

**The Great Commission: Proclaiming Forgiveness to the World, Part 1**

Luke 24:44–49

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This morning we come to verse 44 in Luke 24, open your Bible, if you will, to the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke, the last chapter and the Scripture we're going to be looking at is verse 44 through verse 49. Before we do that, I need to give you a little bit of an introduction to the introduction.

After ten years and two months in the gospel of Luke, we cannot just finish or end or stop. We have to complete our study and that's different. Any book that I ever begin, begins with an overview and some kind of an introduction. If you have a MacArthur Study Bible, you can see that to every book of the Bible there is an introduction, material that helps you access the book in an more efficient and understanding way. We cannot come to the end of ten years plus in the gospel of Luke and just stop. We have to grasp why it ends the way it ends and all the implications that are contained in that ending.

Consequently, it's too much of a task for me to take you through verses 44 to 49 this morning so I'm going to keep you here all day. (Laughter) No I'm not, I wouldn't do that to you. But I am going to take you half way through this text this morning and the other half will be tonight. We cannot just look in a superficial way at the section before us.

This section, verses 44 to 49, sweeps back to the beginning of revelation, in the book of Genesis, and all the way to the end of redemptive history. It looks at the mural of salvation from its start to its finish. It is a sweeping conclusion, very, very carefully crafted by Luke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It must be understood in its richness in order for us to bring this book not to an end, not to a finish, not to a stop, but to a culmination and a completion in the intended way that it is written.

In this portion of Scripture, verses 44 to 49, there is in verse 47 the main focus of these words of our Lord, that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name. That is Luke's version of the great commission. Jesus is saying, the message that you are to preach from now on is the message that calls men to repent and be forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ. This then is the great commission, this is the mission mandate. The parallel, Matthew's account; what I read you earlier in the service, Matthew 28:16 to 20. There you have other elements and details. And, of course, what we have in the Scripture is just a brief summary or a specific rendering of what He said at one point, but not the whole conversation. You can put Matthew's account with Luke's account and you get the complete revelation of this great mission mandate.

The gospel of Luke ends then putting the reader in the same place as the Apostles and the disciples, as being responsible for the proclamation of what you now know. The end of the book will be written by us, it will be written by you and me and all believers who obey this commission. The story is not over, the mural has not been fully painted. Although it is outlined by God, it has to be filled in in the living cover of evangelical testimony all the way to the end till the Lord brings all human history to its

climax, its finish.

So what happens here in this portion of Luke 24 is we are taken briefly back to the beginning of this mural of salvation that sweeps through all of redemptive history and then we are sent out and we can see looking forward to its end. And we're part of it. And so, today and both this morning and tonight, the implications of this entire understanding that you now have of the life and work of Jesus Christ are going to be laid upon you. Since you know now what you know, you have great responsibility for the proclamation of what you now know. You not only know it because it's written in the gospel of Luke, but you know it because you've experienced it, because you belong to God, you belong to Christ, you stand, as it were, in the shadow of the Apostles and the disciples who received this command to go to the world with the message of repentance and forgiveness in the name of Jesus Christ, and you carry the same responsibility that they had in their generation. The baton has been passed down every generation. It's ours and we will pass it to the next.

So what we have then in verses 44 to 49 is the Lord's mandate for the church in the world. Let me read the whole text to you so you have it in mind.

"Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you but you're to stay in the city until you're clothed with power from on high.'"

Matthew tells us that Jesus said to His followers on a mountain as He was giving them this commission, "You are to go and make disciples among all the nations, bringing them to salvation and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and lo, I am with you always."

Luke's version of it is the commissioning of the followers of Christ to take what they now know is true concerning Christ of what they are personal witnesses, as verse 48 indicates, and spread it across the world. This is the all-consuming purpose for all of us and always has been.

It is essential to understand this because we can get caught up in the life of the world around us and we can even get caught up in the life of the church, forgetting for a moment the life of the world around us which we assume you would understand has no bearing on the Kingdom of God. Let's just talk about the life that we live as Christians in the world which does have bearing on the advancement of the Kingdom of God. We get caught up in good things like learning, teaching, doctrine, reading about sound doctrine, understanding sound doctrine. We get caught up in good things like worship, singing, praising God, listening to Christian music. We get caught up in the good things of fellowship, being together, sharing our lives together, enriching one another, ministering our gifts to each other, comforting, encouraging one another. We get caught up in prayer. We get involved in Christian service of all kinds for the sake of the advance of the church. We pursue holiness in our own lives. And all these things are commanded of us in Scripture but none of them is the goal. All of them are simply means to the goal and the goal is to proclaim the gospel and to undergird that proclamation with a life of credibility and spiritual integrity. We are living in a kind of life that will make the message of the gospel believable. That's why we have all of these components.

Scriptures tell us how to fellowship. Scriptures teach us doctrine. The Scriptures tell us how to worship, how to obey, how to be holy, how to serve, how to pray. That's never the goal. That's never the end. Your spiritual growth is not the end. It is not the goal and it's not the objective. The Lord has given to the church Apostles and Prophets and evangelists and teaching pastors for the edifying of the saints, for the perfecting of the saints that the body might be mature so that, Ephesians 4, we may speak the truth in love...so that we may be able to give to every man who asks us a reason for the hope that is in us with meekness and fear, so that we may, as the Apostle Paul said, be able to speak in a way that our speech is seasoned with salt and it goes forward with an impact and an effect on people concerning the gospel. We are, as Paul was, doing what we do for the sake of non-believers that the gospel may come to them and salvation may come to them for the glory of God, 2 Corinthians 4:15, adding voices to the Hallelujah chorus. We live for this. All these other things are merely means to our maturity and our spiritual integrity so we can live a life that undergirds the message and don't come across as hypocrites.

So if you do all of those things, but never proclaim the gospel, you have forfeited the purpose for which all the others exist. God has called His people since this great commission, to be the agents by whom He gathers His elect by whom He collects the bride for His Son. Jesus even came and said, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost," Luke 19:10, that's why He came, to seek and save the lost. And He has passed the baton to us and we do the seeking from the human viewpoint, He does the seeking and the saving from the divine side.

This is consistent with God's nature from Adam and Eve. In the Garden where it says in chapter 3 of Genesis that God was seeking them, saying, "Adam, where are you?" From Genesis where that occurs to the last invitation in the last chapter of Revelation, Revelation 22:17 where Scripture says, "Whoever wills, let him come...come." God all through has been seeking and all of Scripture is the painting of that mural up until the end of Scripture and we continue to paint it by the power of the Holy Spirit until it's fully complete. But the goal of human history is so that God can redeem men and women to take them to glory as a bride for His Son to serve and honor and worship His Son forever and ever and ever. The church doesn't have a mission department, the church is a mission. You're not chosen or elected to be members of a mission committee, you're a missionary, it's just a question of where and how effective or how ineffective.

There is no escaping this. There is no gift of evangelism. There is no gift of missionary. We are all responsible for this. The church is composed of missionaries, the church is a mission in the world. The world is an alien culture and we are here in a foreign land, we are citizens of heaven, we are left here. Our citizenship is there. We are left here and God even endures our stumbling worship and our stumbling obedience and our stumbling prayer and our stumbling effort at holiness and all the rest to leave us here because there's one thing we can do here we'll never do in heaven and that is evangelize the lost. So we're all missionaries. We need then to learn the implications that are laid upon us in this passage before us.

Now as we look at these verses, they're really monumental. And again, with an economy of words, our Lord says everything that needs to be said to sum up the essence of the gospel. And there are several elements of this gospel mandate that I want to talk to you about this morning and then tonight. It is biblical, our Lord says, it is historical, it is transformational, it is Christological, it is personal and it is supernatural. Now those are the components of the gospel that are laid out by our Lord. And it's critical to lay them out because He's essentially saying to them, "I'm leaving,". This is

the great passing of the baton and they need to have it right and they need to do it right. They need to be obedient to this commission.

And they were. And so were many others generation after generation, after generation and so are many of us. Now we're going to look at those points, but before we do, some general observations that I want to make for you.

The book ends having proven what it claimed at the beginning. What did it claim at the beginning? Let's go back to the beginning. Luke chapter 1, verse 35, the angel comes to Mary. The angel says this, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you and for that reason the holy child shall be called the Son of God." The promise of the angel would be that Mary would have a child who would be the Son of God. The rest of this history proves that did happen. Mary had a baby when she was a virgin who was the Son of God. It was proven by His life, His miracles, His power over demons, His teaching and by His resurrection. He was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead, Paul says. What the book promised was that it was going to be a history of the Son of God. And when you come to the end, it has proven to be exactly that.

Furthermore, in the first chapter, Zechariah, the priest filled with the Holy Spirit, who was the father of John the Baptist, is given a wonderful, wonderful prophecy concerning the coming Messiah and He says in verse 69 that the Messiah who will accomplish redemption for His people is a horn of salvation...a horn of salvation. In other words, the angel says to Mary He's going to be the Son of God; the Holy Spirit says to Zechariah He is going to be the one who provides salvation. Down in verse 77, "He will give the people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins because of the tender mercy of our God."

So the book begins with a promise that the one who comes will be the Son of God, that He will provide salvation which is defined as the forgiveness of sins. That's what the book promised, that's what the book delivered. When you come to chapter 24, you can go back to our text, indeed, Jesus Christ came, the Son of God suffered, died, rose again the third day and provided forgiveness of sins in His name. So the book ends having proven what it promised at the beginning.

Since He died and rose again, He is the Son of God, He is the Lord, He is the Redeemer, salvation is accomplished, forgiveness of sin is available. And now you go tell the world. And by the way, Luke moves quickly to his conclusion. Verse 43 ended the night Jesus arose when He met with His disciples. On that first day of the week, the third day after He was crucified, you remember He appeared to the disciples that night. And to prove that He was literally physically alive, He took a fish and ate it. And then Luke moves in verse 44 to the final commission and the ascension. Luke tells us nothing about the forty days, nothing at all. Jesus made many appearances to His own during the 40 days, at least ten of them are indicated in the New Testament. Luke doesn't tell us anything about them in his history.

However, in the book of Acts which is Luke's second volume of history, which tells the story of how the Apostles and the disciples obeyed the Great Commission, he opens the book of Acts in chapter 1 by telling us about the Lord's appearances during those 40 days and thus he overlaps and interlocks these two histories. So he comes all the way to the ascension here and then when he starts Acts, he backs up, describes what happened in the forty days and retells the ascension in detail so that this is one history overlapping and interlocking. It's one story and it's a story you will notice from verse 44

that goes clear back to Genesis, this one great vast unfolding mural of redemptive history.

So the words of our Lord here in verse 44, very likely spoken at the end of forty days. Luke 1 tells us it was forty days that Jesus appeared to His disciples before He ascended.

It's not unusual for Bible writers to vary their approaches. John gives us details about our Lord's appearance in Galilee during those 40 days. If you want to know about the Lord appearing to the disciples, the most interesting description of it is in John 21. But John tells us nothing about the ascension.

Matthew tells us nothing about the ascension either. Doesn't even mention it. But he tells us more about the Great Commission. And this is the beauty of Scripture. You put it all together and you get the whole picture.

So these final words are designed to launch the history of the proclamation of the gospel. You say, "Well how does it relate to us?" Well the baton just keeps passing generation to generation to generation to generation. This is our time to be obedient to this commission.

Now in order for us to be obedient, we need to understand the gospel, right? And that's why you have here this composite summary of the necessary components of understanding. Let's start with the first one. The gospel is biblical as to its foundation. The gospel is biblical as to its foundation.

Obviously the big issue in dealing with the Jews, and they were going to have to begin in Jerusalem to preach this gospel, they were going to have to start there, as it says at the end of verse 47, that's where they were. This was very, very difficult because the Jews didn't believe Jesus was the Messiah. The Jews had seen Jesus as utterly disqualified to be the Messiah because He was the enemy of their religious system, their false religious system which they thought was the true. Jesus was killed, rejected by the leaders, died, disqualified, had no army, triumphed over nothing. They had a...they had a theology of Messiah that only included the triumph and the glory, they didn't have a theology that included the suffering and the dying and rising again. They had totally missed that part.

So now the disciples and the Apostles are going to have the responsibility to start in Jerusalem to overturn everything the people believed, to change everything. And they were going to have to convince the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah, how would you do that? You can't use the New Testament, there isn't any. And the one thing they did revere was the Old Testament, so what did they have to use? The Old Testament.

But they had shown a lack of understanding of the Old Testament. They had shown a severe lack of understanding of most of what Jesus said. Even when He said it to them face-to-face in very simple clear straight-forward terms. They had been subject all their life to a rather inadequate if not downright wrong interpretation of the Old Testament at the hands of their rabbis and so they were in no position to rightly interpret the Old Testament unless somebody helped them. They needed a total correction of their theology and their hermeneutics.

So what is so very, very important is this. They needed to understand that Christianity was not a disruption of Judaism, it wasn't a new religion, it was continuity, it was the same great redemptive plan of God rolling through history and that Judaism without Christ is a false religion because Christ

is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. And so in order to get the gospel in its right context, in order to understand redemptive continuity and redemptive history, you've got to go back. And that's exactly what He does. He says to them in verse 44, "These are My words, which I spoke to you while I was still with you."

All the time He had been with them in Galilee, in Judea, all the years, the months, the weeks, the days, the hours, He had told them things they should have known, they should have understood. Among the things that He told them were the details that He was going to die, be arrested, be delivered, be crucified, rise again the third day. I don't know how many times He said it, maybe hundreds. It's recorded many times in the New Testament when He said it. But He must have repeated it often and they never really understood it. And I can show you that.

If you go back to chapter 9 for a moment, you're way back before Jesus even heads toward Jerusalem, way back early in His ministry, chapter 9 verse 22, they're just figuring out who He is. Peter says in verse 20, "You're the Christ of God," this is parallel to Matthew 16 where Peter says You're the Son of God. He warned them and instructed them, "Don't tell this to anyone, saying the Son of Man must suffer many things, be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, be killed, be raised up the third day." This could have been a year before it happened.

You say, "Was that the only time He told them?" He told them this...He must have told them again and again. Go down to verse 44, He says this, "Let these words sink into your ears." You don't say that unless you've repeated yourself enough that they ought to be getting it. "For the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." He knew there was resistance to that and the resistance is indicated in verse 45, they didn't understand the statement, it was concealed from them so they couldn't perceive it and they were afraid to ask Him about it. They didn't want to know. What is He saying? We don't want that information. We're in the triumph zone here, we don't want that information about suffering death and so forth. It doesn't fit our Messianic theology. Remember I told you last time they had a very partial theology of Messiah, only triumph and glory.

In chapter 18 of Luke and it's many months later now and they're in Judea, takes the Twelve aside in verse 31, this time it's the Twelve. And He said to them, and I'm sure there was a lot of emphasis on this because how many times He had said it before now we could never know, "Behold, we are going to Jerusalem and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished." He says it again. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. He will be mocked and mistreated and spit on and scourged and killed and the third day He'll rise again. And every bit of that is prophesied in the Old Testament, every detail of it.

And the same reaction...verse 34, "The disciples understood none of these things." Why? "He that is convinced against his will is unconvinced still." We don't want that information, we reject that information. That's not consistent with our Messianic theology. The meaning of the statement then is hidden from them....didn't comprehend the things that were said.

This was such a common message that...look at Luke 24 verse 6 to 8, the women...the women, now we're not talking about the men, we're not talking about the Apostles, the Twelve, these are women. They come to the tomb. They're terrified because there's a blazing angel there talking to them, two of them actually, and they are terrified. Verse 5, "They bow their faces to the ground and the angel says to them, 'Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He's not here, He's risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into

the hands of sinful men and be crucified and the third day rise again?' And they remembered His words."

So look, He said this so often, even the women knew it who were not in the inside circle. This isn't something He said once or twice or three times in some private situation. He kept saying it and saying it and it's exactly the way the Old Testament laid it out.

Now we'll go to our text in Luke 24 and verse 44 and He says, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you." What words? "That all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses in the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." That's a three-fold division of the Old Testament, by the way. It is the Law of Moses, Torah, Genesis to Deuteronomy, the Jews called the Torah. It is the Prophets. The Prophets is the Hebrew *Nevi'im*. There are the former prophets and the latter prophets. The former prophets would be Joshua on, which is the book after Deuteronomy, the Pentateuch, Joshua throughout all the books of history, that's the former prophets. The latter prophets would be the major prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Lamentations, and the minor prophets, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi...that's the whole Old Testament.

So Jesus is saying, "Look, everything that is happening I told you. I've been telling you. I've been repeating it again and again. Must be fulfilled and will be fulfilled." That is basic to the gospel, dear friends.

When you proclaim the gospel, you must understand that this is not some intrusion into human history. This is not some late religion that just got developed like the liberals say, Christianity popped up in the first century out of nowhere and was an apostate form of Judaism. Not at all. It is the one great mural that is painted by God that sweeps through all of redemptive history until all is done and this whole universe is destroyed and replaced by the new heaven and the new earth. And it is with perfect divine continuity that this is taking place. We must then be able to understand that. How else could they start at Jerusalem to convince people Jesus was the Messiah if they couldn't prove it from the Old Testament Scripture? If they couldn't compare the details that happened in His living and His dying and His rising with the prophecies of the Old Testament, they couldn't prove it. But they could prove it because it was there.

So their evangelism was scriptural evangelism. This is basic to the gospel. The Old Testament promised the Messiah would come and the Messiah would be from the line of Abraham. The Old Testament, Genesis 12, promised that He would come through the tribe of Judah, Genesis 49, that He would come through the line of David, 2 Samuel chapter 7. That He would be born of a virgin, Isaiah 7:14. Born in Bethlehem, Micah 5:2. That He would be betrayed by a familiar friend as the psalmist puts it. That He would be beaten, spit on, beard pulled, gambling would take place for His clothing. He would be pierced Zechariah 12, Psalm 22, Psalm 69. His death would be vicarious, Isaiah 53. And He would rise from the dead, Isaiah 53 to the end of the chapter, Psalm 16:8 to 11...many other details.

The Christ of gospel history did not invent Himself, nor is He the invention of a little group of people in the first century. He is the unmistakable fulfillment of divine prophecy. That's at the heart...that's at the foundation of the gospel. So we say that if you're going to carry out the mandate of the gospel and fulfill your mission and it is your mission, you must understand that as to its foundation, the gospel is Old Testament biblical.

And so, it was time now for them to come out of the darkness and the doubt. Remember, I read you in Matthew some of them doubted. It's time now to come out of the doubt. I don't know whether that doubt was about something in the Old Testament or the connection with Christ, I can't imagine that. It may have been doubt about their responsibility to preach it, but whatever the doubts may have been, perhaps they were different doubts, it's time to dispel them all, verse 45, then He opened their minds to understand the Scripture.

I think He did it supernaturally in part, but I also think He did it by explaining it...by explaining it. He did what He did for the two on the road to Emmaus, right? Back in verse 25, He said, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken, was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and then to enter in to His glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets He explained them concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." He did it again. That was just for two of them. The rest knew He was alive. But they still didn't understand the connection between all the events that had happened in His dying and His rising and they're Old Testament prophecies.

So He did what He did for the two on the road to Emmaus. He gave them a sweeping Messianic interpretation of the Old Testament. Oh the effectiveness was powerful...powerful. They got it. I mean, they absolutely got it. And the book of Acts proves it because the first time you hear one of them preach is in chapter 2, Day of Pentecost, Peter, verse 14, Acts 2, stands up with all the eleven around him and he raises his voice and says, "Men of Judea and all you who believe who live in Jerusalem, and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to My words," listen everybody. And then He gives His text, Joel chapter 2, verses 28 to 32. He quotes Joel and says, "You have just seen a fulfillment of that." And then in verse 22 he gives his sermon on Jesus. A man delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed Him to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death but God raised Him up. And then he goes right to Psalm 16 and shows the prophecy of the resurrection in Psalm 16. They got it. They knew how to do it. They knew how to evangelize the Jews. You make the point...this is what the Old Testament says, this is what Jesus did, it is unmistakable that He is the Messiah.

And then just for good measure, throughout that whole sermon he throws in a few other Old Testament quotes, verse 30, verse 31, verse 34, verse 35 and I say he got it. You preach from the Scriptures Christ.

In the fourth chapter he says in verse 10, Peter again filled with the Holy Spirit, verse 10, "Let it be known to all of and all 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." And then he says, Psalm 118:22, "He's the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, and become the head of the corner, the cornerstone." Just as Psalm 118:22 prophesied.

This continued to be the pattern of their preaching. They draw it out of the Old Testament. You see it in chapter 4 later where David is quoted from the Psalms. You see a good illustration of it is in chapter...well there's some in chapter 7, Stephen, chapter 8 also, I love this, "Philip, not an apostle," so the baton is passing to a deacon in the church, and this guy's reading Isaiah 53, "He was led as a sheep to slaughter...verse 32...and a lamb before its shearers is silent," doesn't open his mouth, "in humiliation his judgment was taken away. Who will relate his generation for his life is removed from the earth."



“And the eunuch answered Philip and said, ‘Tell me, who is this prophet talking about.’ Philip opened his mouth and beginning from Scripture, from this Scripture he preached...whom?...Jesus.” They got it and the Apostles passed it on to the deacons in the early church. And it became the way you preach. You find it was the way even Paul preached. Chapter 17, “When they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica and there was a synagogue of the Jews there. So as Paul was accustomed to doing, he went to the Jewish synagogue. What did he do? For three Sabbaths he reasoned with them from...what?...the Scriptures.” What would that be? There was no New Testament, that’s the Old Testament. And he used the Old Testament to explain and give evidence or proof that the Messiah had to suffer and rise again from the dead...and then he said...and this Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is that Messiah. Look at the facts. History, prophecy meet in Him.

So, back to our text, our Lord took the same Scripture that He had referred to many times before, Scripture that was very familiar to them and rolled out its pure meaning and opened their minds to understand that it all pointed to Him. And I think He took them Scripture by Scripture by Scripture by Scripture by Scripture and I don’t doubt that the Scriptures you see them using in the book of Acts were Scriptures that He taught them. That’s why Acts and Luke link because it’s the history of their obedience.

Now I’m sure they had the burning heart experience because verse 32 says, the two on the road to Emmaus had the burning heart experience. They even commented to each other, verse 32 of Luke 24, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road while He was explaining to us the Scripture.” What’s the burning heart experience? It’s the experience of joy and the need to proclaim. They had that experience, I’m sure, too. I’m sure their hearts were so fired up they couldn’t contain their joy. For the first time, they got it. They understood. It was their eureka moment. And that was part of the energy that prompted them to go. In fact, they were so energetic, I think they were so fired up, I think their hearts were so hot to proclaim the message that the Lord has to say to them, verse 49, “Stay where you are.” Whoa...He’s kind of restrained them, they’re ready to go but they can’t go because zeal won’t do it, you’re going to need the power from on high. And we’ll get to that tonight.

Blaise Pascal on November 23 in 1654 had an experience of biblical clarity which he described as the most memorable spiritual experience of his entire life. It was such an overwhelming understanding with clarity of the Scripture that he wrote down one word in his journal...fire. And then below it he wrote, “Joy, joy, joy, joy, tears of joy.” And in another place he wrote several times in large letters, “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.” He must have been somewhere near the latitude of Emmaus spiritually when he had that experience. It’s the burning heart that grasps the connection between the Scripture and the fulfillment in Christ. That’s where the gospel begins, folks. It is not an intrusion into Judaism, it is not another religion than Judaism. Judaism without Christ is a false religion, it is apostate, it is a defection from the truth. Christianity with Judaism is incomplete because we’ll never be able to prove to them that Jesus is their Messiah unless we can prove to them that He matches all the prophecies in the Old Testament. Start in Jerusalem, that’s how you start. Everywhere in the book of Acts, they went to preach...every time they preached to Jews they started from the Old Testament Scripture.

Second point I want to give you, you need at least two this morning. The gospel is biblical as to its foundation. Secondly, its historical as to its accomplishment...it is historical as to its accomplishment.

It is not myth, it is not legend, it is history. Verse 46, "He said to them, 'Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day.'" And, folks, I might say it's obviously implied there that He did die and did rise again the third day. That is attested by history. In fact, some say there's no event or fact of ancient history in existence that is better attested than the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And we're not talking about a religion that was invented by a bunch of first-century religious nuts. Jesus did not invent Himself either. This is not something they just made up. The record of history is absolutely undeniable.

Some of you may have heard of a form of theology called neoorthodoxy. Sounds okay, new orthodoxy, you think it would be new and orthodox. But in a sense, that is an oxymoron. If it's orthodox, it can't be new. But the reason it got that name was because of a man named Karl Barth. This is a name among many names among dead German theologians who got it wrong that you would never know if people didn't resurrect their bad theology and then argue with it. But they do. Karl Barth was living under the tremendous impact of theological liberalism in Germany, of the higher-critical theory which debunked the Bible of all that was miraculous, stripped Jesus of His deity and you name it. And Karl Barth thought that when you're done doing this, you've got nothing. You've got nothing but a philosophy, humanism, that's all you have if you've just taken all the supernatural out of the Scripture. So he said, "We need to put it back." So neoorthodoxy was Karl Barth's effort to put back the supernatural into the Bible. He wrote books doing that, that's why he was called a neoorthodox, it was an attempt to get back to orthodoxy. Karl Barth didn't defect from orthodoxy to liberalism; he defected from liberalism back to orthodoxy.

The problem was, he didn't get far enough because if you said to him, "Karl, do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead?" He would say yes. Second question, "Karl, do you think it happened in history?" No, it happened in heilsgeschichte, it happened not in historii, the German with the two i's at the end, but in heilsgeschichte. It happened in Holy Ghost history.

What is Holy Ghost history? It's a figment of your imagination. They want the resurrection to be a mystical reality, a spiritual reality, but not a physical reality. It is important to ground the gospel in physical history, in a literal death and a literal resurrection of the literal Lord Jesus. Thus it is written and thus it happened. There's a wonderful testimony, the summation of testimony to that in the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians where the Apostle Paul says that, "I delivered to you...verse 3...as a first importance what I also received that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." Again here he's in Corinth, long after the great commission and he's preaching that the death of Christ connected to Old Testament Scripture. And that He was buried. And that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. And that is the third day is even depicted by the type of Jonah who was three days in the belly of the fish and Jesus made that connection.

Paul goes on to say that He appeared to Peter, He appeared to the Twelve. He appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time. He appeared to James, appeared to the Apostles. Last, to me...He appeared to me also. This is history. Jesus is not some mystical figure. As I said last week, it's not enough to say it doesn't really matter that He arose from the dead as long as His Spirit is alive.

It does matter. Christianity is not false religion, all other religion is false religion, all other religion is a fabrication, it's an illusion. This is true history. Messianic credentials become gospel elements. The gospel as to its foundation is biblical, as to its accomplishment is historical.

I'm going to introduce the third point. The gospel is transformational as to its provision...it is

transformational as to its provision. What does it do? Why is it so important to believe that Jesus died and rose again the third day? Why is it so important to believe He's the Son of God? Why is it so important to believe that He's the Messiah of Israel, Savior of the world, Redeemer? Why is that so important?

I'll tell you why it's important. Verse 47, "So that repentance for the forgiveness of sins can be proclaimed in His name." What is the provision that transforms? It is the forgiveness of sins. The gospel message to be proclaimed across the world, folks, is just one simple message: repent and ask for the forgiveness of sins in the name of Christ. That's it. We say, "You know, we want people to be saved." And the obvious question is saved from what? From their sins and the punishment of those sins that is everlasting in hell. This is our only message. We don't have a social message. There are social implications in the gospel because godly people behave differently. We don't have an economic message. We don't have an educational message. We have one message, forgiveness of sins. That's it. And that's what was laid out at the beginning.

Let me show you something, just quickly, and we'll end with this, but this is a good place to make a break. Back in chapter 1 verse 77, I read this to you earlier, in the prophecy of Zechariah which sets the course of the book, He is coming...this Son of God, the Messiah...to give to His people the knowledge of salvation. Okay? How they going to get that? How are they going to be saved? "By the forgiveness of their sins because of the tender mercy of our God."

The Christian gospel is this, God is merciful, God will forgive your sins and that provision is in Christ. That's the way it starts in the book of Luke and that's the way it ends. So when John the Baptist comes along in chapter 3 who is the forerunner to the Messiah and the child born to Zechariah, verse 3 of chapter 3, "He came into all the district around the Jordan preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."

Or chapter 4, Jesus comes on the scene. Jesus is preaching repentance. And He gives one message in Nazareth in the synagogue and in verse 18 He quotes from Isaiah 61, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me. He's anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, those who are captive to sin, sight to the blind, those that are blinded by sin, set free the oppressed, those that are oppressed by sin." Chapter 5 verse 20, they drop a man through the roof, remember that? He needs to be healed and Jesus heals him and in verse 20 He says, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." That's why He came, to forgive sins. The healing was only to prove that He was the Son of God. The mission was to forgive sins.

"The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason saying, 'Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?'" They were right about that. They were wrong about the fact that He was not God, He was.

In the seventh chapter, this woman is showering Jesus with her affection and washing His feet with her tears and her hair and in verse 47, "For this reason I say to you, 'Your sins which are many have been forgiven, for she loved much. He who is forgiven little, loves little.'" And then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven."

"Those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, 'Who is this man who even forgives sins?' He said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you, go in peace.'" He hadn't yet

died the death that provided that forgiveness but He applied that forgiveness before His death through all of redemptive history. It was always about forgiveness, never about anything but forgiveness. He said when the disciples came and said, "How should we pray?" He said, "Pray this way," chapter 11 verse 2, "Father, hallowed be Your name, Your Kingdom come, give us each day our daily bread and forgive us our sins." And then when He was hanging on the cross in Luke 23:34 He said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

So, when the Apostles and the Disciples were dispatched, when they were sent out, what was their message? Social gospel? Fix the world? End poverty? Injustice? Crime?

No...no. Walter Judd, the old congressman from years back in the U.S. Congress who had been many, many years of his life a missionary in China said, "You either believe that you can change a society and it will change men, or you believe that you change men on the inside and they'll change a society." That's the Christian view. We have only one message, the forgiveness of sins.

And they got it...they got it. Let's go to Acts and show you how, these two interlocking, overlapping histories. Peter gets up on the Day of Pentecost using Old Testament passages to prove that Jesus is the Messiah who would die and rise the third day, Peter speaks in verse 38. He comes to the end of his sermon, Acts 2:38, "Peter said to them, 'Repent and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.'" He got it, preached forgiveness by repentance. "For this is the promise for you and your children and all who are afar off." It's a promise of forgiveness.

Peter's still preaching in chapter 5. Another place, another time, Peter and the Apostles all say to those who want to silence them from the Jewish Council, the Sanhedrin again, "We must obey God rather than men," verse 30, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a prince and a Savior...oh, I love this...to grant repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."

Chapter 10...chapter 10, Peter again, ha-ha, verse 40, let's pick it up there. This ties so well with the end of Luke. "God raised Him up the third day, granted that He become visible, not to all people...nope...but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is to us who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead," remember they gave Him a piece of fish and He ate it and He ate breakfast with them in Galilee? And then this, here's Peter looking back, remembering the great commission. "And He ordered us to preach to the people and solemnly to testify that this is the one, He's the one who has been appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead, of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name every one who believes in Him receives a happy life, positive feelings." What? "Forgiveness of sins."

There's never been any other message. Peter got it, wouldn't you say? He made the connection completely. Understood the reason Scripture was being fulfilled in Christ, the necessity of that, made the connections between the Scriptures and the things that happened in the life of Christ, bought into the mandate, knew what he was supposed to do, proclaim that Jesus is in fact the one talked about by the prophets and that the message is simple, "Forgiveness of sins."

In the thirteenth chapter, Paul...this is really a great message and he borrows also from the Old Testament Psalm 2 and Psalm 16, so he's doing what the original Apostles did. Now remember, he's kind of an out of time Apostle, so we're moving to another generation now and he's doing the same

thing the others did. He stands up, sons of Abraham's family and those among you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent to those who live in Jerusalem and so forth. "Though they found...verse 28...no ground for putting Him to death." Isaiah said that, by the way, that He would be the innocent one. They did. They put Him on a cross. Verse 29, "When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him," there it is again, isn't it? They carried out all that was written concerning Him. They understood the connection, then they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people and we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers."

And what is this good news, by the way? What is this good news? Go down, please, to verse 38, here's the good news, "God raised Him, God didn't let Him undergo decay therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you." There's no other message, folks. This is the message. Jesus said this is what you preach.

Forgiveness of sins, however, in His name, that's a perfect place to stop for tonight. Come back and we will complete this.

Father, again it's a constant joy to see the power, consistency, clarity of Your Word. Thrilling, our hearts are burning within us as we understand this. Help us, Lord, to take the baton in this generation and be faithful to use the Scripture now, the Old and the New, to prove that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior, the Redeemer, to tell people far and wide that if they repent, there is forgiveness of sin in His name. May we live to proclaim that great truth. May You use us as instruments of salvation in Your hand as we faithfully proclaim it, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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