursday morning, what do you think he was praying about? I think I know what he was praying about. I think he wanted light.

I think he wanted information. I think he wanted to know more about this true God. And God sent an angel and said, Cornelius, this is in Acts chapter 10, we won't go back there and take time to read it, but the angel said, Cornelius, your prayers and your generosity to the Jewish temple in the giving of alms has come up before God.

And here's what God wants you to do. you send men to the city of Joppa. Now, this is right on the coast, probably about two days journey away.

[31 : 12] You send men to Joppa, and when you get there, you locate a fellow by the name of Simon the Tanner. He tans hides, and he's got a little business there right on the coast, because the Tanner of Hides needed a lot of supply of water in order to apply his trade.

And when you find the house of Simon the Tanner, you knock on the door and you ask if there's somebody there by the name of Peter. And he'll be there. And you tell Peter that he is to come with your men to the house of Cornelius, who is waiting for what he has to say.

Meanwhile, in Joppa, Peter is experiencing this incredible vision with this sheet let down from heaven with all manner of four-footed bees, clean and unclean animals.

And the voice says, Rise, Peter, kill and eat. And Peter says, Nothing doing. My lips have never eaten anything unclean. And he refused. And the sheet was let down the second time.

And then finally, the third time, Peter got the message. And what was the message? All of these animals, clean and unclean together. Some the Jews could eat, some they couldn't eat.

[32 : 26] They were unclean. But they were all in this thing together, all mixed up. And Peter finally got the message. This is not about animals. This is about clean and unclean something else.

What could that be? If it's not about animals, it couldn't be about people. Clean and unclean people?

We know that clean people, and this is ceremonially, morally, ritually clean people, are Jews.

Unclean people are Gentiles. They are dogs. Don't have anything to do with them. They're dirty. What does this mean?

These animals together. are Jews. They are Jews. They are together. It's going to result in people together. Jew and Gentile together.

[33 : 34] Unthinkable. It is that very concept that got Peter in trouble when he went to Cornelius, and it's that very concept that got Paul the apostle killed, instigated by his own countrymen.

They just could not conceive of this. You see, what is taking place here, listen to me now, this is really important. What is taking place here is a dramatic change of program that most of Christendom does not allow for and does not recognize.

And this is a principal reason why there is so much disagreement and confusion over the Bible. They do not make allowance for the change that is taking place.

It is moving from strictly Jew to Jew and Gentile in one body they twain making one new man.

Can't believe it. It can't be true. That was the average Jewish response. So, we just jump in here now in Acts chapter 10 and Cornelius in verse 33 is telling Peter what's happening.

[34 : 58] And in verse 33 Cornelius says to Peter, So I sent to you immediately and you have been kind enough to come. Now then we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.

We are not told how many people Cornelius had here but I think it was not only himself and his wife and his kids but his household probably servants maybe even some of the men in his troop who were close to him that he had influenced.

I think Peter walked into this situation and it was wall-to-wall Gentiles and Peter is really uncomfortable. He does not want to be here.

And he says, he walks in there and he says, you know how that it's unlawful for a man who is a Jew to be here in the company of you.

I don't know what I'm doing here. I'm just following orders but I don't know what these are. I just can't understand this. I don't know what's going on. This doesn't make any sense to me. But I had this message that I could not deny and it told me to come and these men came and knocked on the door and said that you sent for me and I don't have any idea what's going on.

[36 : 13] But I know one thing. I'm a Jew and you are Gentiles and I am really out of my element. This is not my comfort zone at all. I don't want to be here. But I didn't have any choice.

I'm here under duress, under direct orders and I don't have any idea what's going on. And opening his mouth, Peter said, wow, well, he didn't say, wow, I said that.

I most certainly understand now. And you see now is italicized. That means it's not there in the original. Peter says, I most certainly understand that God is not one to show partiality.

Wow, what a breakthrough. Because the Jew had always considered God as showing partiality. the Jew is God's pet, God's favorite.

Well, isn't he? Isn't the Jew the apple of God's eye? Yes, he is. Don't you try to take that away from him. He is. Isn't the Jew God's chosen people?

[37 : 24] Yes, he is. But you must understand this. God never chose the Jew just for the Jew. God chose the Jew for the world.

He chose the Jew to be the spearhead, to be the impetus, to be the starting point.

He chose the Jew to be a light to the Gentiles. But they weren't interested. They just wanted to enjoy the most favored nation status and let it go at that.

and they considered the Gentiles as fodder for the fires of hell. And a good Jew would arise in the morning and utter the prayer, O God, I thank Thee that I have not been born a woman, a slave, or a Gentile.

How's that for a prayer of arrogance? That was standard operating procedure for a Jew. And now something is happening here.

[38 : 33] look at verse 35. But in every nation, in every nation, you mean in Egypt, in Assyria, in Babylonia, in every nation, the man who fears him, Cornelius was a God-fearer, and does what is right, is welcome to him.

What would he use to do what was right? He would use his volition, he would use his will. That's the same thing we all use. But what is that saying?

And does Peter have it right? The man who fears him, fears God, and does what is right, is welcome to him. Now, the only way he can do what is right is in response to this innate knowledge of God, and the innate knowledge of right and wrong that he has, knowledge of God.

But he doesn't have any lighter information. He doesn't know anything about the Ten Commandments. He doesn't even know they exist. He knows nothing about the law of Moses. He knows nothing about the miraculous deliverance from Egypt.

He knows none of that stuff. He is just a pagan that is given over to the worship of all kinds of things. But there are some who do right is welcome to him.

[39 : 59] Hmm. On what basis? Well, on the basis of fearing him and doing what is right.

Now, I'm going to make a statement that I don't fully understand, but I'm going to make it anyway because this is as close as I can come. I have no idea what real criteria God uses to evaluate accepting or rejecting people in the Old Testament.

As I said, in the New, it's quite clear. You're either in Christ or you are not. But in the Old Testament, before the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, that issue is very, very fuzzy.

Suffice it to say, grace was the fountain head of it. I have no doubt about that. But what the particulars were, I don't know. I just don't know, and I don't know of any place that is spelled out.

And you cannot say, well, it all has to do with sacrifice. No, it doesn't either, because sacrifice, there's no indication that sacrifice is required here.

[41 : 13] All I can say is this, God has his own way of reading the human heart and what people are exposed to.

God knows what we are accountable for. God knows what we have access to by way of information. God knows the desire of our heart.

God knows whether or not there is a desire to know him or a wanting to know him as opposed to being one's own authority, God is able to do that.

And I don't know what other criteria that he uses. It is just very, very vague to me. From what Peter says here, and I have no reason to believe that this is not true, that Peter is wrong.

Peter spent a share of his times being wrong, but there's no reason to believe that this is not true. So, it is the word which he sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ.

[42 : 16] He is Lord of all. You yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee after the baptism which John proclaimed. You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

And I think that Cornelius knew about that. Because news about Jesus, listen, anybody who can heal the sick, give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, cause the lame to walk, anybody who can do that, you'd better believe the information news about them is going to spread very rapidly throughout the whole area.

And it did. And Peter goes on in verse 39 and says, and we are witnesses of all the things. I think that's Peter and the four Jewish men that he brought with him.

Protection, no doubt. Security detail. He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, and they also put him to death by hanging him on a cross. Him. God raised him up on the third day and granted that he should become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is to us, who ate and drank with him after he arose from the dead.

Listen, I'm telling you, Peter says, I know his resurrection was real. I ate bread and fish with him on the Sea of Galilee, on the shore.

[43 : 49] Had breakfast with him, and it was him, and there was no doubt about it. And he ordered us to preach to the people and solemnly to testify that this is the one who has been appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead.

Of him, all the prophets bear witness. That is, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and all the minor prophets bear witness that through his name, everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins.

And Cornelius says, that's it. That's it. That's what I've been waiting for. That's what I've needed to know.

All the while Peter was relating this in detail, Cornelius was registering these things in his heart. Yes, yes, yes, I understand. Yes, I believe that.

Yes, I hear you. Yes, I buy that. And just like that, it clicked. And you know what took place? Cornelius and those who were with him were dramatically visited by God at that very spot.

[45 : 08] Regeneration was taking place all over that room. These people came to light. They heard the information they needed, and they bought it.

And when they believed, confirmation was given. Because the next verse says, while Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.

Because they were listening with believing hearts and minds. And all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter, who are they? They're Jews.

his Jewish friends, his security detail. They were amazed. Why should they be amazed?

The Holy Spirit fell on them on the day of Pentecost. Why should they be amazed that the Holy Spirit has fallen on these people? They're Gentiles. That's the difference.

[46 : 07] They're Gentiles. And these guys are saying, what? What? This can't be. This can't be. They are amazed. They are Gentiles. Because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also.

Now, let me ask you, do you not see a cataclysmic quantum leap here? This is all new.

It is so new. Those who were living it day by day couldn't get over it. This was stunning. How can this be? And the reason it is, is because God is beginning to set aside the nation of Israel for their continued unbelief and rejection of the Messiah.

and he's going to do something entirely different that the Jews had never imagined in their wildest dreams. He's going to take believing Jews and believing Gentiles and marry them together and make them one new man.

unthinkable. That's exactly what he's going to do. You know what he's going to call this? He's going to call this the church which is the body of Christ.

[47 : 44] Never existed before. A whole new thing is beginning to come on the scene and God is using Peter and Peter's credentials well established as one of the twelve apostles and one of the inner circle and one to whom Christ gave the keys of the kingdom in Matthew 16.

He's going to use Peter to break the ice and Peter didn't even know what he was doing but he was breaking the ice. Now one last passage and it's also here in Acts.

Acts chapter 17. We've talked about this before. It is a dramatic passage. It's the icing on the cake for me and it has to do with Paul the apostle and Paul is in Gentile territory.

You can't get more Gentile than Athens, Greece. That was as Gentile as you could get. This was the citadel of intellectualism.

And in Acts chapter 17 when Paul goes there to Mars Hill and begins preaching it is a remarkable thing and we're going to skip down all the way down to Acts chapter 17 and remember that Paul's on Mars Hill he's talking to these Athenian philosophers they're a bunch of intellectuals and he says that in verse 28 for in him that is in this God of creation we live and move and exist as even some of your own poets that is some of your own Greek poets have said for we also are his offspring being then the offspring of God we ought not to think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone an image formed by the art and thought of man therefore and this is a verse that really this is a verse that really wraps me up and I just can't get a handle on it therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance when were those times it was all the time that preceded this time it was the old testament times it was when nobody even had the law of

[49 : 52] Moses except Israel and all of the other pagans the Gentiles they were just on their own just a bunch of rag tag pagans the only light they had was that knowledge of God that was put in them and from creation and we read that God overlooked the times of ignorance some translations render that God winked at I don't know how to interpret that other than to say God cut those previous generations some slack God did not judge them as harshly as he might have God overlooked God winked at God I'm not sure we can go so far as to say God excused them but God does not seem to have the same demand upon them that he's going to have later and you know why that is because the more light you have the greater the demand for accountability and these people didn't have the light that

Israel had they didn't have the law they didn't have all of that history and background they didn't have that but it doesn't mean they didn't have anything they just didn't have as much light so God does not judge them with the same degree of accountability that he does those who have more light because unto whom much light is given of him shall much be required but notice the contrast having overlooked the times of ignorance God is now now as opposed to earlier he is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent because he has fixed the day in which he will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom he has appointed having furnished proof to all men by raising him from the dead and what Paul is telling these pagan philosophers is you could have gotten away more easily with your unbelief before

Jesus Christ died on the cross and paid the price for your sins but belief before Jesus Christ died on the cross and paid the price for your sins but belief before Jesus Christ died on the cross and paid the price for your sins.