

Acts 024

Blessing to the Gentiles

Acts 3:21-26

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All right let's open our Bibles this evening to Acts 3:21. This is our last study of the quarter. So, this class on Acts will reconvene September 12th. We typically take the summer off. And every time I say that I get all these emails saying, "Are you guys shutting the whole church down?" No. Everything just goes as usual except for Wednesday night. And when I first came here and I figured out the church did that, I thought, "What a bunch of slackers." And then after teaching the class, I'm like, all right, praise the Lord, summer break. It just gives you a chance to sort of not be under deadlines all the time. Of course, there's nothing wrong with deadlines. If we didn't have deadlines, we wouldn't do anything. But I can put myself under some other deadlines for the summer. Can I get an amen on that? All right. Very good. We're going to finish Acts chapter 3 tonight. You notice how much credibility I have there? Everybody starts laughing when I say that. Because I would love to start the fall in Acts 4:1. So Acts chapter 3, There's been a miraculous healing. As the Lord has healed a man who was lame from birth. I think he was around 40 years of age. He hadn't known anything other than his infirm condition. And he's healed as the Lord is working through Peter and John near the temple area.

- I. Miraculous Healing Acts 3:1-11
 - I. Occasion of the Miracle (1)
 - II. Encounter with the Lame Man (2-3)
 - III. Healing of the Lame Man (4-7)
 - IV. Three Results of the Miracle (8-11)

And then this crowd gathered to investigate this miracle. You know, here's a man that is lame and was a beggar, and now he can walk immediately. And he's jumping around and praising the Lord. And so, you can imagine a miracle of that quality attracting attention. So, a crowd gathers, which gives Peter an opportunity to preach his

second sermon in the Book of Acts. Of course, his first sermon is Acts 2, where 3000 people were saved as a result of that sermon. And now Peter moves into his second sermon. The sermon basically has two parts. Verses 12 through 18, he points the finger right at Israel. And he says, you rejected your Messiah. You rejected your king. And fortunately, the sermon doesn't stop there, because once you get to verses 19 through 26, Peter outlines the condition that Israel has to meet nationally so she can become what she failed to become in the first century. In the first century she rejected her king. So, God has taken His hand off Israel for a season temporarily. And so how is it that God is going to put His hand back on Israel? Well, they have to sort of undo what they did back in the first century. They have to repent or change their minds about who Jesus is. So that's what he's dealing with in verses 19 through 26.

II. Peter's Second Sermon Acts 3:12-26

- A. Israel's Rejection of her Messiah (12-18)
- B. **Israel's Responsibility (19-26)**

So, verse 19, you have the necessity of repentance. There's got to be national repentance. And we talked about that. And then Peter says, second half of verse 19 into verse 21, once you have national repentance, here's what's going to happen: national salvation. Every Jew on planet Earth at that point will be saved. Verse 19, The kingdom will come and with that is the second advent of Christ; that's in verse 19 and then verse 20. And once that happens-- and we believe that this is a tribulation period event, it's the time of Jacob's trouble, Jeremiah 30:7. But she, Israel, will be saved from it. So, this national repentance is not going to transpire until Israel has run her course in the tribulation period. But once she is in national repentance and Jesus returns to set up His kingdom on the Earth, that will end Christ's present session. And this doesn't happen until the end of the tribulation period. So, salvation, kingdom, second advent, and termination of Christ's present session. And notice Acts 3:21. He says there in verse 21, *whom heaven must receive until the period of the restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time*. Notice this first expression here: *whom heaven must receive*.

So, heaven has received Jesus Christ. When did that happen? It happened in Acts 1, The Ascension. You remember the verses? Verses 9 through 11. It says, *And after He said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud*

received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." So, when Jesus left Planet Earth in Acts chapter 1, His Ministry of Prophet ended. And He began His present session ministry as priest, not after the Order of Aaron, but after the Order of who? --Melchizedek. And the whole book of Hebrews is describing that present session. It's the ministry that He's doing now. He's been doing it for the last 2000 years. It's the ministry that He's doing right now that relates to you as a Christian. There's lots of things that He's doing. He's not yet reigning on David's throne from Jerusalem, but He's functioning as a high priest in His present session. And when we've talked about the present session of Christ, we've talked about how Christians know a ton about His first coming-- His life on the earth.

And Christians also know a lot about His second coming, what things are going to be like when He returns. What most Christians-- and this is something that Lewis Sperry Chafer pointed out back in 1947, and I think it's still true. Most Christians know almost nothing about His present session. In fact, when was the last sermon that you heard in your church-- not this church, because we talk about it, but in church in general-- on the present session of Christ? When I was teaching at the local Bible college I taught three different semesters. I guess they'd be trimesters. And I taught four classes every single round. And I did that for seven years. And I asked that question in every single class. I go, "When was the last time in your church you heard a sermon on the present session of Christ?" And after seven years teaching all those classes, I didn't have a single student put their hand up. Because for whatever reason, it's just an area that's ambiguous in the minds of most Christians. And yet it's sort of sad because that's the ministry that directly relates to us.

And you say, well gee Pastor, do you have a good book on the subject? Yes, I do. The Book of Hebrews is all about it. And it's what encourages us. It's how Jesus ministers to us in the midst of affliction and persecution. Jim just prayed First John 1:9, which restores broken fellowship with God. That's with Jesus, that's a present session ministry. First John 1:9. He's making intercession for us as we speak. That's a present session ministry. He is sustaining the earth. He's not creating, and He's not judging, but He's sustaining the cosmos. He's the one that's preventing the planets from colliding

into each other. That's a present session ministry of Christ, Colossians chapter 1. He's building the church, Matthew 16:18. He's giving to the church spiritual gifts. And I have a list of about ten or eleven things He's currently doing. And He started that ministry after He went back into heaven with His ascension. But once Israel is in repentance, that ministry will be over, and He will return to the earth upon their national repentance and establish His kingdom upon the earth. And it's at that point He will begin his third ministry called the Kingdom, where He will be functioning as king. So, Christ has three offices: Prophet, Priest, King. He was a prophet in His first coming. He did what all prophets did. He called Israel to repentance. And then beginning in Acts chapter 1, He started ministry two where he's functioning as priest after the order of Melchizedek.

And by the way, this is why you don't have to go through a priest, as many people sadly think, to get to God because Jesus is your priest. So why would you waste your time talking to some intermediary, allegedly, between you and God when you have Jesus Christ the ultimate intermediary? That's what a priest does. So, He's functioning in that role as priest. And then when Israel is in national repentance, He'll function as reigning Davidic king. So right now, He's anointed as king, but He's not yet reigning as king because there is a usurper on the throne named the devil. And so, he has to be deposed. That's what Psalm 110:1 is speaking of when God the Father says to God the Son, *"Sit at My right hand Until"* --meaning He's not going to be at the Father's right hand forever in His present session. *"Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."* So once the judgments of the tribulation period run their course, and the Antichrist is dethroned, and the earth is taken out of satanic bondage and brought back into the authority of God himself, then the Regal King Ministry of Jesus will start. Right now, He's not reigning in that sense. He's anointed as king, but He's not yet reigning as king. He is functioning as priest after the order of Melchizedek because His current priesthood is higher than that of Aaron's.

That's what the book of Hebrews is about. So, when you look at Acts 3:21, it says, *whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things*. The period of restoration of all things is the kingdom. Going back to verse 19, it has to do with Israel's national repentance. *--in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord*. Now last time we saw that you can't divide, as many people do, verse 19 from verse 21. You cannot do that grammatically. You cannot do that

exegetically, even though your theology might be demanding that you divide those verses, you can't do it. It's a package deal. They all happen simultaneously. And both verses, the times of refreshing, verse 19 and the restoration of all things, verse 21 are speaking of the kingdom. Once the kingdom comes, heaven is no longer the place for Jesus. He's back on the earth and He will be just as physical and real as He was in His first coming. So, this is what Peter is getting at. Once Israel's national repentance happens, you'll have the salvation of a whole nation, the manifestation of the kingdom following the second advent of Christ. And once the kingdom age starts and He's ruling with a rod of iron over planet Earth from Jerusalem, then He's no longer in heaven anymore, He's on the earth and His present session is over. He's now reigning as king.

So as my Professor J. Dwight Pentecost used to say, "Selah," which is a Hebrew word. You see it in the Psalms. Selah means consider carefully. Think about this, because if you get these three offices down, you'll understand the Bible. If you try to mix them all together, then the Bible is just like a big blender, and you don't know what's going on. There's an actual order in God. It says, *whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things*-- That's the manifestation of the kingdom. Now look at the end of verse 21: *about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time*. So, when the kingdom comes, people aren't going to be having to say, Oh, I didn't know there was a coming kingdom. I mean, I had no idea. Because the prophets all told us over and over again that it would come. It's just currently in a state of-- not cancellation, but what? --Postponement. I mean, great prophecies of the Bible deal with this subject. Isaiah 2:1-4 is one of them. *The Word which Isaiah of the Son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it will come about that in the last days The mountain of the house of the Lord Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob, That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths. For the law will go forth from--* Washington, D.C. Whoops, didn't say that. *For the law will go forth from Zion And the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war. Isaiah 11:6-9 says, And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and*

the bear will graze, Their young will lie down together, And the lion will eat straw like the ox. The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand in 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.

Isaiah 65:17-25, Kingdom verse, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing And her people for gladness. I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people; And there will no longer be heard in her The voice of weeping and the sound of crying. No longer will there be an infant who lives but a few days, Or an old man who does not live out his days; For the youth will die at the age of one hundred And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred Will be thought accursed. They will build houses and inhabit them; They will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They will not build and another inhabit, They will not plant and another eat; for as the lifetime of a tree, so will be the days of My people, And My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands. They will not labor in vain, Or bear children for calamity; For they are the offspring of those blessed by the Lord, And their descendants with them. It will also come to pass before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent's food. They will do no evil or harm in all my holy mountain," says the Lord.

And I just say, Lord, bring it on. In my book *The Coming Kingdom*, chapter six deals with this subject of what the prophets portrayed, the portrait they portrayed of the coming kingdom. And I really felt dumb writing that chapter because of the amount of information that the Holy Spirit has given us in the prophets- and I'm bringing this up because that's what verse 21 says. This kingdom age is spoken by the prophets. The amount of information that's given there about the coming kingdom in the prophets is enough to drown in. I mean, you could spend your whole life trying to grab every detail. And I felt like I just gave a shallow presentation. It's kind of the Reader's Digest version, the Cliff notes, as we used to call them. But when the kingdom comes, people aren't going to be able to say, Well, I'm shocked. I didn't know this was going to happen, because all the prophets spoke about it over and over again. I just gave you a few verses in Isaiah. But it's all over the prophets. And so that's what's going to happen when Israel is in national repentance.

That's what Peter is explaining to his audience after pointing out to them that they blew it in the first coming by rejecting their king. The day is going to come when you're going to get it right. And once national repentance happens, we're going to have the kingdom age. That was long ago spoken by the prophets. And from there he goes on to verses 22 through 26 where he moves into: Here's what's happening *right now*. Here's what God is doing presently, Peter speaking 2000 years ago to this audience. In verse 22, he explains that Jesus was the fulfillment in His first coming of Deuteronomy 18:15. Look at verse 22, *"Moses said, 'The Lord of the Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren'"* In other words, this coming prophet has to be Jewish. *"To Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you."* You'll notice, in the NASB, for example, those words are capitalized meaning he's quoting the Old Testament. He's quoting Deuteronomy 18:15, which is the prophecy of the prophet. And it says all the way back there and it's quoted here: *"The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me,"* says Moses, *"from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him."* Now we believe that that prophecy that he gave was messianic in tone. Because when John the Baptist showed up in the New Testament, one of the questions that was asked of John the Baptist trying to figure out who he was is: are you the prophet? Are you the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18:15?

So back in John 1:21, it says, *They asked him*, (John the Baptist) *"What then? Are you Elijah?"* Because they had prophecy that Elijah was going to return in Malachi 4:5-6. And John the Baptist answered, *"I am not."* Then the second question is: *"Are you the prophet?"* And he answered, *"No."* So for them to ask the question, "Are you the prophet?" They obviously took the prophet as some kind of prophecy of the coming Messiah. And what Peter is saying in this sermon is that the prophecy already was fulfilled. It was fulfilled when Jesus came the first time. And then from there he goes down-- Oh by the way, I hope you're paying attention to the names of Jesus in this sermon. When we started working through this, I showed you that there are seven names for Jesus that Peter weaves together masterfully in this sermon. Here are the names with the verse addresses that we've covered so far.

Names for Jesus in Acts 3

1. Holy One (14a)
2. Righteous One (14b)

3. Prince of Life (15a)
4. "Christ" or "The Messiah" (18)
5. **Prophet Like Moses (22-23)**
6. Servant (26)

He calls Jesus the Holy One, the Righteous One, the Prince of Life, Christ, or the Messiah. And then here, number five, he calls Jesus a Prophet like Moses. The fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18:15. And then you go down to verse 23, and now he's quoting Deuteronomy 18:19, saying when the prophet shows up, you better pay attention to Him. And you guys didn't pay attention to Him, is his point. Look at verse 23. It says, *And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet--* Look at this-- *shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.* And basically what he's getting at is you better pay attention to the prophet or you're going to go into tremendous discipline as a nation. And this relates to Israel's covenant structure. One of the covenants that God gave to Israel is called the Mosaic Covenant, given at Mount Sinai. It is what the scholars call a Suzerain-Vassal treaty, which is a fancy name. It has a simple meaning, though. It's a covenant between a superior and an inferior. And so, we have evidence of these types of covenants existing outside the Bible.

And so, we believe that the Mosaic covenant was a similar Suzerain-Vassal treaty. There's archeological evidence of these kinds of covenants in the time of Moses and even before the time of Moses. It's basically where a superior comes to an inferior; The superior is the suzerain, the vassal is the inferior. And the superior says to the inferior, if you obey me as revealed in the covenant text, then I will take care of you and I will bless you. But if you disobey me, I will curse you. Now, the curse does not mean a divorce, because God can't divorce Israel. Not because of the Mosaic covenant, but because of what other covenant? Hint: We've been studying a lot of it Sunday mornings. Abrahamic Covenant in the Book of Genesis. The Genesis Abrahamic Covenant is unconditional. This covenant here is conditional, meaning that God can severely discipline Israel when they disobey the covenant text, which would be the Ten Commandments. Just as a suzerain could discipline or curse the vassal when the vassal disobeyed the covenant text in the Suzerain-Vassal Treaty. Part of the Suzerain-Vassal treaty-- and by the way, as you can see from this outline here, the whole book of Deuteronomy is laid out like a Suzerain-Vassal treaty.

Six Parts of a Suzerain-Vassal Treaty in Deuteronomy

- Preamble (1:1-5)
- Prologue (1:6–4:40)
- Covenant obligations (5–26)
- Storage and reading instructions (27:2-3; 31:9, 24, 26)
- Witnesses (32:1)
- **Blessings and curses (28)**

And this is an area of biblical study called form criticism where the Bible is fitting known forms of the ancient world. In this case, the book of Deuteronomy fits exactly with everything we know about Suzerain-Vassal treaties from the Mosaic time period. There was a preamble, a prologue. Then there were the covenant obligations of the vassal. Then there were specific instructions for storage and reading of the covenant text, how frequently is to be read. Witnesses were summoned. But the last part of it here was blessings and curses. Deuteronomy 28 is a tremendous chapter because it lays out for you the blessings for Israel if she obeys, and they're all national and physical and literal.

Verses 1 through 14, blessings for obedience. And then you get to verse 15 through the end of the chapter, verse 68, and there are curses for disobedience. God knew what was going to happen; that most of Israel's time prior to her national repentance would be spent under discipline. And Deuteronomy 28 is the spine of the Old Testament. If you want to understand every single book of the Old Testament, read it against the backdrop of Deuteronomy 28 and it will start to make perfect sense. Lamentations, where Jeremiah (who we believe is the author of the Book of Lamentations) is lamenting the destruction of Solomon's Temple. And you read through Lamentations-- what is there, five chapters in Lamentations, if I remember right? Boy, and you'll see reference after reference after reference that Lamentations makes to Deuteronomy 28. It's like Jeremiah in Lamentations is saying, You guys knew this was going to happen if you disobeyed God. That was revealed centuries earlier in Sinai. Leviticus 26 is a parallel chapter to Deuteronomy 28. They're both talking about the same thing. The blessings and curses in the Suzerain-Vassal Treaty. Leviticus given to the first generation out of Egypt. Deuteronomy given to the second generation out of Egypt. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28-- you read those chapters, you'll understand

everything in the Bible, particularly Old Testament books that are kind of ambiguous to you. They're all dealing with this subject.

What would happen is these curses would sort of roll like a snowball. And when they would reach their zenith, what Deuteronomy predicts is that a nation from afar, a pagan nation, will come against you and kick you out of your land. So, all the way back in Deuteronomy 28:49-50-- this is 1500 years before the time of Jesus. This is Mount Sinai stuff. At the height of discipline. It says, *"The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand, a nation of fierce countenance who will have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young."* So, at the height of your disobedience will be the height of divine discipline. It will be foreign invasion kicking you out of your land. That's why when Solomon left the throne, the kingdom was divided between the North and the South. That's an outworking of divine discipline because of Solomon's disobedience. The North was scattered by the Assyrians in 722 BC, in Second Kings 17. The remaining Southern kingdom, Judah and Benjamin, were taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. Second Kings 25. In the post-exilic time period, they came back into the land. But as the great theologian Yogi Berra would say, "It's deja vu all over again" because now they're about to be disciplined at the hand of the Romans about forty years future from when Peter spoke these words, because they're under discipline again, because they rejected their king.

So, the Romans are going to come. They're going to displace you from your land. And you're going to go into what's called the diaspora, worldwide dispersion the Jews have been in for the last 2000 years. So, Acts 3:23, quoting Deuteronomy 18:19; when it says, *And it shall be that every soul that does not heed the prophet-- the Messiah -- shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.* That's what it's referring to. It's referring to the cycles of discipline that Israel is under. This is why Jesus, foreseeing this in Luke 23:29, to Israel said, *"For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.'"* I mean, don't weep for me, you know, it's basically what Jesus is saying. Weep for yourselves and your children because of the horrors that are coming upon this nation at the hands of the Romans in AD 70. And it was a terrible time for the Jewish people. All you have to do is read Josephus, the historian who writes around that time period.

It's exactly what Jesus said would happen in Luke 19:41-44, how you'll be hemmed in on all sides. And your temple is going to be torn apart brick by brick. And he talks there in Luke 19 about how there's even going to be death for the children within you. Luke 19:41-44. That's why he says, woe to those that are pregnant during that time period. So, everything that Jesus said would happen, happened. Titus of Rome came in AD 70. He literally built a sort of an enforcement encampment around Jerusalem where you couldn't get out even if you wanted to. They took the temple and they lit it on fire. The gold in the temple melted and dried. It kind of oozed down and dried between the bricks of the temple. And obviously, what did the Roman soldiers do to get their hands on the gold? They took the temple apart brick by brick, which is exactly what Jesus said would happen. And Josephus talks about how they tore open the wombs of pregnant women to strangle to death the children within them to erase the Jewish race, they thought, forever. I mean, this is serious stuff. But it's all predicted in the Mosaic law. It's all part of the Suzerain-Vassal Treaty. And that's what Peter is saying right here. Verse 23, *"And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet--"* In other words, if you don't pay attention to your own messiah, Israel, here's what you can expect to happen. God's not divorcing you, but you're going through severe discipline.

"And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people." I think that's a clear prophecy in AD 70. And these things happening now are actually a summation, a fulfillment of all the prophets. So, we're back to what all the prophets said. Verse 24, *"And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days."* The very prophets that predicted this kingdom that's coming also predicted this time of divine discipline, largely beginning in AD 70. Who are the prophets? The prophets are the *Nevi'im*. *'Im* ending in Hebrew is plural. It's like adding an s at the end of a noun in English. The Old Testament-- what we call Old Testament-- Hebrew Bible was divided into three parts: Torah, *Nevi'im*, Ketuvim. Torah, Law. *Nevi'im*, prophets. Ketuvim, writings. So, when Jesus says in Luke 24:44, *"These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all the things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses (Torah) and the Prophets (Nevi'im) and the Psalms--"* which is the most prominent book in the Ketuvim, the writings-- *"must be fulfilled."* Hebrew Bible points to Me is what Jesus is saying. And you tripped right over Me.

Luke 24:27 says, *Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.* And we always want to be a fly on the wall, don't we? You hear people say, boy, I wish I was a fly on the wall and could hear the Sermon on the Mount. Well, if you want to know what my dream is, I want to be a fly on the wall and hear this sermon on the Emmaus Road where He explained all things in Hebrew Bible about Him. Wow. That's quite a teaching. Sign me up for that. So, what He's saying is TNK (Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim), another way of saying Hebrew Bible, points towards Me. So, when Peter is talking here about the kingdom and this time of discipline, he's saying, read about it in your own scripture. It's in Nevi'im. The prophets all talked about this. The prophets all talked about Jesus. They talked about the coming kingdom of Jesus. And they talked about the time of discipline that the nation would go through before the kingdom comes because the nation would have rejected their own king. Notice verse 24, that the first prophet, according to Peter here, was a guy named Samuel. Because he says here, *"And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel..."* In other words, Samuel was the first one. Why is Samuel the first prophet? Because what was a prophet's job? A prophet's job was to call wayward kings back to the Mosaic Law. That was their primary job. And in the process, the Lord used them in such a way that they made predictive prophecies about the future. But their primary job was to go to a king and say to a king, you're outside of the will of God. You're violating God's law. The national curses are going to get worse if you don't straighten up. If you want these curses to stop, then go back to the Mosaic law. If you want these curses to get worse, then keep doing what you're doing. And it's going to get so bad that you're going to be invaded by a foreign power. And what do you think the kings did? --Yay! Thank you for your warm, fuzzy message. No, the prophets were all killed, primarily.

Jesus in Matthew 23 gave sort of a summary statement of the prophets. Matthew 23:35, *so that upon you may fall the guilt of all of the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel (Genesis 4) to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah--* That would be not the Prophet Zechariah that you know of, but a guy mentioned in Chronicles. And they didn't divide up Chronicles the way we do; First Chronicles, Second Chronicles. They just had one book of Chronicles and they put it at the end of the Hebrew Bible. So, when Jesus says about the prophets, *so that upon you may fall the guilt of the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the*

temple and the altar. What He's saying is every single prophet, for the most part, was murdered. Isaiah, we believe was sawn in two, if you can believe that. And you just go right on through the list, every one of these prophets-- read the book of Jeremiah; they're mistreated, ultimately martyred. Jesus says that started in the Book of Genesis, and it goes all the way through the Book of Chronicles. It's like the way we would say from Genesis to Revelation, from A to Z, from beginning to end. Because the prophets were not liked by the Kings, because they were always calling the kings to repentance, and the king had the political power at his fingertips to-- can I use this word? -- "cancel" the profits. Let's take away their website. Let's take away their Facebook posts. Let's put their churches under whether they're going to have tax exemption or not. And it gets worse and worse and worse to the point of let's just kill them, get rid of them. We'll just call them disappeared persons. That's how all the prophets were treated. And once God established the office of a king-- and the first king was who? Saul. God had to raise up a prophetic voice to call the wayward kings to repentance, because most of these kings were completely and totally wicked.

The northern kingdom has nineteen kings. How many good kings were there? Zero. Goose egg. Nada. I mean, if your team goes zero and nineteen, that's not a very good season. The Southern kingdom, there was a little bit more grace on the southern kingdom because Judah is in the southern kingdom and the Messiah is going to come from Judah. They had twenty kings and I think on their list, they only had eight kings that were good. The rest of them were wicked. So, all the way through the Bible, the prophets are saying, come back to the law, come back to the Suzerain-Vassal Treaty, or these curses are going to get worse. And the kings did not like the message and so they canceled the prophets. Samuel is the first guy that God uses this way as a prophet to speak out against Saul. Remember, Saul wanted to be a priest. First Samuel 13:8-11, Saul, the first king of the united Kingdom. *Now he waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him. So Saul said, "Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering. As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him and to greet him. But Samuel said, "What have you done?"* You just violated the law of Moses!

First Samuel 13:13-14, *Samuel said to Saul, "You have acted foolishly;"* That's what a prophet is supposed to do. *"you have not kept the commandment of the Lord*

your God, which He commanded you, for the Lord now would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not endure. The Lord has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you."

That's the first prophet we have in the Bible, Samuel, who's calling the king to repentance. And so that's why Peter says, this time period I'm talking about of conversion, second coming, kingdom, but before that rejection of your own Messiah and national discipline-- These things are all spoken of by the prophets, the Nevi'im. And the first guy that started talking this way was Samuel, because he was the first prophet on the scene. Because you now needed a prophet now that you had a king. Because the function of a prophet is to confront the king and to call the king to repentance.

So, what's happening right now? Deuteronomy 18:15 is happening right now. Peter says, Jesus was your Messiah, but you didn't listen to Him. So, there's going to be severe consequences, Deuteronomy 18:19. And Peter says, you know, don't take my word for it. It's all over your own scripture. Just read the Nevi'im and start with Samuel. Start with Samuel's confrontation of Saul. But for us Gentiles that are not part of national Israel, it's really good news because God took lemons and turned them into lemonade. As Israel rushed Jesus through their judicial system to get Him dead as fast as they could and broke every rule in the book as they did that and got Him turned over to the Romans to be killed, God took a tragedy and turned it into a triumph because He attached to the death of Jesus, the sin debt of the world. The sin debt of the world has been paid for because of what Israel did to Jesus back in the first century. And so, anybody on the face of the earth can trust in what Jesus did and have their sin debt completely paid for. So, this whole sad scenario, this tragedy has turned into a triumph. And that's how God works, right? I mean, you look at some of the worst things that ever happened in your life, you can look back on them and say, you know what? God accomplished some neat things that I wasn't even aware of at the time through that.

We just got back from a memorial service today. One of our church members, their son died, which is tragic. But you see how that whole family was brought together because of that tragedy. And you're seeing how God can work through something even as tragic as that. That's what the death of Jesus was like. I mean, it was painful to watch, no doubt. But God used it to pay the sin debt of the whole world. And that's what He's getting at in verse 25. *"It is you who are the sons of the prophets and 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.'" That's a quote from where? Genesis 12:3. *And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.* And it's part of the eight promises that God gave to Abraham when He made him certain promises in Genesis 12. And one of the things He said to him is your people are going to be used as a blessing to the whole world. And so, the whole world has been blessed through this King that Israel rejected. And when you start studying what Paul says in Romans 11:15, you know, if Israel's rejection of her Messiah brought this good result you know, the payment of the sin debt of the world so every human being is savable today. They're not saved until they trust Christ, but they're savable. If Israel's rejection of her own messiah brought this good result-- what do you think is going to happen to this planet when Israel is in faith? What do you think is going to happen to planet Earth when Israel fulfills her condition in verse 19? Then you're going to have something even greater coming to the earth, which is the kingdom. The times of refreshing and the restoration of all things. So, if Israel, rejecting her Messiah, brought a blessing to the Gentiles, think how much more the Gentiles are going to be blessed when Israel has received her Messiah.

So, he's arguing from the lesser to the greater. Peter is saying we're right on schedule. These things that happened to Jesus are tragic. You guys, first-century Israel, did it through ignorance. But you know what? Even though you were acting that way, God was still saying, I'm going to fulfill Genesis 12:3. I'm going to use this to pay the sin debt of the world. Because I said all the way back in the time of Abraham, 2000 years before Jesus ever showed up, that in you, Abraham, all the families of the earth will be blessed. Now, who is the Book of Acts written to? Anybody remember? Theophilus. This goes back to our introductory lessons that we did about ten years ago, and I said, you've got to pay attention to this because if you understand who Luke is writing to, you understand why Luke is including the things that he includes. He's trying to present Theophilus with an orderly account of the birth and growth of the church so as to affirm Theophilus in what he has believed. This is why Luke documents the birth and growth of the church numerically, geographically, and ethnically in the Book of Acts, because he's trying to show Theophilus. Is Theophilus a Jew or a Gentile? He's a Gentile. And we tried to piece it together with what we know of Theophilus from the prequel, The Gospel of Luke. Theophilus is wondering, you know, this Christianity thing, it looks really Jewish. Am I part of the deal? I mean, I believed in Jesus. But everything looks Jewish. I'm a Gentile, a Roman. Was I ever contemplated in the in the mind of God? And Luke,

recording Peter's statement, says, Theophilus, you bet your bottom dollar that you were contemplated in the mind of God. Because God said through Israel, I'll bless the world. I'll bless the whole world when Israel rejects her king and I'll bless the whole world even more when Israel accepts her king.

So, if you can put yourself in the shoes of the immediate recipient of the Book of Acts, you understand why Peter would include that there in verse 25. And then we come to verse 26. Can you believe it? We may even finish. *For you First, God raised up His servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.* Notice the reference to servant. Israel in the book of Isaiah 49-57 is called The Servant. Isaiah 42:6, *"I am the Lord, I have called You in righteousness,"* And we believe these prophecies are ultimately speaking of Jesus. *"I am the Lord, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations,"* Isaiah 49:6, He says, *"It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."* Including you, Theophilus, probably in Rome. God was thinking of you when He put this whole program together, because He said all the way back in the time of Abraham, I'll bless the world through you, Israel.

This tragedy that happened ended up being a blessing to Theophilus. Now remember our list of messianic titles in Acts 3? You ever put a list together of messianic titles? Well, how about doing it just from one chapter? I mean, if you were to go home this week and study all these messianic titles just from Acts 3, your knowledge of who Jesus is would grow exponentially. I mean, just in this sermon, Jesus is called the Holy one, the Righteous one, the Prince of life, the Christos or Mashiach, meaning Messiah. He is a prophet like Moses. And the last thing he brings up here, verse 26; he brought it up in verse 13 too. He calls Jesus the servant, the servant that Isaiah spoke of that would bring light to the Gentiles. But with all that being said, look again at verse 26, He's speaking to Jews here. *For you first, God raised up His Servant--* Israel is the elect nation, she's chosen. Deuteronomy 7:7 says, *"The Lord did not set his love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples."* I mean, why didn't God use the Egyptians or the Phoenicians or the Assyrians or the Babylonians to bless the world? Because God made a sovereign choice. God decided that all those other nations were corrupted, probably because they

owe their roots to the Tower of Babel in some way or substance. So, He created a nation independent of the Tower of Babel. That's why the Tower of Babel incident happens in Genesis 11. And then God raises up Israel beginning in Genesis 12. Israel is the only nation that has ever existed that owes no allegiance or heritage to the Tower of Babel and its corruption. So, He raised up Israel. Why did God raise up Israel? Because God made a decision to do that. And He has the right to make decisions like that because He is God. Right? I mean, if you're God, you get to set the rules. And so, He made a decision that He was going to raise up Israel. I chose Israel and I'm going to use Israel as my instrument to bless the whole world.

So, with that being said, Israel was given the first bite of the apple when Jesus showed up. Israel could have received the King, their King. And if they had enthroned the King on the King's terms, the kingdom would have come. It was a bona fide offer. Now, when I say that everybody writes me and asks me the same question and they say: Well, if that had happened, how could Jesus have died for the sins of the world? I mean, if Israel had accepted her king and the millennial kingdom would have started, how could Jesus have died for the sins of the world? And the answer is God knew what was going to happen. He knew Israel would turn down the offer. And it would result in Jesus getting rushed through the judicial system to get Him handed over to the Romans and killed as fast as possible. And when He was hanging on that Roman cross, His final words would be, "It is finished." Meaning God used a tragic event to turn lemons into lemonade and pay the sin debt of the world, thereby blessing planet Earth through Israel, even though Israel rejected her king when He came the first time. So, this offer that she had is called the Offer of the Kingdom. It's preached by John the Baptist, Jesus, the twelve, and the seventy. There's the scriptural addresses where you can find it. It says, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Had Israel repented nationally-- by the way, isn't that what Peter told Israel to do back in verse 19? Future Israel repent and return. Well, what if she had repented and returned when Jesus came 2000 years ago? Then the restoration of all things and the times of refreshing would have come. The kingdom would have been set up. That's what Peter means here when he says *"For you first."* You got the first bite of the apple because you're the elect nation. *"For you first, God raised up His servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways."*

This is why when the offer of the kingdom is being presented, it says in Matthew 10:5-7, *These twelve, Jesus sent out after instructing them: "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. And as you go, preach saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"* See how narrow the offer was? Israel, you get it first. You get the first bite of the apple. You could have the kingdom right now. This is why in Matthew 15:24, Jesus makes this statement: *"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel."* Why would He say that? Because it's a unique time in history where the kingdom offers being extended to Israel. Why is it being extended only to Israel? Because she's the elect nation. And that's why Peter says, *"But you first."* And we know what happened, right? Israel turned down the offer. The leadership said, we will not have this man to reign over us. In fact, His very existence is threatening our power structure. So, we're going to get this guy killed. We're going to get this guy dead as fast as we can. So, as we have explained, they rushed Him through their judicial system, broke all their rules of evidence, turned Him over to Rome for execution, thinking that they had gotten rid of the problem.

And the whole time, as Jesus is dying on that cross, the sin debt of the world is being paid for the Gentiles. So Theophilus, don't have any question marks in your mind about whether Christianity is for you. The whole thing is for you. God set it up this way. And if God could take a tragedy and turn it into a triumph through a rejection like that, what do you think He's going to do when Israel accepts her king? Then you're going to have, once she repents and returns, the times of refreshing, the restoration of all things, and the manifestation of the Kingdom of God on planet Earth. So Theophilus and Gentiles and Sugar Land Bible Church in the year 2023, Peter says we're right on schedule. We're right on schedule. And so that takes us to the end of Acts 3. Think you guys can wait a whole summer to get into Acts 4? You guys need to read Acts 4 by the time we get back to it on September 12th.