

The Jewish Final Solution to the World's Problem - Peter's Message / Israel's Response Part 1

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[0 : 00] And our scripture this morning is in chapter 13. And in chapter 13 we'll be reading the first nine verses there.

I'll be reading and you can follow along. 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 Salome 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 : 27] 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. That is an extremely important passage of scripture that is regarded by many as just relatively incidental and has very easily passed over and given no significance or importance at all.

But it is tremendously significant. And we shall see how and why. Would you pray with me, please? Loving Father, we bow once again in your presence with the acknowledgement that our knowledge and understanding are so deficient and so lacking.

[3 : 01] And we look to you for that which we know we do not have. Because unless you are pleased to reveal it, we certainly will not be able to discover it.

So we deliver ourselves to you this morning for understanding and wisdom regarding the passage and its implications. We are grateful for the presence of each one here this morning.

We know that each of these has a special burden of their own, some situation in life with which they are dealing. And we simply ask that you will show yourself to be mighty on their behalf, that they can turn to you and trust you when seemingly all else fails.

Thank you for being the ever-benevolent God who is ever-attentive to our cries. We have no one else but you. We need no one else but you.

So thank you for yourself and all that you are to us. We ask that as we engage the text, you will provide that understanding which we acknowledge we lack and give us an appreciation of the implications of it as well.

[4 : 10] In Christ's name we pray. Amen. Oh, by the way, something I keep forgetting to mention, and I've been reminded of this again and again, and I guess I just have a distaste for talking about money.

That's why in the 40 years, plus 40 years that I have been your pastor, I average speaking on money once every eight years.

I figured it out. We've done that five times in 40 years. And for your information, we do not pass an offering plate, as you know, but there's a box attached to the wall outside.

And anyone who would like to make a contribution to Grace Bible Church and what it is all about can leave your offering in that box. If you want to give with an envelope system so as to satisfy the Internal Revenue Service, there are envelopes in the back that you can assign to yourself and a number if you wish to take one.

And I just say again, thank you so much for the ongoing generosity of Grace people who do not have to be hounded and shamed and pounded on in order to give.

[5 : 25] Your generosity just amazes me. So thank you again for just being who and what you are. Appreciate it so much. Well, the passage from which Gary just read placed a great deal of emphasis upon the subject of repentance.

It is pretty much lost track of today, but I still think of it as God's silver bullet because it is absolutely incredible what happens when repentance is in place.

And repentance means the changing of the mind, and it always involves the same thing. And that means that when you hear information that perhaps enlightens you as to what you didn't know before, or perhaps it contradicts what you believed before, and you understand that information to be true and accurate, and you are willing to change your mind about what you used to believe about that certain item, and you embrace what you have just heard as being true, that's repentance.

Repentance always involves reversing yourself from a previous position that you held. It always means that you move from something you recognize to be wrong to embrace something that you recognize to be right.

That's repentance. And it doesn't necessarily even have to have a religious or spiritual connotation. If you go out, you're going to be shopping for a new car, and you go look at the latest Buick that's out, and you look in the showroom there, and you examine, you take it out for a test drive and everything, and you decide, you know what, I'm going to sleep on that, but I think I'm going to buy that car.

[7 : 37] I think I'm going to go in there tomorrow and close the deal and buy that car. And you're telling a friend about it, and the friend says, well, that's all well and good, but have you looked at the new whatever?

No, I haven't bought it. Well, you really need to go give that thing a drive and talk to somebody about it before you buy that Buick, because you just may change your mind.

So you do that, and you say, wow, this thing really does have it on, and now it's \$900 cheaper. You know what? I'm not going to buy that Buick. I'm going to buy this car.

Do you know what you've done? You repented. Now, we don't think of anything spiritual or religious about that. That's strictly a business deal.

You just change your mind about buying this car instead of that car. But that's repentance. That's what it means. It means change your mind. And the reason you changed your mind and you're not going to buy the Buick is because you drove this other car.

[8 : 36] In other words, you got new information from this other car, and it caused you to change your mind about the Buick. Now, the truth of the matter is, in a way, the jury's still out because the Buick may have been the better car.

But who knows? At any rate, that's what repentance means. It just means change your mind. And it's always because of information.

Information is what prompts us to make decisions. We hear data, information, and it comes into our mind, and we begin processing it and comparing it with what we already know and how it stacks up.

We evaluate the information, and then we decide what we're going to do about it. We make a decision. And if it is something contrary to a position we held in the past, you have repented.

This is the essence or the rationale for preaching the gospel. That's really all it is. When you preach the good news, when you tell the people good news, you are giving them information.

[9 : 53] You cannot process information you don't have. You cannot make a decision if you do not have adequate information upon which to base that decision.

So every preacher, whether it's Billy Graham or a country preacher like myself here, located in an obscure place of the country, in an obscure part of town, preaching the gospel, all we are doing is just giving people information.

And the hope is that they will receive the information, process it, evaluate it, and make a decision. And when it comes to the gospel, the good news, we preach Christ died for your sin.

And people say, well, I don't think I have any of those. Yes, you do. We all do. Because we're all cut from the same bolt of cloth, and every one of us is a sinner right down to the core of our very being.

That's why Christ had to die. He died for our sin. That's information. How does it stack up with what you believe before you got here? Maybe it complies with what you believe.

[11 : 13] So you say, well, I've already made that decision. But it could be that you haven't, because people are at different places at different times in their lives with different information that they have, and we're always evaluating things and taking in information.

So it's something to think about. And when the nation of Israel heard the message that Peter preached regarding the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, we are told that 3,000 out of however many were there, and we don't know how many there were, but there were a lot more than 3,000, we are told that 3,000 repented.

3,000 changed their mind. What did they change their mind about? They changed their mind from a position they previously held, which consisted of, can any good thing come out of Nazareth?

What? You're saying Jesus, the son of Mary, and Joseph the carpenter is the Messiah? Give me a break. I don't buy that for a minute. Crucify him.

Crucify him. We don't want this man to reign over us. Kill him. That's a position. That's a conclusion. And that's what they did.

[12 : 29] And after the resurrection, Peter went back to the same temple area, and he preached a message that went something like this.

Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by the many signs and miracles which he did, which some of you saw, and you have by wicked hands crucified and slain the Lord of glory.

But God raised him from the dead. And then he went on and quoted that passage from the Psalms about David speaking.

And David wasn't talking about himself when he said, thou wilt not allow thine holy one to seek corruption. And Peter says, David wasn't talking about himself. David the king is dead and buried, and we know where his tomb is, and his bones or what's left of them are there moldering in the grave.

David was speaking of his son, the son of David. And he would not see corruption, because he was raised from the dead after three days.

[13 : 42] And these Jewish people standing there listening to this message, numbering in the thousands, some of them were turning to the person next to them and saying, he's right.

This all makes sense. I see it now. He really was the Messiah. It all comes together. It fits. Now that he has said this and explained this, you know what?

I get it. Oh, no. We crucified the very one God sent to be our Messiah?

We handed him over to Pontius Pilate, and he put him on a cross? Oh, how could we have been so blind? But what's done is done.

We can't undo it. Where do we go from here? How can we rectify this? What can be salvaged out of this situation? Men and brethren, what shall we do?

[14 : 52] And Peter says, repent. Change your mind. You've just heard the information. Process it. Reach a new decision. What's your conclusion?

And the conclusion of 3,000 of them was, as much as we hate to admit it, this man is right. We blew it.

We crucified the very one whom God sent to be our deliverer. They reversed themselves. They did a 180. And Peter says, and you be baptized.

This is the baptism they earlier rejected. This was John's baptism. They rejected John. Many of them did. The establishment did for sure. The chief priests and rulers.

They rejected John. And they rejected the one whom John introduced as the Messiah. And they remain in a rejection mode. And who are the people who were coming along?

[15 : 49] Who are the 3,000 who repented? They are the common people. They are the ordinary Joe and Jane Doe in the Jerusalem assembly there.

And they reversed themselves. You know what? It takes an unusual person to be able to say, it's my bad.

I was wrong. I messed up. It's my fault. Do you know anybody that enjoys that?

That's painful. It's painful. It makes you look inadequate. It makes you look wrong. It makes you feel wrong.

It makes you look sometimes stupid. Stubborn. Nobody likes the feelings that come with saying, I was wrong. I blew it. And you know what?

[16 : 53] This is why so many of us won't do it. It's called being stiff-necked. God referred to the nation of Israel as being, surely you are a stiff-necked and a stubborn people.

Just will not repent. Repentance is God's silver bullet. Repentance is God's, hey, you pass go, collect your \$200.

That's what that is. It's a get out of jail free. That's what repentance is. It is God's new beginning.

But it has to start with a painful, gut level, honest admission of being wrong.

Being wrong. I've had to do that so many times, I've almost gotten used to it. And if you do it enough, it becomes easier.

[18 : 04] Because when you've been wrong about things as much as I have, you start making an art form of it. You have to reverse yourself here because I was wrong there, I was wrong here.

And you just have to change your mind. Someone said, after all, that's the best way to maintain a clean mind is you change it often.

And sometimes, and the basis for changing it is always the same. Always the same. Information. You learn something you didn't know before. And it trumps what you thought you knew before.

So you say, I'm going to have to scrap that. Because it does not compute with the truth. And I've got to go the way of truth.

Because truth is the only thing that's real. Truth corresponds to reality. And everything that doesn't is a lie. So, when Peter preached this message, there were a lot of people, 3,000 of them, who were big enough, honest enough, to admit that they were really wrong.

[19 : 14] And they needed to reverse themselves. And they did. And they subjected themselves to John's baptism, the baptism they earlier rejected, and probably ridiculed.

And now, they're part of it. So, the message continues in chapter 3, and if you're looking at the book of Acts, like I would hope that you would, Peter's Pentecostal message is in Acts chapter 2, and now, he is going to provide us with an update in chapter 3, and it's essentially the same thing, except that which precipitated it was the healing of this man who was lame from his mother's womb, lying there at his privileged place of begging by the gate beautiful near the temple.

And let me inject this, if I may, because this is so important. I want you to have this in the back of your mind for the next few messages at least that come, because this is really, really critical.

And here it is. The conventional wisdom all across Christendom takes the position that God set the nation of Israel aside in connection with their rejection of Jesus and handing him over to be crucified, and that the crucifixion was, as it were, God's or Israel's final answer to God about Jesus.

And that's not true. I can understand how they would arrive at that, because it looks very much that way, at least in one regard, because when you see in your mind's eye Jesus Christ hanging there, suspended on that cross, and now he's dead, and the Roman soldier comes up and positions the point of a spear right below his rib cage, and then lunges with that spear, so it pierces the heart of Christ, and forthwith there come out blood and water separated, and the medicos tell us that is evidence that death had already occurred, because you could see the distinction between the blood and the white fluid or the clear fluid, the serum that it had separated, and that takes place at death, so it's proof positive that he was already dead, and when you see that in your mind's eye, you kind of think in terms of, well, that's it.

[21 : 57] the leadership of Israel and the chief priests and so on, they were instrumental in instigating this thing, and they used a Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, to do their dirty work, and he killed him, and it's over, and Israel's Messiah has been finally rejected, and I can understand people thinking in terms of that as a terminus, even apart from the fact that the resurrection was yet to come, it does look like Israel's final answer, I mean, after all, death is pretty final, but, one of the things that Jesus said of his seven final sayings on the cross, one of them was, remember this, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do, who do you think

Jesus was talking about? Well, he might have been talking about the Roman soldiers, those who were physically responsible for executing him, because, it's true, they didn't know what they were doing, they thought he was just another, another unfortunate Jew that crossed the religious establishment, and they're doing him in, and we're just carrying out orders, which is to execute him, and by the way, the Romans had a crucifixion execution squad that just specialized in this, and this is all they did, they just crucified people, that was their job, that was their assignment, and they didn't know what they were doing, but I rather suspect that the request for forgiveness went much further than that, I think, and the text doesn't say this, and I don't want to read into the white spaces, but I think that Jesus was asking the Father to forgive the whole nation of Israel, and the religious

Jewish establishment that connived and conspired to put him there, in saying, they know not what they do, and later, Peter is going to say in his Pentecostal address to the audience, I know that you did it ignorantly, and in unbelief, so it appears that Jesus is asking the Father to forgive maybe everyone who was responsible for and involved in his phony trials, the kangaroo courts, and the execution, he was asking perhaps for anyone who had anything to do with it to be forgiven because they didn't know what they were doing, they were just ignorant.

Now, let me ask you this question. If Jesus made that prayer request to his Father, do you think it was honored?

Is it conceivable that Jesus could have appealed to the Father with the prayer request and the Father might have said nothing doing? I rather suspect that the Father heard the prayer of the Son.

[25 : 25] I think he forgave them. And do you know what that really involves? That involves an extension, a reprieve given to the nation of Israel so that they as a nation are not cut off with the crucifixion of Christ but so they are given another chance.

After all, he is the God of the second chance. And you remember that little statement that is made back in Luke 13, I think, from which Gary read about that fig tree or about the tree that didn't bear any fruit.

Remember that? and it was ready to uproot it and throw it away and he said, why is this thing even taking up the ground? Dig it up and throw it away.

And he said, no, no, no, wait, I'll tell you what let's do. let's give it one more year. And he said, and this is really significant.

Some think maybe I'm putting too much in this, but I don't think so. In that little parable, the owner says, for three years, listen to this, he didn't say four years or one year or two years, he said, for three years I have come to this tree looking for fruit and it hasn't borne any.

[27 : 00] So I'm going to dig it up and throw it away. How long did Jesus come to Israel preaching his message and performing his miracles? How long?

Yeah, three years. Three years he came looking for fruit. From who? From Israel. And what did he get? No fruit.

No fruit. So, why don't we just cut Israel off and forget him? He said, no, no, let's give him another year.

And what I'll do, I'll take this tree and I'll get some fertilizer and I'll fertilize the tree so that it will have even less excuse for not bearing fruit because it will be watered and it will be fertilized and then if it doesn't bear fruit, boy, it's been given every opportunity and then it's time to dig it up and throw it away.

So, if the tree represents Israel and they are given a year's extension, that bypasses, goes beyond the day of Pentecost, so what I am saying is the day of Pentecost, who is it that remains in the driver's seat on the religious scene?

[28 : 32] it's Israel. They're still on. They're not rejected. They're not overthrown. They're not cast aside. Not yet. They are very much intact.

That's why Peter is addressing them and he says, men of Israel. And then in chapter 3, we've got two different responses here and I must hurry because my time is almost gone, but we've got two different kinds of responses to Peter's message and if you will look at chapter 3, the book of Acts, and verse 38, Peter says, repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus.

And verse 39, for the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off.

What is he saying here? He's saying the promise is still good. It's intact. It isn't over and done with. Israel, you still have an opportunity.

It isn't a lost cause. You can still repent nationally and turn everything around. Well, we know that is not going to happen, but the ball was in their court.

[29 : 57] And he is imploring them that they reverse themselves. And we've got an official and an unofficial response. And I want you to look at this.

And let's come to chapter 4 quickly. And notice, if you will, just these two responses. I call them an official response and an unofficial response.

and I ask you the question, which one is it that counts? The official response to Peter's message in chapter 4 and verse 1, look at this.

As they were speaking to the people, this is the masses, the crowd, the thousands of people who had gathered because of all the commotion. As they were speaking to the people, maybe we even say the common people, the multitude, the crowd, look at what happens.

The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came upon them. Who are they? They are in charge.

[31 : 01] They are the shakers and movers. They are the big shots. They are the ones who call it. And they were greatly disturbed because they, the apostles, were teaching the people, the masses, and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

And they laid hands on them, grabbed them, arrested them, put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening.

Now that's the first initial official response. This is coming from the religious establishment. These are the people in charge.

These are the ones whose opinions really matter. They are the ones with clout. That's their official response. Now look at verse 4. This is an unofficial response.

And who is it that makes up unofficial them? We do. You and me. We are the hoi polloi. We are just the masses.

[32 : 11] We are just the ordinary, regular, everyday people. That's us. We are not the shakers and movers. And we are told that many of those who had heard the message believed.

And the number of the men came to be about 5,000. Now that simply means that they've added 2,000 because there were 3,000 to begin with on the day of Pentecost.

And by the way, when these numbers are given, they are limited exclusively to males. This does not include women, does not include any teenagers or children who might have been present.

These are strictly males. That's the way they calculated numbers. And it came about on the next day, verse 5, that their rulers and elders and scribes, and who were they?

That's the establishment. That's the officialdom. They were gathered together in Jerusalem. And Annas, the high priest, was there.

[33 : 12] He's the kingpin. This is the go-to guy. This is the number one man in the nation of Israel. And Caiaphas and John and Alexander and all who were of high priestly descent.

And when they had placed them, that is, the apostles, in the center, they began to inquire, by what power or in what name have you done this?

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, rulers, elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that 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 in good health.

Wow, what a message. And I can just see these chief priests and rulers vibrating as he's saying these things. And their minds are turning and they're saying to themselves, how are we going to counter this?

we've got to have some kind of a response to this because these guys are really putting us on the spot and it's becoming very, very uncomfortable. And Peter and the apostles are not going to back down.

[34 : 47] This is the official and the unofficial response and it's going to continue to vacillate back and forth from one to the other until the time is going to come when we'll get to it.

It's in chapter 7 and it's the stoning of Stephen and I will submit to you that that will be Israel's final answer to God regarding Jesus of Nazareth.

And I want to leave you with this question but I'll answer it also. About how long was it after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ that Stephen was martyred and stoned to death in chapter 7.

The best chronologies tell us it was about one year. About one year.

No, let's dig around this tree and fertilize it and give it one more year and then if it doesn't bear fruit we'll cut it down.

[36 : 08] Do you think that's just a coincidence? Boy, I don't think so. To me, it looks like dots that need to be connected. And I'm excited about connecting them and we will continue with this passage.

And what we're talking about is Israel in the past. When we get to chapter 7 in just a few sessions, then we are going to leapfrog into the Middle Ages and Israel's experiences in Europe during the Middle Ages and we'll be dealing with the blood libels and all of those things that have so contributed to the hatred of the nation of Israel.

And then we'll move right into the present day scene where we are now and then on into the prophetic portion of Daniel and of Matthew 24 and the book of the Revelation that pictures Israel in the final days and the time of the Antichrist.

And that's where we're headed. So let's close, shall we? Father, we recognize that much of what has been shared is sometimes difficult to grasp and put together, but we trust that the Spirit of God, who is the only really efficient revealer, will take these truths and make them understandable to us.

If anything has been uttered from the flesh or not true, we certainly want it to pass away and come to naught. And any truth that has been uttered, would you take it and seal it to our hearts that we may use it for information building upon future information.

[38 : 00] And Father, we are so grateful for your love and benevolence and for the principle of repentance that you have built in to our very being, the ability with our volition to acknowledge being wrong and wanting to embrace the right.

And we pray that this will weigh heavily on the heart and minds of anyone here, including myself, who needs to do it in any area of life, but particularly in connection with our eternal salvation.

Thank you for the presence of each one here this morning, none of whom we believe to be here by accident. We are grateful for their presence. We are especially grateful for yours. Dismiss us now, we pray in the Savior's name.

Amen.