

**Confronting the Murderers of Christ, Part 2**

Scripture: Acts 3:12–26

Code: 44-16

The history that really is important to me is the biblical history. I am fascinated by world history. I read a lot of books on world history. I had a minor – double minor in college – in Greek and history. I love that.

But that's just simply a temporal fascination. The history that captivates my heart is kingdom history, divine history, church history. And that is why I love the book of Acts. That's why I love the gospels so much, because they are history of the person of Christ and His work. And the book of Acts is the history of my people, the church. And that is why it has such a great appeal to me. It's also the history of the work of the Holy Spirit through the church and the spread of the gospel to establish the church. Take that message to the ends of the world.

The book of Acts is the first book of church history and it is divinely inspired. There are many great books about the history of the church, many of them I have read and love. This is the only one written by the Holy Spirit. This is information that we desperately need to know our origin as part of the church of Jesus Christ. And as we begin the book of Acts, we know what has happened. The Lord Jesus has come into the world, born of a virgin, lived His life in sinless perfection, claimed to be the Son of God, proved it by His words and works. He was rejected by the nation of Israel, who then pressed the Romans to crucify Him.

The gospels tell us about the crucifixion and they then immediately tell us that He rose from the dead on the third day after His execution. We know that He is therefore alive. He appeared over 40 days to his disciples and spoke to them of things pertaining to the kingdom of God. He has through his death provided forgiveness of sin and eternal life in heaven to all who believe in Him. He commissioned His followers, His first line apostles and everyone after them, to take that message of eternal life and forgiveness and salvation and spread it to the entire world throughout all of human history until He came back to establish His kingdom. So we are in that history. We are 2,000 years into that history that began, really, here in the book of Acts.

We find ourselves now in chapter 3, so open your Bible to Acts chapter 3. The Lord has ascended back to heaven, and having ascended to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit. He sent the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment, to regenerate the elect. And He sent the Holy Spirit as well to empower the church for the preaching of the gospel by which means He does His regenerating work. So the Lord has ascended to the right hand of the Father. Having ascended,

He sent the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has come and given birth to the church.

That was in chapter 2 on the Day of Pentecost. Three thousand people are converted that day. They constitute the body of Christ, the believing people who continue in the apostles doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers. Their testimony in Jerusalem, the only place a church exists on the planet, is powerful. It is so powerful that through their testimony and their daily proclamation in the temple of the gospel, the Lord is adding to the church daily people who are being saved. That first great sweeping of 3,000 people into the church came as a result of a sermon in chapter 2 preached by the apostle Peter.

We now find ourselves in chapter 3, and again Peter is the preacher. And again, the Lord collects the crowd. On the Day of Pentecost, you remember He collected the crowd in a miraculous way, by a mighty wind, by phenomena that looked like flames of fire, by enabling His followers to speak languages they didn't know. Miraculous occurrences drew the crowd. Peter preached to them, 3,000 were saved. Here again in chapter 3, our Lord has drawn the crowd. This time, a different miracle.

The opening 11 verses describe that miracle as the healing of a very well-known blind beggar who sat daily in the same place in the temple. People knew him well. There is some traditions that say he'd been there as much as 40 years. Everybody knew him. Everyone knew his condition. But when he leaps in verse 8, stands upright, begins to walk, enters the temple with the apostles, Peter and John, "walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God; they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to *beg* alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened." And the man "was clinging to Peter and John – " and while he was there with them, " – all the people rushed together to them at the so-called porch of Solomon, full of amazement."

Again, by a miracle, God collects a crowd and He is about to add to His church an even greater number than the number that occurred on the Day of Pentecost. Again, He will use Peter as the preacher, and again the sermon will be about Jesus Christ. And again, the sermon will have two parts: part one, guilt; part two, grace. On the day of Pentecost, he declared in that very first Christian sermon that the men of Israel, the men of Israel, had nailed the Son of God to a cross through the godless hands of the Romans and put Him to death.

Here we learn in this second sermon in chapter 3 the indictment is even more extensive. He declares to the people of Israel in verse 13, "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Son Jesus, *the one* whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince of life, *the one* whom God raised from the dead, *a fact* to which we are witnesses. And on the basis of faith in His name, *it is* the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which *comes* through Him –

” through Jesus “ – has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.”

He starts out, as we saw in our last study, heaping guilt on them for the execution of the Son of God, the Savior, the Holy One, the Righteous One, the Prince of life. He declares that the people of Israel had denied Him, delivered Him, and executed Him. The very One whom the one true God, the God of Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, had glorified. But after they had done their damage, as it were, and their destruction to Jesus, God raised Him from the dead. He is alive and it is His power that is on display in the healing, the miraculous healing of this man who has been crippled all his life.

Well, the first time Peter preached, he preached guilt, but then he also preached grace. They felt so guilty in verse 37 of chapter 2, they said, “Brethren, what shall we do?” What shall we do? Feeling the weight of their rejection of the Messiah and the Son of God, they asked, “What shall we do?” We don’t hear them say that in chapter 3, but it’s implied because if you come down to verse 17 where we left off last time, Peter says, “And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also.”

I think Peter says that to calm them down. They had just heard the most frightening message their ears had ever been open to. You, you, you as a people took the One, “the Son of God, Jesus the Savior, the Holy One, the Righteous One, the Prince of life, the One the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified – ” and you delivered Him, denied Him, and executed Him. And God raised Him from the dead. That’s a frightening reality because if He’s now alive, surely He is about to heap vengeance on our heads. This is a terrifying reality and I think Peter is quick to open up a window for them to see out of the blackness of their indictment.

“And now, brethren, – ” and he uses the word “brethren” because it’s an ameliorating designation “ – I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also.” In ignorance, enormous guilt, unparalleled guilt on loyal temple leaders, scribes, rabbis, Pharisees, Sadducees, authorities, teachers of the Old Testament, and all the worshipers in Israel who gathered there, devout Jews.

By the way, they’re there for evening prayers. They’re there for the evening sacrifice. These are devout Jews who have just heard this terrifying indictment and just been notified that the One they executed at the hands of the Romans is alive from the dead, raised by God and that the apostles have seen Him and give testimony.

This is classic gospel preaching. A heavy burden of guilt, an inescapable indictment, horrific fear grips the heart. And then immediately we go from guilt to grace. Grace is about to be put on display. Grace that is just beyond comprehension. And the first hint of that grace is in verse 17. “I know that you acted in ignorance.” I know that. I know you didn’t know. What did Jesus say on the cross? Luke 23:34, “Father, forgive them; – ” why? “ – they don’t know what they are doing.” They do not know what they are doing.

In the book of Acts, we see other occasions of this kind of ignorance, which God graciously takes into consideration. Listen to Acts 13:26. “Brethren, sons of Abraham’s family, and those among you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled *these* by condemning *Him*. And though they found no ground for *putting Him to death*, they asked Pilate that He be executed. But God raised Him from the dead.” They did it in ignorance, of course.

In 1 Corinthians 2, listen to verse 6. 1 Corinthians 2:6. “Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory; *the wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” There again, Paul is saying they were ignorant. They were ignorant.

Where there is ignorance, there is the possibility of forgiveness. There’s an Old Testament precedent for this. If you go back to the 15th chapter of the book of Numbers, I can just read it to you briefly. As the instructions come, as God lays out laws for life in Canaan, we read in verse 22 “But when you unwittingly fail and do not observe all these commandments, which the Lord has spoken to Moses, – ” when you unwittingly fail, when you ignorantly fail “ – *even* all that the Lord has commanded you through Moses, from the day when the Lord gave commandment and onward through your generations, then it shall be, if it is done unintentionally, without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one bull for a burnt offering, and a soothing aroma to the Lord, with its grain offering and its drink offering, according to the ordinance, and one male goat for a sin offering.” A special limited sacrifice for unwitting iniquity and disobedience. “Then the priest shall make atonement for all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and they will be forgiven; for it was an error, and they have brought their offering, an offering by fire to the Lord, and their sin offering before the Lord, for their error. So all the congregation of the sons of Israel will be forgiven, with the alien who sojourns among them, for *it happened* to all the people through error.

“Also if one person sins unintentionally, then he shall offer a one year old female goat for a sin offering. The priest shall make atonement before the Lord for the person who goes astray when he sins unintentionally, making atonement for him that he may be forgiven. You shall have one law for him who does *anything* unintentionally, for him who is native among the sons of Israel and – ” the same law, really “ – for the alien who sojourns among them. But the person who does *anything* defiantly, whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming the Lord; and that person shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the Lord and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt *will be* on him.”

That is why in Hebrews 10 it says that if you sin willfully after the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice. Grace begins to be extended on the basis of Numbers 15 because of ignorance, of ignorance. Acts 17, Paul says on Mars Hill to a Gentile audience, "The time of iniquity in the past God overlooked, but now commands all men to repent because He has unveiled His Son." Grace, then, is available to the guilty ignorant, an offer of forgiveness and eternal life to those whose crime is horrendous. Amazing, amazing grace.

And then in verse 18, "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled." By the way, you didn't thwart the purpose of God. Peter said that in the first sermon, in chapter 2. "This *Man*, –" verse 23 "– delivered over –" meaning Christ "– by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross." It was within the plans of God. It was sinful. It was wicked. It was heinous. But it was ignorant and it was in the plan of God. Chapter 4 verse 27, "there were gathered truly in this city against Your holy Son Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur."

In spite of what they did, God's plan was perfectly fulfilled. And he's referring in verse 18 when he says, "which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, –" to all the Old Testament prophecies concerning the suffering of Christ. And we've gone through those. We did a series "Finding Christ in the Old Testament." Remember that? We went through Psalm 22, Zechariah. We went through Isaiah 53. The whole sacrificial system of the Old Testament was like a living prophecy of the One who was to be the final acceptable sacrifice.

So rather than stop the plan of God, this was within the plan of God. Rather than the death of Messiah – listen carefully – disqualifying the Messiah, His suffering and death validates Him as the Messiah because that's what the prophets said would happen. And He took them back in their minds to those Old Testament prophecies. The first glimmer of grace, you did it in ignorance. The second glimmer of grace, God planned it. It had to happen. Unwittingly, ignorantly, you fulfilled the divine plan.

And then comes a very important word, verse 19, "therefore." From that transition, we move from guilt to grace. "Therefore repent and return." Is that possible? Is that an option? Repent? *Metanoe*, turn and go the other way, reverse your verdict on Christ. Reverse your attitude on Him. Repent and return. Reverse the judgment you made on Jesus. Go the very opposite direction. Receive Him as Messiah and the Lord, Savior, Redeemer, Son of God, abandon your false religion, repent, repent. There are a lot of things that can produce repentance. We hear them in the baptistry.

Knowledge can produce repentance. Sometimes just knowing the truth is all that the Holy Spirit needs to produce repentance. Listen to Matthew 11:21. "Woe to Chorazin! Woe to Bethsaida!" Those

towns in Galilee. “For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.” Sometimes just the revelation of God is enough. If Tyre and Sidon had seen what Chorazin and Bethsaida saw, they would have repented. Repentance can come purely on the basis of divine revelation, the divine revelation of a miracle or the divine revelation of the miracle of Scripture.

Sometimes, repentance is the product of sorrow. Listen to 2 Corinthians 7:9. “I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of* repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of* God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to *the will of* God produces a repentance without regret, *leading to* salvation, but the sorrow of the world – ” just “ – produces death.” A lot of people in the world sorry for the consequences of their behavior, sorry for the consequences of their sin, but with no intention of repentance. Sometimes knowledge, revelation, just the truth revealed is used by the Holy Spirit to produce repentance.

Sometimes sorrow leads to repentance. Paul says sometimes the opposite of sorrow leads to repentance. In Romans chapter 2, Paul says this. “Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?” Sometimes people repent because they’re literally overwhelmed by sorrow. Other times, people repent because they’re overwhelmed by the goodness of God, the wonders of His salvation. God can use many things to make people sorrowful, and He can hold out many glorious promises to make the gospel an expression of divine kindness.

Sometimes, repentance is the result of the threat of final judgment, final judgment. And that was certainly a theme in the early apostolic preaching, literally telling people that they were going to die in their sins and go to hell forever. That’s how Jesus preached. Back to that passage in Acts 17 on Mars Hill with Paul, “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, – ” and you should repent why? “ – because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” You better repent because judgment is coming. Judgment is coming.

The apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians says this. This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment. “For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, – ” you believers “ – and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

The Holy Spirit can use just the revelation of Scripture to produce repentance. The Holy Spirit can use an overwhelming grief and sorrow, suffering and pain. The Holy Spirit can use a declaration and a comprehension of the great goodness of God. The Holy Spirit can also use the threat of judgment. Well, all of those are going to show up in the rest of Peter's sermon in some sense.

So he says – let's go back to Acts – “repent.” Repent. Turn and go the other way in your conclusions about Christ and embrace Him fully as Lord. And then return. *Epistreph*, turn back. Turn around, literally and go back. Turn around, face the other way, and then go all the way to Christ. That's kind of the picture. This word is a familiar word to Christians, conversion. But just to make the distinction between these two, *metanoe* and *epistreph*, one means “to turn around.” The other means “to go in the opposite direction.” Turn around and come to Christ. That's the invitation.

And Peter is going to then give, starting in verse 19, five blessings, five motivations to repent and come to Christ. Five. The first one, sin will be forgiven. The second one, the kingdom will come. Thirdly, the Messiah will return. Fourthly, judgment will be avoided. And fifth, promises will be realized. So you have really from verse 19 onto the end of this brief sermon – and by the way it wasn't as brief as this. I want to hurry to say that. These are just the inspired notations, the cliff notes out of a sermon that I'm confident must have been two hours long or so. But here are the salient promises to the people of Israel. If they will turn around with regard to Christ, go the other direction and come all the way to Him.

Number one, sins will be forgiven. Verse 19, “so that your sins may be wiped away.” Change your conclusion about Christ. Make the right conclusion about Him. And then come all the way back to Him. And the terrible iniquities that reached their apex in your blasphemy against the Son of God will be forgiven you, will be forgiven you. There are blasphemers, but this is not a final blasphemy for all of them. There will be some who turn. What is the language here saying? This is so wonderful. “So your sins may be wiped out.” Some translations say “blotted out.” Some say “erased.”

The old Levitical system covered sins up, didn't remove them. Because there was nothing in the old system that could pay the penalty. David cried out in Psalm 51, “Blot out my iniquity,” feeling the guilt. But no priest could do that and no sacrifice could do that. But that was the cry of the heart of a true believer and it was also the promise of God. Listen to Isaiah 43:25. “I, even I, – ” says God “ – I am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins.” That embraces the blasphemous rejection, denial, execution of the Savior. I will wipe out your transgressions. That's who I am. “I am the one who wipes out your transgressions. I will not remember your sins.”

The next chapter in Isaiah is chapter 44, verse 21, “Remember these things, O Jacob, And Israel, for you are My servant; I have formed you, you are My servant, O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me. I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud And your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me,

for I have redeemed you. Shout for joy, O heavens, for the Lord has done it! Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth; Break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it; For the Lord has redeemed Jacob And in Israel He shows forth His glory.”

The verb is “to wipe out.” Ancient writing was done on papyrus and the ink used apparently had no acid in it, and so it didn’t bite into the papyrus or the vellum, in the case of skin, like modern ink does. It just kind of laid on the top and all you had to do was take a wet sponge and wipe it away. God says, “If you will turn around and repent and go toward My Son, believing Him to be who He claimed to be, I will wipe out your sins.”

Listen to Colossians 2:13. This is Paul’s take on this great reality. Colossians 2:13. “When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, – ” with Christ “ – having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

Paul speaks here of a hand-written indictment, a hand-written record of crimes, of criminal debt that was literally nailed to the cross where the criminal was executed. But in this case, it is nailed to the cross of Christ and forever removed. God takes the indictment, the charge list, and nails it to the cross of His Son. In fact, when you put Christ on a cross, God put your sins there, too. He paid the debt.

It’s the first of five amazing motivations. Why should I repent? Why should I turn and go toward Christ? Because your sins will be wiped away, all of them forever. And now, secondly, to Israel in particular, the kingdom will come. Verse 19 again, “in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” Times of refreshing. What are “times of refreshing”? Go down a little bit to verse 21 and you’ll notice another phrase there, “*the* period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.” These two phrases refer to the coming and promised kingdom.

The Messiah is alive. He has sent His Holy Spirit. He has empowered His preachers, and the first thing His preachers say is if you will have the right view of Christ and commit your life to Him, your sins will be forgiven. And if you do that as a people, if you do that as a nation, the times of refreshing, the period of restoration of all things will come. What is that? That’s the kingdom. There are people who say there is no kingdom for Israel. There is no future kingdom for Israel. Well then why is He offering it here? This is after they’d already killed Christ. This is after the church has already been brought into existence.

He is talking to the people of Israel and He is saying that the *kairoi*, the times, not chronology, not hours and days and months, but the period, the era, the predetermined fixed event of the great



kingdom, the time of rest, respite, refreshing, that glorious promised kingdom will come and it will come from the presence of the Lord. It's not an earthly kingdom. It's not orchestrated by men. It's not the postmillennialists' kingdom. It's not us establishing the kingdom and handing it to Christ. It comes from God to us and it is based on the faith of Israel and their Messiah. This is a promise that if this nation now, even after they have crucified Christ, if they will repent and return, the kingdom will come. The long-awaited kingdom with all the promises given to Abraham and David and through the prophets. The golden age they'd all been waiting for. They expected the Messiah to bring.

So here, they've already rejected the Messiah, killed the Messiah. The Messiah's gone back to heaven, but if they will repent and return, the kingdom will come. Again, it is called a period of restoration of all things and it comes literally in the Greek "from the face of the Lord." He is the author of that glorious final kingdom. What is that kingdom? It is a future time on earth that is described very clearly by the prophets. Go back to the 11th chapter of Isaiah. We'll look at a couple of passages there just briefly, but in Isaiah chapter 11 starting at verse 6, we read about some of the conditions in the coming kingdom.

"The wolf – " Isaiah 11:6 " – will dwell with the lamb, – " no longer natural enemies " – the leopard will lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; – " feeding " – And a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze, Their young will lie down together, the lion will eat straw like the ox."

Was there ever a time in the history of the world when carnivorous animals were vegetarian? Yes. Before what? Before the fall. "The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea. Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, – " the Messiah " –Who will stand as a signal for the people; And His resting place will be glorious."

Wow. That's coming. More about the kingdom is found in the 35th chapter of Isaiah. You might want to see that. Isaiah chapter 35, we can start at the beginning of the chapter. "The wilderness and the desert will be glad, And the Arabah will rejoice and blossom; Like the crocus It will blossom profusely – " if you go anywhere into the desert in the Middle East, you are in the desert for a very long time. Thousands of miles of desert, nothing but desert. What is described here is Eden-like.

"It will blossom profusely And rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, The majesty of Carmel and Sharon." Densely wooded places. "They will see the glory of the Lord, The majesty of our God. Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble. Say to those with anxious heart, 'Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance; The recompense of God will come, But He will save you.' Then the eyes of the blind will be opened And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped." There will be healing of physical infirmity throughout this

coming kingdom.

“Then the lame will leap like a deer, –” no more disabilities “– the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. Waters will break forth in the wilderness And streams in the Arabah. The scorched land will become a pool the thirsty ground springs of water; In the haunt of jackals, its resting place, Grass *becomes* reeds and rushes. A highway will be there, a roadway, And it will be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it, But it *will* be for him who walks *that way*, And fools will not wander *on it*.

“No lion will be there, Nor will any vicious beast go up on it; These will not be found there. But the redeemed will walk *there*, And the ransomed of the Lord will enter And come with joyful shouting to Zion, With everlasting joy upon their heads. They will find gladness and joy, And sorrow and sighing will flee away.”

A lot of people talk about utopia. That’s the real utopia. Promised kingdom. How long will the kingdom last? Revelation 20 says it will last 1,000 years. And if I were able to pull together all of the prophetic statements made about the kingdom, it would come out like this. Here are the things promised: peace, no war; joy, fullness of joy; holiness, everywhere; glory, fully revealed; comfort, the king himself will personally minister to every need; justice, perfect justice to everyone all the time; knowledge, complete; instruction, the king will teach everyone; and knowledge and wisdom will fill the earth; no curse, the curse will be mitigated in the animal kingdom and in the natural realm; no sickness, the king is a healer; no deformity, there will be wholeness; preservation of life by supernatural means, if someone dies at 100 years, they die an infant; freedom from oppression; no successful attacks against the king; prosperity, no want; an increase of light, which means greater productivity of everything on the planet. It all comes from God, from the face of God.

So Peter says to those Jews, “You need to know that if you will repent and follow Christ, all your sins will be forgiven and the kingdom will come.” Kingdom will come. Yes, the kingdom arriving is conditioned on Israel’s repentance. Still, the millennial kingdom won’t come until that period prior to the kingdom when all Israel is saved. God knew what they would do, and yet they had to be responsible for the doing of it. They could have brought the kingdom if the nation had repented. Stunning promise.

And of course, naturally the third one is the Messiah will return. When “the times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Messiah appointed for you.” It was established clearly in the Old Testament that there wouldn’t be a kingdom without a king, that there wouldn’t be a messianic rule without a Messiah. It’s true that millennial blessings cannot come apart from the return of Christ.

So as you look at the future of Israel, in the future they will finally believe. They'll look on the one they've pierced, mourn for Him as an only son, be cleansed, and the Messiah will come and establish His kingdom. I love that phrase in verse 20, "Jesus, the Messiah appointed for you." The Messiah appointed for you. Literally, "the having already been appointed Messiah," declared so by the prophets, and by John the Baptist, and by the apostles. If you repent, turn to Christ, your sins will be forgiven. The kingdom will come. The Messiah will return.

I'm just reminding you folks that God has not canceled His promises to Israel. He was reiterating them right here through the apostles. Jesus, verse 21 says, must remain in heaven. Heaven must receive Him, hold Him "until *the* period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time." Talking about the kingdom, things I read you. Jesus has to remain in heaven until the kingdom. He cannot return until the time of restitution. He cannot launch the time of refreshing until the people of Israel acknowledge Him as their Messiah. And they will.

Go back – and I'm not going to take time – read Zechariah 12, 13, and 14. The sequence is there. They exercise faith in chapter 12 and 13. They go through tribulation further in that 13th chapter, and then the kingdom comes in chapter 14. As Paul says in Romans 11, "All Israel will be saved." And when they are saved as a people, when they mourn for the One they pierced and a fountain of cleansing is opened to them, they will then be purged of all the rebels and the kingdom will come. Zechariah 14 lays that out. And this is what "God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time." This is all prophesied in the Old Testament.

So repent, turn, follow Christ. Your sins will be forgiven. The kingdom will come. Messiah will return. Fourthly, judgment will be avoided. Judgment will be avoided. "Moses said –" verse 22 "– 'The Lord God will raise you for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you. And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel on and *his* successors onward, also announced these days."

All the prophets announced the coming of the Messiah, from Samuel on, all of them. "And every soul who does not heed the prophets shall be utterly destroyed from among the people." Moses is the one prophet quoted, and that's from Deuteronomy chapter 18 verses 15 to 19. "The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren, to him you shall give heed." To everything he says to you. Moses was saying, "Messiah is coming. Messiah will be a prophet like me."

The ancient Jewish Midrash puts it this way, commenting on that Deuteronomy passage. "As was the former redeemer, so shall the latter redeemer be. While the former, it is said, and Moses took his wife and his sons and set them upon an ass, so of the latter, for it says in Zechariah 9:9, 'He is lowly and riding on an ass.' And while the former redeemer brought down manna, so the latter shall bring down

bread.”

There are parallels between the leadership of Moses and Jesus. Moses was the great deliverer of Israel from bondage. Moses was not the only prophet. All the prophets from Samuel on announced His arrival. If you believe that and if you repent and return to Him, you will escape the destruction of verse 23. You have been warned. All the prophets gave you warning. The prophets hit the danger and disaster of rejecting the Messiah.

The pleading of Peter here is really very remarkable, very remarkable. Your sins will be forgiven. Your long-awaited kingdom will come. The Messiah will return. You will escape judgment. Then one final promise, if you repent and return, all the promised blessings will be realized. I love this in verse 25. “It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant.”

I remember when I was a very young guy sitting in a room, listening with intent to John Walford, who was the president of Dallas Seminary at the time, who was speaking on the future of Israel. I can’t honestly say I really knew where I was in terms of what I believed at that point. I was very young in my dad’s church. And he said this. “They had denied and crucified their Messiah and they are still the sons of the prophets and the sons of the covenant.” That was enough for me. That was enough for me.

And then when you track back to Genesis and you see it was a unilateral covenant made by God on behalf of Israel, you understand why Peter said that. You. He doesn’t say “you used to be the sons of the prophets. You used to be the sons of the covenant. But you’re canceled out. You’re done. It’s over. And all the promises are now shifted to the church.” No. “You are the – ” present tense “ – the sons of the prophets.” You are “the sons of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one *of you* from your wicked ways.”

What’s he saying? The prophecies are still related to you. The covenants are still related to you. You are still in God’s plan and you will be blessed in the day that He turns every one of you from your wicked ways. Just really an unmistakably clear indication of the future. Change your mind, Israel. Change your mind and receive forgiveness, and the kingdom, and the king, and deliverance from destruction and all God’s blessings. Change your mind.

Well, what was the response? Chapter 4. “As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple *guard* and the Sadducees came up to them, being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the message – ” what? “ – believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.” That’s a mega-church, 3,000, 5,000. That’s a mega-church Incredible.

Guilt, yes, but also grace. That's always the gospel message. Israel as a nation has not believed. They will in the future, but every Jew or every Gentile who turns toward Christ and goes after Christ to follow Him receives all these things. We have forgiveness of sin. We are members of the kingdom. We are cared for, protected, ruled by the king. We are delivered from destruction and we have inherited all God's promised blessings. Hey, we'll all be there in the kingdom and all the blessings of eternity after the kingdom is over. It's all for anyone who repents, turns from rejecting Christ to receiving Christ, pursuing Him.

This is still the gospel message. Nothing has changed. This is still the message we have to call to Israel, "Israel, Israel, repent of your attitude toward Jesus. Repent and return and receive forgiveness, the kingdom, the king, deliverance from judgment, and all promised blessings." But we can say that to anyone and everyone, can't we? Repent, return, and enter into all that God has provided, first to the Jew, but also to the Gentile. Let's pray.

So many things to think about and contemplate, it's a truth that we don't want to go over lightly and yet we're somewhat constrained to not belabor the point so that we get the whole picture. So Lord, help us to be able in our own study of the Word of God to find things that expand from what we've said tonight, passages that enrich the truths that we talked about, doctrines that rise out of Scripture that clarify and enhance the truths that have here unfolded for us.

And again, may we realize that all faithful preaching is about Christ and about following Him and receiving forgiveness, a place in His eternal kingdom, His rule, lordship, care, protection, provision, escaping judgment, and being blessed forever with lavish, incomparable blessing. And may that, Lord, may that complex of pledges motivate repentance and return. Be glorified, Lord, by drawing men and women to Yourself in that way.

Thank You for a wonderful day. We've been so greatly blessed. May we honor You now as we take this truth, rejoice in it, praise You for it, and proclaim it to others. This we ask in Your Son's name. Amen.

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