

The Gospels: Prophecy & Promise Realized (Part 1)

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[0 : 00] Introductory to this present series, we delivered a broad sweep of the Old Testament in one fast-paced sitting. And I would suggest if you would like to maintain some semblance of continuity and have an appreciation for where we are going, you might do well to obtain that tape.

It is the first in the series, The Old Testament Prophecy and Promise. Today we'll be looking at the first segment of the Gospels and we would label it Prophecy and Promise realized.

We noted in our one fell swoop treatment of the Old Testament, which by the way was very scanty and very rapid moving, that its chief characteristic is just that, prophecy and promise.

That is the theme throughout. And of course what is prophesied and what is promised is the restitution of all things or the great theme of redemption.

We noted that the Old Testament deals with history and that most of it was negative due to man's sin and rebellion. The Old Testament is not good news per se.

[1 : 13] It is not intended to be good news. What it does is it promises and prophesies good news that's coming. But in and of itself, it is pretty much of a downer.

It is a book that is fraught with human failure, human rebellion, and human wickedness. In fact, the only bright thing that you really find in the Old Testament scriptures is the promise of God.

And that is fulfilled in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Man had made a mess of creation, but God was committed to fixing it. And that's basically the burden of the Old Testament.

That's what redemption is, and it is the theme of the whole Bible. In order for something to be redeemed, it had to have once been forfeited. In order for something to be found, it had to have once been lost.

And that is precisely what the account is that is set forth in the Old and New Testament. The Old Testament is a story of failure. It is ruin. It is rebellion on the part of man.

[2 : 20] Man has just about, as thoroughly as possible, messed up the ideal environment and creation that God has given. But God is not content to leave man in that messed up state.

He moves to do something about it. And he begins by making some promises. The first one we find, given just as soon as the need arises.

And that is, man has sinned and fallen. And in Genesis 3, that's where that is recorded. And in that same chapter, we find the promise given that the seed of the woman shall crush the head of the serpent.

That is as early as you can get. That's Genesis chapter 3. The promises begin. And they are stacked one up on top of another. God is saying, this is what man has done.

This is a sorry state of affairs to which man has brought creation. And it needs to be brought back. How am I going to do it? How am I going to fix this thing? Well, how was it ruined?

[3 : 23] The irony is, it was ruined through a man. By one man, sin entered the world. By one man's disobedience, sin entered the world.

And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. How is God going to remedy it? With a man. The man Christ Jesus. Even so, by one man shall righteousness reign unto life eternal.

Adam is the undoing of it. And Jesus Christ is the reestablishing of it. He is the redeemer. The theme is redemption. If redemption is going to be accomplished, somebody is going to have to do it.

Who is going to extricate man from this mess? Through thousands of years of history in the Old Testament, he has proved time and time again that he can't. All man can do is add to it.

But God is going to extricate man from his ruinous sin and rebellion into which he is plunged. And he is going to do that with the ideal man.

[4 : 25] With the man who knows nothing about sin. With a man who is untainted and unspotted. And he is going to reach down and call us unto himself. He is the redeemer.

Redemption is the theme of the Bible. The Old Testament is that man is lost and has brought it all to wreck and ruin. And the rest of the story is that God is providing a way back.

And the way back is through the redeemer. So this promised redeemer becomes the focal point of the Old Testament. He is found throughout. He is referred to as the Messiah.

And you need to understand that from the earliest of times in the Old Testament, as far back as we've already said, Genesis 3, up through the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all of his sons, and those that have followed in the line down since then, they have all gotten the word and they are all plugged into the concept, somebody's coming.

He's going to fix it all. He'll be the redeemer. He'll be the Messiah. We don't know when he's coming, but one of these times he is going to appear on the scene.

[5 : 39] And do you know, and you've got to understand this, you'll never appreciate the Old Testament, you'll never appreciate the New, if you don't understand this. This one important concept I'm going to tell you right now, and that is this.

The Jewish mindset was so steeped in, so saturated with, the promise of a redeemer. That's all they could think about.

That's all they could talk about. They referred to this one as being the consolation of Israel. He's going to be the son of David. He'll be a direct descendant of David. They know that much.

Micah 5.2 says that he's going to be born in Bethlehem. They know that much. Isaiah 7.14 says, Behold, the Lord himself shall give you a sign, a virgin shall conceive and be with child.

They didn't really understand that. But they knew that's what Isaiah said. They knew also that Isaiah the prophet said, His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

[6 : 36] They knew that when he comes, he is going to write things for Israel. He will save his people. He will be the ultimate Jew. He will redeem his country.

And any self-respecting Jew, when he laid his pillow on the bed at night, could think maybe tomorrow the Messiah will come.

You know, devout Jews to this day, not all Jews, but devout Jews, Orthodox Jews, are still looking for the Messiah. They believe that he's yet to come. They do not believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah.

If you have ever seen pictures on television, and you probably have, of the Wailing Wall, which is about the only thing that is original that remains of ancient Judaism. And all it is is just a wall, just a big wall, with stone upon top of stone.

And you may see Jews, particularly the Orthodox Jews, men in black attire, black hats, with a full beard, and they go, and they stand there at the Wailing Wall, and they say their prayers, and they bow, and they pray, and they pray, and they take a little slip of paper, and they stick it in a crack in the Wailing Wall.

[7 : 48] And I would venture to say, you could stop any of those. When they are walking away, from having uttered their prayers at the Wailing Wall, you could stop any of them, and ask them, excuse me sir, would you mind telling me please, if it's not too personal, would you mind telling me, what you were praying about?

And I would venture to say, that almost to a man, they would say, we are praying for the coming of the Messiah. This is steeped in them.

They longed for, looked for, dreamed of, prayed for, anticipated, the coming of the Messiah. because, he is God's answer, to all of Israel's problems.

He's God's answer, to all of the world's problems. He is going to be God's ideal man. He is going to fix everything. He is going to redeem his people Israel. Oh, that God might send the Messiah.

They also called the Messiah, the consolation. The consolation of Israel. Because when he comes, he's going to console Israel. He's going to bind up her wounds. He's going to establish her, and restore her.

[8 : 57] And it's going to be so blessed. All of the Old Testament prophets, particularly Isaiah and Jeremiah, are given to what is going to happen when the Messiah comes. He's going to fix it all.

Nations will learn of war no more. They'll beat their spears into plowshares, and their swords into pruning hooks. It's going to be wonderful. Everything will be peaceful. They shall say no more, know the Lord, for everyone will know the Lord.

The knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth, as the water covers the seas. They shall hurt no more, and all my holy hill or habitation. A child will die. When a person dies at a hundred, you'll think he's but a child.

Longevity will be incredible. The deaf will hear. The lame man will leap like a heart. The blind will receive their sight. The desert shall blossom as a rose.

The Messiah is going to do all that. He is Mr. Fix-It. He is going to be absolutely wonderful beyond words. And maybe, just maybe, our generation will be the one that sees the Messiah.

[10 : 05] What an incredible thing. Now let me ask you, do you have any idea how long the nation of Israel waited before that promised Messiah came? From the earliest time in Genesis chapter 3 until that baby cried in the manger in Bethlehem.

Do you know how long it had been? 4,000 years. That's a lot of waiting. A lot of people have come and gone. A lot of disappointed generations never saw the Messiah.

Nobody knew when he was coming. Paul says in Galatians 4, when the fullness of the time was come, and that simply means God has his own precise strategic time, and no man knows when that is, but he does.

And when it comes, he will send forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

You've just got, dear friends, to understand the Old Testament against that kind of backdrop. All they could think of was this one thing. Messiah is coming. Messiah is coming.

[11 : 18] Messiah is coming. The word Messiah is, in other words, a synonym for Christ. And it means the Anointed One. The Anointed One, the Christ, and the Messiah, and Hamashiach, all mean one and the same thing.

They are all referring to the same person. And this person is going to prove to be none other than Jesus of Nazareth. That will become the issue of controversy for all of the Jews of the first century, and for many of them, even to this day.

In the Old Testament, and I'm going to resist the temptation to go back there, but I do want to give you references for those who are taking notes. In Daniel chapter 2, in verses 44 and 45, we have the promise given in the vision to Daniel that the Messiah's kingdom will be established and he will reign forever.

And it is depicted as the final, everlasting kingdom. All of the other kingdoms are deposed. The Babylonian kingdom, the Medes and the Persians are put down.

They are history. The Roman Empire, that is history. But the time is coming when the Messiah comes and the Messiah will sit on the throne of David and he will establish his kingdom and it will have no end.

[12 : 36] It will never end. Now, you cannot have a king or a kingdom without a king. In fact, it is a kingdom that makes a king a king. And it is a king having a kingdom that makes that a kingdom.

You cannot have one without the other. This becomes the watchword. It is the kingdom. The kingdom. The kingdom. The kingdom. When you read the Gospels, that's all you hear about.

Because that was forefront in the minds of all of them. And even after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, when he is giving his disciples orders, as we shall see in a couple of sessions future, in Acts chapter 1, do you know what the apostles of our Lord are still thinking of?

They ask that very penetrating question. After the death, burial, and resurrection, right before he ascends, they are all gathered together and they ask Jesus, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom?

And what they mean is, we thought you were going to do it before. But instead of you taking the throne of David and establishing your rule, you went to the cross.

[13 : 43] Boy, that really threw us. And we didn't have any idea that was going to happen. Now you have come back from the dead and we have been together for 40 days and 40 nights. Now you're talking about leaving again.

What we want to know is, are you going to establish the kingdom now? We thought you were going to before, but you didn't. Are you going to do it now? Huh? And it's significant. Jesus didn't say, well, fellows, the kingdom is already in place.

You just aren't able to recognize it. You see, it is a spiritual kingdom. He didn't say that. What he said was, it is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power, but you shall receive power.

After that, the Holy Spirit has come upon you and so on and so on. He never denied that there was going to be a kingdom and he certainly should have set them straight if they had it all wrong, but he didn't. And what he meant was, yes, there is going to be a kingdom, but it isn't going to be established immediately.

It will be established in accordance with the Father's good time. So the Jew is thinking in terms of a Messiah and when the Messiah comes, he's going to take charge. He's going to rule.

[14 : 50] He's going to fix everything that needs to be fixed. I tell you, there will not be any more injustice. There won't be any more racism. There won't be any more hatred. There won't be any more strife.

There won't be any more wars. This is the millennium we're talking about. This is utopia on earth. No political system can create this. Not communism, not capitalism, not democracy.

Nobody can accomplish this. Only God can accomplish this and he is going to do it through the Messiah, through the Redeemer. He is going to establish his kingdom and it will extend to all nations of the earth because he will be the king of all kings and the Lord of all lords.

And all the nations shall flow into Jerusalem and they will take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew and say, we have heard that God is with you. We will go with you. Israel is going to be the central nation for the whole planet earth.

Jerusalem is going to be the world capital and Jesus Christ is going to be the world ruler. We're talking about the second coming. You know, a lot of people find that very hard to believe.

[16 : 08] I just can't get into that. You know, that just seems so strange and so forth. I just, it's, well, the first coming is pretty strange too.

but it was fulfilled exactly as it was prophesied. I don't think it is a bit more strange that Jesus Christ is going to return the second time than that he was born of a virgin the first time.

That still absolutely blows me away how God orchestrated that, but he did. He did. Without the instrumentality of a human father, Jesus Christ was born of a virgin.

And I say that without apology and without reservation. And that's what the word teaches. And it is unique and critical to the person and work of the Messiah. And as miraculous as that was, just use it, if you will, and build on it for the reality that he is coming again.

He's promised that he will come again. When will it be? I don't know. They waited 4,000 years for him to come the first time. We've only waited 2,000. I don't know when he's coming.

[17 : 13] Maybe in our lifetime. Maybe not. But he's coming. And when he comes, it will be glorious. Let's go now to the Gospels. Luke's Gospel, Chapter 1.

Very familiar portion, but we've got to look at it. Maybe you'll see it in a little different light now. Luke's Gospel, Chapter 1. The kingdom is promised in Daniel 2.

It is reiterated in Daniel 9, where the 70 weeks prophecy is given and the Messiah is going to be cut off at the end of 69 weeks. The 70th is yet to occur, and that is the 70th week of Daniel, which is the Great Tribulation period.

Also, in 2 Samuel, Chapter 7, God promises to David that a king of his loins, a son, an heir of his loins, would sit on his throne and it would be established forever.

And the Jews, if the Jews know anything, I mean the devout Jews of the first century, they knew the Old Testament. they were not like the Jews of today. If you talk to the average Jew today, he would have to have the table of contents to find the book of Leviticus because he's just not very well read, not even in his Old Testament.

[18 : 25] But the Jew of Jesus' day had succeeded, many of them, in committing extremely lengthy portions of Scripture, whole books, some of them, to memory.

and if they knew anything, they knew the Messiah was coming, he's going to establish his kingdom, and it's going to be glorious. They knew that. Now look, if you will, at Luke chapter 1 and verse 26.

Very familiar portion. You hear this every Christmas time, I'm sure. In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David.

That's very, very important. Very important. You can look at the genealogy in Matthew, we'll not turn there, but in Matthew 1, the genealogy of Jesus is given.

And it is unmistakable that his legal parent, Joseph, and Joseph is the legal father of Jesus, not the real father, but the legal father, and he is traced right back to King David.

[19 : 38] Interesting thing is, in Luke's genealogy of the Lord Jesus, we find the pedigree of Mary given, and she also traces her genealogy right back to King David.

So both David, or both Mary and Joseph, are direct descendants of David. David, but you see, apart from the fact of Jesus being born with a sin nature, if Joseph were his earthly father, that's one complication, and another complication is the fact that if Mary was the mother, and Joseph was the real father of Jesus, he would have been ineligible to sit on the throne, because Joseph was descended through the line of Jeconiah, and Jeconiah was under the divine curse, wherein God said no seed of Jeconiahs would ever sit on the throne, but Mary was not of the seed of Jeconiah because the line branched off and went in a different direction, and Mary was born of David through Nathan.

Incredible. Just so beautiful the way that works out. The scriptures are just so wonderfully accurate, it just boggles your mind. And how anybody can look at these things and think for one moment that the Bible is just a human book put together by a bunch of people who wanted to espouse their own particular ideas about religion.

Incredible that anybody could study this and come to that kind of conclusion. Verse 28, And coming in he said to her, the angel said to her, Hail, favored one, the Lord is with you.

But she was greatly troubled. Well, she had a right to be. I mean, after all, she was probably a young lass, and how many young ladies have been subjected to an experience like this? She kept pondering at what kind of salutation this might be, and the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary.

[21 : 38] I would suggest that she was demonstrating some fear, and the angel simply trying to calm her down. She's probably trembling. I would think anyone would be, and would have a right to be. And he God.

Do you know what that means? It means just exactly what it says. It is the same thing that occurred on behalf of Noah.

It doesn't mean that God looked down on Mary, and he wanted to see what woman was qualified, and capable, and worthy of bearing the body of his son, and he scanned the whole of the human race, and he found Mary.

It doesn't mean that at all. It means that Mary was a recipient of grace in the same way Noah was. She was favored in that she found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and God chose her, because it is God's nature to be gracious, it isn't man's nature to be worthy.

We must understand that. She is selected. What an enormous privilege, and I have no doubt, whatever, that like Noah was a remarkable man, I'm satisfied that Mary was an extremely remarkable young woman.

[22 : 51] woman, but Mary was a woman with a flawed life, just like all the rest of us, just like Noah. The only person who ever lived without a flawed life was Jesus Christ.

You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David.

Incredible! Now wait a moment. Remember, David the king, direct ancestor of Jesus has been dead for a thousand years.

He's been dead for a thousand years when the angel is talking to Mary here. And of course there have been many descendants of David, and many of them have sat on the throne. Who was on the throne at this time?

Well, Herod was the king of Judea. He was nothing but an imposter. He was phony. I mean, he had the legal right to rule.

[24 : 02] Because Israel was a subjugated country. They weren't calling their own shots. Israel was a conquered country. They were beaten. Militarily, they were oppressed and beaten down.

And the Caesar of Rome, the Caesar of Rome appointed Herod to be the king of Judea. He wasn't of the line of David.

He wasn't even a Jew. He was a Nidimian. He was a rascal. He had no more right to the throne at all. But he was occupying the throne.

You can see why that old boy got a little restless when the wise men came from the east and said, we have heard that is born the king of the Jews. We've come to worship him. Herod says, whoa.

Wait a minute. What is this competition you're talking about? King of the Jews? And his mischievous mind began working. And when you find him, let me know so I can come and worship him too.

[25 : 03] I want to worship him with a knife about that long. He was intimidated by that. man. Well, he should have been. He wasn't entitled to that throne.

And when Mary is told here that the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end.

Now, the big rub is this. Here's the question. Is he reigning on this throne now? Some are persuaded that he is.

Some are persuaded that when he went, when he ascended to heaven, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, and that David's throne is in heaven, and Christ is sitting on the throne now, and he is ruling and reigning in righteousness now in fulfillment of this prophecy.

But then you have some real problems because when the Messiah is reigning, there isn't going to be any more famine, there isn't going to be any more war, there isn't going to be any more injustice, there isn't going to be any more illness, it's going to be wonderful.

[26 : 13] Frankly, in all due respect, if Jesus Christ is reigning now in accordance with the Old Testament prophecy, if I may say so, he's not doing all that great a job.

I do not believe I do not believe that the kingdom on earth or that the will of the Father is being done on earth as it is in heaven.

No question but what God is sovereign. He has always been the sovereign Lord of his universe and he always will be. But I cannot believe for a moment that the prayer, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

I cannot believe that that has been answered. If you want to say that it is answered in the sense that God is sovereign in all affairs, then the will of God has always been done and there's no point to pray about it because it always has been done, always will be done.

It's not even a subject of prayer. But that's not what he's saying. it is a prayer for the coming of the kingdom. And either the kingdom has come and it is in existence right now and it is a spiritual kingdom and that's all the kingdom there's going to be or the kingdom is yet future.

[27 : 31] Now it's got to be one way or the other. One is spiritual and the other is literal. And I cannot, I cannot spiritualize it and allow it to have any impact or to make any sense at all.

Mary said to the angel, how can this be since I am a virgin? She really, I'm sure, is in shock and hasn't grasped the implications of it.

And it's an extremely difficult and trying thing for, but of course, it turns out to be a great blessing. Now while we're here in Luke, and I don't want to skip around too very much, but let's come over to chapter two, to another very familiar portion.

Luke's gospel, chapter two, and if I may, I'll just jump in with verse four. You see, in verse one, it talks about Caesar Augustus. He's the man who was calling the shots. He is ruling the land of Israel from Rome, and he sends his lackeys over there, and he sends a few thousand Roman soldiers.

And Pontius Pilate is one of the right-hand men. He's kind of like an ambassador, if you will, in residence there. And he, Pontius Pilate to the Jew, during the time Jesus was alive, was much like General Douglas MacArthur was to the Japanese after World War II.

[28 : 50] He just kind of moved in and took charge, and he drew up a new constitution for Japan, and he laid down the law, and he says, you people are a conquered people, you surrendered unconditionally, you're going to do what we tell you.

The first thing he did was made Hirohito get on the radio nationwide to Japan and tell the people that they were all mistaken, that he wasn't God. And they used that for starters, and they went from there, and they built a whole new government in Japan.

Well, in many respects, there are a lot of similarities between that and what Pontius Pilate did for the Jew, but there was no way in the world that he could knock the monotheism out of the Jew. The Romans were given to polytheism, they worshipped many gods that never did accommodate the Jew, and they had more problems.

The Roman army had more problems keeping the peace in little old tiny Israel than they did the rest of the world put together, because those Jews were so religiously fanatical and insistent on pursuing their worship of the one true God.

In Luke chapter 2, beginning with verse 4, Joseph also went up from Galilee from the city of Nazareth to Judea, the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David.

[30 : 03] Skip down to verse 10, please. And the angel said to them, Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people, for today in the city of David, Bethlehem, there has been born for you a Savior who is Christ the Messiah.

This is it! And when the angel says this, I'm telling you, it's like a bombshell. I mean, they had prayed, they had been promised, they had anticipated, they had dreamed, they had yearned for, they had cried for.

And the angel said, This is it, folks! 4,000 years of waiting! And here he is! This babe lying in a manger. How electrifying and shocking that must have been.

My, oh my! Come over while we're still in Luke, if you will. And may we begin with verse 36, when they come to present Jesus in the temple, there is a prophetess there, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel.

She is going to prophesy. She's 84 years old, she's been laboring and serving in the temple. And verse 38 is a very significant verse. And at that very moment, she came up and began giving thanks to God and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

[31 : 43] Folks, that really means something. These were devout people. They were looking for the redemption or the liberation of Jerusalem.

Who's going to liberate it? The Messiah. And now they're talking about the Messiah. And you better believe ears are perking up all over the place. Also, while we're in Luke, come over, if you will, to chapter, well, right here in the same chapter.

We won't stray away. Look at this, if you will. Verse 25. Luke 2, verse 25. Simeon, an elderly man.

He was righteous and devout. And what's he looking for? Praying for? Thinking of? Dreaming of? Look at it. Looking for the consolation of Israel. That's another way of saying he's looking for the Messiah to come.

I mean, this man is so wrapped up in the promises of God and his promise of a Messiah he's... But read on. The Holy Spirit was upon him and it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he, Simeon, would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ or the Lord's Messiah.

[33 : 03] Holy Spirit told Simeon, relax, Simeon, you are not going to die until you with your own eyes have looked upon the one who was promised and looked for for 4,000 years.

You know, if it were not for divine intervention and for divine protection, if this old boy had a heart condition, surely that would finish him off. It would be such an incredible message.

But God had promised him, you're not going to die until you see the Messiah. He'd have to know, well, either I'm going to live to be 600 or 800 years old or I'm going to die when most people do and it can't be too far away and the Messiah is going to come and it's a most beautiful, tender, endearing story.

I think this is my very, very favorite in the childhood life of Jesus. Verse 27 says, He came in the Spirit into the temple and when the parents, Joseph and Mary, brought in the child Jesus to carry out for him the custom of the law, why were they doing that?

Because Jesus was a Jew. Do you know Jesus wasn't a Christian? Lots of people might take offense at that. I've talked to people who think not only was Jesus a Christian, he was the first Christian and he was the best Christian that there ever was and he founded the Christian faith and those are all wrong statements, every one of them.

[34 : 32] And it is thinking that way that keeps people befuddled with the revelation of Scripture. I'll explain what I mean in a moment. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to carry out for him the custom of the law, then he, Simeon, took him into his arms and he blessed God and said, Now, Lord, thou dost let thy bondservant depart.

He's talking about himself and he says, To depart in peace according to thy word. And what that means, translated, is Simeon says, I can die in peace now. Now I'm ready to die.

Old man, probably tired, worn out, hanging on because of this promise. And Joseph and Mary bring this little baby boy in who is six weeks of age, cradled in her arms.

And Simeon is standing there. This is a big area. Temple courtyard. Big area. People are milling around, coming and going. Lots of people there. And the Spirit of God whispers in Simeon's ear, There he is.

There he is. Right over there. And Simeon whirls and looks and he sees a mother and a father with a baby in arms.

[35 : 51] And he walks over to them. And he took him into his arms. I've often wondered about that. What would you, as a new mother with a six-week-old baby, think if some old man, probably with a beard half down to the floor, teetering over, walks over to you and reaches out his arms for your little six-week-old baby?

I don't think she had any question at all. I think she knew everything was all right. And this godly, godly old man, wrinkled, beard, I can see now, walks over and holds out his arms.

And Mary takes baby Jesus and puts him in Simeon's arms. And don't tell me that old man didn't cry. There had to be a tear trickle down his cheek.

And he holds that little baby and lifts his heart to God and says, Now, Lord, let us, thou, thy servant, depart in peace. For mine eyes have seen your salvation.

[37 : 01] Here he is, right here. This is the Redeemer. Four thousand years we've waited. And here he is in my arms.

They conducted the purification rites for Mary. Indicating again that she was a flawed person like all the rest.

And Simeon goes on to give a sad prophecy that actually foretells the death of the Lord Jesus and the great anguish of heart that is going to be caused Mary.

She doesn't know what it means. But thirty-three years later, Mary will remember when she stands at the foot of the cross and sees her son up there. Then she will remember and the sword will pierce your own heart also that the thoughts and intents of many may be revealed.

Then she'll know. Simeon will have long since been dead. We don't know how long he lived after this. Possibly not long at all. Jesus lives in relative obscurity.

[38 : 13] We don't have much information about his childhood. Only one incident when he was twelve years of age. But, I would have you note that he was born in accordance with what Paul says in the fullness of time.

Born under the law to redeem them that were under the law. Jesus labored and ministered under the Old Testament economy. Folks, I'm going to make a statement that is so simple it is not profound at all.

Not profound at all. Very simple. Very basic. But, I am absolutely amazed at how many people do not know this and do not understand it and it locks them out.

of much of the understanding of the New Testament. And that is this. The New Testament, the New Covenant, did not begin with the birth of Jesus.

The dispensation of grace did not begin with the birth of Jesus. The New Covenant began with the death of Jesus. That's at the end of the Gospels.

[39 : 16] It's not at the beginning. Why do you think Jesus was circumcised the eighth day? Because he was a Jew. He had to be circumcised if you were a Jew.

Why did they present him at the temple when he was six months old? And why did Mary offer these turtle doves as means for her purification? It's because they were Jews. Jesus was a Jew.

And when you look here in verse 41 of chapter 2, and his parents used to go to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover, and he became twelve, he went up there according to the custom of the feast. Why did he do that?

He was a Jew. Jesus, we are told by Paul in Romans 15.8, was a minister, came as a minister to the circumcision in order to fulfill the promises given to the fathers.

Who were the fathers? Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David. God made promises to them. And Christ is the fulfillment of those promises. And he was sent to the Jew, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, as a Jew, to redeem the Jew.

[40 : 24] The most significant and tragic thing about the whole situation is that even though he was sent to his own, his own received him not.

Why didn't they recognize him as the Messiah? I mean, he had all the credentials, the miracles that he worked. The teachings that he relayed, his character and manner, had all the credentials of the Messiah.

And their response was, we will not have this man to rule over us. Crucify him! Crucify him! Away with him! How could they have been so blind? How could they have missed him? Some didn't.

But most did. Why? He was born a Jew, lived a Jew, died a Jew, was raised from the dead a glorified Jew, and when he returns, he will be a Jewish conquering king.

Now, if you have a thing about anti-Semitism, if you've got a bad thing for the Jews, that's tough because you're going to live under the authority of one. If you are a believer, you'll be reoriented to it then the way you ought to be.

[41 : 53] When I said that Jesus Christ was not a Christian, I better explain that because some people will go out of here and think, I visited a Bible church this morning and got my first dose of blasphemy.

In order to be a Christian, you have to, first of all, be a moral failure. You understand that?

In order to be a Christian, you have to be a sinner. You can't become a Christian unless you're a sinner. And Jesus Christ certainly doesn't qualify for he was born without spot and without blemish.

He who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. So in order for someone to become a Christian, he has to confront the fact that he is a moral, spiritual failure.

That he is a spiritual waste. That he has nothing to commend him to God. And when you see yourself, as God sees you, morally bankrupt, unfit, undeserving, no claim upon the grace of God, only when you come to that place is there hope for you.

[43 : 12] Then, you may become a Christian. Then, you can embrace the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. You see, Jesus is not a Christian because he's never been redeemed.

Christians are redeemed sinners who are given the official status of saints, even though there are plenty of times when we aren't too saintly in our behavior. We have the official category of saint.

And Jesus Christ cannot become a Christian because that would necessitate a moral need. And he has no moral needs. Some think that he came to found the Christian religion and Christianity is what Christ has founded.

Well, that isn't true either. He didn't come to found the Christian religion. He came to fulfill the promises that God gave to the fathers. And to a large measure, he has done that.

And the Christian faith that has resulted as a result of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is not something that he came to accomplish per se. That has been the result of the rejection and setting aside of Israel.

[44 : 21] Israel. And what has come into the fore then is the church, which is the body of Christ. And we'll be looking more at that later on. May we go quickly, please, to John's Gospel, chapter 1.

And with this, we'll wrap up our study. And I think you'll have enough to chew on until next week. And then we'll have our second segment in the Gospels. John's Gospel, chapter 1.

And verse 29. This is with the ministry of John the Baptizer. I can't tell you how much I love this man. How much I appreciate him. My very favorite people.

Of course, I don't even list Christ as one of my favorites because he's totally unique and in a category all of his own and you don't compare him with anybody. He stands unparalleled and incomparable.

But among men, mere men, my favorite, of course, has to be the Apostle Paul. And I think that my second favor is John the Baptizer.

[45 : 32] What an incredible human being. John, John, in a time of great political distress and a time of great national depression, spiritually, morally, every other way for the nation of Israel, John is raised up, born six months ahead of Jesus, designed to be the forerunner.

His mother and John's mother were cousins. And when John appears out in the wilderness with his message that Jews have been waiting for 4,000 years to hear and it came in a way that they didn't understand or didn't appreciate or didn't know that it would come that way, keep in mind that when Malachi laid down his pen for the Old Testament, 400 years, four centuries had gone by and God hadn't said anything.

The heavens had been silent. There had been no revelation at all. 400 years. And the people had come in and plundered Israel and left and new people came in and plundered Israel and they ruined the walls and they sacked the city and they burned the temple and they destroyed it at least twice.

They carried away thousands and thousands of Jews into captivity. Now they are back in the land. Now they have a renegade king that doesn't even belong to them who's on the throne.

Now they're taking orders from Rome. Now they're paying money into the coffers of Rome. They can't stand it because it's a heathen government. They are oppressed people. They are as low as you can get.

[47 : 03] The spiritual hierarchy of Israel was not good for them. It was nothing but bad, wicked, given over to Caiaphas and Annas the high priest and their lackeys. They'd made a money-making proposition out of cheating the yokels who came to town to keep the feasts out of their money and the money changers and selling them animals that hyped up inflated prices for sacrifices.

That was a mess. It was a mess. And John the baptizer appears on the scene out in the wilderness crying, Repent! Repent! The kingdom of heaven is at hand!

And it sent shockwaves through the whole country. Thousands of people came out. Thousands came out and lined the banks where John was. And he began preaching and baptizing those.

And what he was saying is this. Folks, the kingdom that God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and David is around the corner.

It's coming! What you need to do as a nation is get ready, repent of your sin, and make moral, spiritual preparation for the coming of the Messiah because he's on the way.

[48 : 13] He's going to be here shortly. The Messiah is coming. The kingdom is at hand. Why, these people were absolutely beside themselves. You talk about a revolutionary message.

I mean, they've been looking for this for 4,000 years. Could it be? Is this it? Is it really it? Verse 29, John 1. The next day, he saw Jesus coming to him and said, Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

This is he on behalf of whom I said after me comes a man who has a higher rank than I for he existed before me. And I did not recognize him. Now, I want you to look at this.

This is a very important statement. John says, I did not recognize him, but in order that he, this Messiah, might be manifested to Israel, declared, revealed, showed openly, put on display for Israel, I came baptizing in water.

And John bore witness, saying, I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and he remained upon him. Why was Jesus baptized? Because he was a Jew.

[49 : 29] He wasn't baptized for the same reason all the others were. They were baptized for repentance unto remission of sins. But you can't place that tag on Jesus.

He was baptized to identify himself with this believing remnant of Israel, and he was baptized to fulfill the law, because thus, when John refused to baptize him, Jesus said, Suffer it now to be so, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.

Listen, I haven't come to destroy the law. I've come to fulfill the law. And what that means is, I am obligated to do everything that the law prescribes a loyal, devout, obedient Jew to do.

And I'm not going to cut any corners. And they baptized him. The confusion that has come out of that is absolutely incredible. You talk to people about water baptism, why do you think, well, Jesus was baptized?

And the famous phrase is, and I want to follow the Lord in baptism. I appreciate and I sympathize with the motive and the desire and the intent.

[50 : 38] I want to follow the Lord in baptism. Well, okay, if you're going to do that, are you going to follow the Lord in circumcision? Oh, well, you don't have to do that.

Well, now, wait a minute. If it's law, let it be law. Of course, you've got to keep the feast days. You've got to do everything else that's prescribed.

this baptism was a really unique thing. It meant something to the Jew and we'll explore that a little bit later. This is a fascinating passage.

Now, while we're here also in John's Gospel chapter 1, I want you to look and read, I just get so excited about this. He has arrived on the scene.

He's been making acquaintances. He's been gathering a following. For time's sake, let's skip down to John's Gospel chapter 1 and verse 40.

[51 : 40] One of the two who heard John speak, that is, John the baptizer, and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He found first his own brother, Simon.

That's Peter. And he said to him, now look at what he said. Look at what he said. We have found the Messiah. Oh man, I'm telling you, to make a statement like that, you're either right or you are completely out to lunch.

There's no two ways of slicing it. Either you have or you haven't. And if you have found the Messiah, this is the greatest find, this is the greatest discovery, this is amazing, or you're dead wrong.

One of the two. But they knew full well what the implications are. We have found the Messiah, which translated means Christ. He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, you are Simon, the son of John.

You shall be called Cephas, which translated means Peter. The next day he purposed to go forth into Galilee, and he found Philip. And Jesus said to him, follow me. Now, Philip was from Bethsaida of the city of Andrew and Peter.

[52 : 52] Philip found Nathanael and said to him, we have found him. We have found him of whom Moses and the law and also the prophets wrote.

And guess who it is? Who? Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said to him, wait a minute.

That can't be. I got you. Got you. Right there. You can't have the right guy. Jesus, the son of Joseph, Nazareth, nope.

He's disqualified, sorry, case of mistaken identity. No way that anything good can come out of Nazareth. Absolutely unthinkable that the cherished, promised, exalted Messiah of whom Moses and the prophets did speak, the one that we have been looking for for 4,000 years comes out of Nazareth?

No way. Well, the truth of the matter is he didn't come out of Nazareth. He came out of Bethlehem. He was reared in Nazareth. And that makes a lot of difference.

[54 : 02] Nathaniel said to him, can any good thing come out of Nazareth? I love Philip's response. I love it. I love it to death. Philip said to him, come and see.

Hey, I'm not interested in trying to put forth any arguments. I don't want to try to convince you. I'm not going to try to overwhelm you with logic. All I want you to do is come and see.

Make up your own mind. And when Nathaniel does, he ends up signing on. This kingdom that John proclaims and the kingdom that Jesus continued proclaiming is of just incalculable importance.

And the thing that strikes me that just jumps off the page and grabs me when I read this in all of the gospels, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel.

The kingdom of heaven is at hand. That phrase is found all throughout the gospels. But the thing that is so super significant is this. It is never defined.

[55 : 15] It's never explained. That's somewhat mystifying. I mean, how is it that such an important theme that recurs again and again and again is never anywhere explained?

What is the explanation? For there being no explanation. There's only one to which I can come. Only one possible conclusion. Now, it would have seemed perfectly appropriate.

John says, Repent! Repent! The kingdom of heaven is at hand! The kingdom of heaven is at hand! I can easily visualize somebody going up to John when he's finished his message and is walking away and he's got his hanky out mopping his brow.

It's very hot there. And someone taps him on the shoulder and says, Excuse me, Mr. John the Baptist, would you mind telling me what do you mean the kingdom of heaven is at hand?

What's that? Nobody ever did. Or if they did, it isn't recorded. And I submit, the reason the kingdom is talked about over and over and over again and never explained is because there was no need for any explanation.

[56 : 22] Every Jew knew what was meant. It was crystal clear to them. They knew what the implications were. They knew that a kingdom meant a king and a messiah.

They knew what the promise of restoration and redemption was. They understood all that. They had cut their teeth on this stuff. It was bred into them. I'll tell you how I think it would register by way of comparison if I said something that I think was just as familiar to them using something that is just as familiar to you.

what would you think if I told you it's starting to rain. Go out and roll the windows up in your car. The rain is coming and everybody sits there and nobody moves and the reason you don't move is because you don't have any idea what rain is.

You don't even know what I'm talking about. You just sit there. Now how stupid would that be? Because if there's anything that I don't have to explain to you this is what rain is.

When I say it's raining it's raining are you going to sit there? What's he talking about? What is rain? Everybody nobody needs to explain even to a three year old child what rain is.

[57 : 42] You know what rain is. Nobody needed to explain to a Jew what it meant. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Get ready. God is going to do something and it's going to be fantastic.

The Messiah is here. This thing is getting wound up. It's going to happen. We've been looking for the consolation of Israel and here it is in the person of Jesus of Nazareth the son of David.

Well that's an introduction to the gospels. we have yet to deal with the subject of the Sermon on the Mount which we will touch on and we will see what application it does and does not have to us today and then we'll be moving on hopefully in one more session completing the gospels and then into the Acts of the Apostles and I've never had anything open up to me the whole plan and program of God like an understanding of the Acts of the Apostles has.

It is absolutely incredible. I must confess and I do not do this with any pride. It's sure nothing to be proud of. I struggled with the gospels and I struggled with the Acts and I struggled with things that I could not make fit for about the first 15 years of my Christian life.

Parts of this Bible were all locked up and parts of it were unlocked and I couldn't make head nor tail out of a lot of it until I came into an appreciation and understanding of what I am giving you right now and what you'll be getting in the next few weeks and I have never had anything open the book and make me love the book so much and search the book so much and find so much comfort and blessing from the book as I have these principles and if they do for you what they've done for me you'll really come to appreciate it.

[59 : 44] This book becomes alive. You will see how it fits and how it connects and how it relates and it is just such a blessing.

You are really in for something if you get half of what I got. I'm excited for you. We've got three minutes. Questions or comments? May we stand?

Our Father, we are so grateful for the redemption that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. We who are believers, we who are Christians, have at one time in our life come to grips with the fact that we are morally undone.

We have nothing to commend us to you. We are bankrupt, guilty sinners and that's why Jesus Christ died to provide redemption for us that we could never provide for ourselves.

We marvel at that great grace gift and we want to extol it and we want to explore it and we want to be blessed by it in a way that we never have as a congregation.

[61 : 01] to take on the for seventy- vara and I thank you for this played and if the is forgive us and if you want to see the Caribou and our right let's have a smart anderen privilege find it as you and although each is a artificial edge