

Progress of Redemption #05

by David Shirley

The sermon explores the transition from God's plan for Israel to the establishment and mission of the church through the ascension of Christ and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 1:14:41

Scripture: Genesis 12:2, Matthew 9:14-17, Matthew 16:18, Mark 13:2, Luke 24:49-51, Acts 1:9-11

Topics: "Redemption"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of both words and deeds in the preaching of the word of God. They explain that Jesus, who worked and taught on earth, continues to do the same work from heaven through his spirit and his people. The significance of Jesus' ascension is interpreted through Paul's words in Ephesians 4:8-13. The sermon also highlights God's plan to make a great nation through Abraham in the Old Testament and to build his church in the New Testament, with the purpose of proclaiming the Messiah. The transition from the old to the new is seen in the destruction of the temple in AD 70 and the sending of the Holy Spirit to form the church.

Transcript

Father, we thank you for your divine plan that you said in your word that you would make great nation of Abraham, and you did, and that you would build your church, and that you are. We thank you for the privilege of being your children, drawn by you, as our king who loves us so much that you would actually die for the subjects of your kingdom. Truly, Lord, there's none like you.

We praise you, and we thank you for the gift of faith, for your Holy Spirit, for being such a great judge who is the loving and drawing savior of all men. As we continue today to look at your plan, we ask that you would just open our eyes, but also let us enjoy you, and see you, and just how great you are. For your glory, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. In Genesis chapter 12, in verse 2, the Lord says to Abraham, I will make you a great nation. And then, when Jesus came, we saw last week the Messiah who fulfilled everything that was predicted of him, and he said, I will build my church in Matthew 16, 18.

And as we look through the Old Testament, in Exodus 19, 6, God has said, you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and the holy nation, my own possession among all the peoples. Of course, that they obeyed him, and they followed his laws and his ways, but God has wanted them to be, to me, he says, a kingdom

of priests, and a holy nation. That's been his desire.

When we get to the New Testament, in 1 Peter chapter 2, in verse 9, we read the same thing, that we are a holy nation. We're a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession. And so, God hasn't changed in what he's desired from the Old to the New Testament.

He's wanted this people to be a kingdom of priests, that he has chosen a holy nation to him, a people for God's own possession among all the people. So, in God's plan, I will make you a great nation in the Old Testament. It was so that they might provide the Messiah.

And in God's plan in the New Testament, I will build my church. It was so that we might proclaim the excellencies of him, to proclaim the Messiah. And so, we want to look today at the transition that's made between the time that Christ was here and the beginning of the building of his church.

Christ ascended into heaven, and then the Holy Spirit was sent, descended. And you'll notice in history that it wasn't too long after the descent of the Holy Spirit that in A.D. 70, a Roman general named Titus came into Jerusalem, and he destroyed the temple. Actually, Jesus had said when he was there on the temple mount one time, look at these stones, not one stone will be left upon another.

And they must have thought, wow, these are tremendous stones, and there's no way this is going to be destroyed. But when they caught the temple on fire, and the gold that was in the dome melted down between the rocks, they actually did take the stones apart in order to get the gold. And so, as he said, not one stone will be left upon another.

And it's interesting that the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. It actually in many ways fit well with God's plan, because God is beginning to transition from the old to the new, and he has sent the Holy Spirit to form the church, and the natural temple where they had worshipped before as a nation is now destroyed. Now, if you're turning your Bible to Luke 24, we will see the closing scene of the gospel, and then we will look in Acts and see the opening scene of that which continues the gospels.

In Luke 24, beginning in verse 49 through 51, and behold, I am sending forth the promise of my Father upon you, that you're to stay in the city, that is Jerusalem, until you're clothed with power from on high. And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came about that while he was blessing them, he parted from them.

The gospels close with Jesus Christ ascending up into heaven. And then in Acts chapter 1, verses 9 through 11, we read, and after he had said these things, he was lifted up while they were looking on, and the cloud received him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while he was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them, and they said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched him go into heaven.

And Luke makes it very clear in the first verse of chapter 1 of the book of Acts that he's writing about all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day that he was taken up. But Jesus says he wasn't taken up until after he had, by the Holy Spirit, given orders to the apostles whom he'd chosen. And so all that Jesus began to do, he continues to do, as the gospels introduced us to Jesus Christ the Messiah, the book of Acts now will continue the progress of Christianity into the world up through the first century.

It's about words and about deeds. And so the same Jesus who worked and taught on earth is now still working and teaching. He's still doing what he was doing in building his church, but he's just doing it from heaven.

Since he's ascended and given his spirit, he continues to do by his spirit the same work and through his people. And if you'll turn to Ephesians chapter 4, verses 8 through 13, you'll see Paul's interpretation of the significance of the ascension of Jesus Christ. We've seen that Jesus came, incarnate, the word became flesh, lived among us, and that he died for the world.

He was buried and he rose again as the third day. And then Jesus ascended into heaven, is at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, and he sent his Holy Spirit at Pentecost to baptize and to form the church as his witness, as his ambassadors to the world. And Paul's interpretation of the significance of this ascension which ties the gospel with the progress of the church in the book of Acts is found beginning in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 8. Therefore he says when he ascended on high he led captive a host of captives and gave gifts to men.

Now this expression he ascended, what does it mean except that he also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is himself also he who ascended far above all the heavens that he might fill all things. And you can read Hebrews 2 and Psalm 8 for further commentary on that. That is he did it, verse 11, and he gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers.

For the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ. So Jesus ascended into heaven. He gave gifts to men and these gifts were actually men themselves.

The word gift here being Doria, people gifts, not the charismatic so much as the people that God would work through to build his church. God gave these people to equip the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ. Jesus Christ is the head of his body.

His body is in the process of being formed. The church is progressing. The church is growing.

We live during the greatest time between the two resurrections, the resurrection of Jesus Christ and then the rapture of the church and the first resurrection, we call it. And we have the opportunity as Christ is forming and building his church to do the work of service. And we're to do it, he says in verse 13, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a mature man to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ until the complete body of Christ is formed.

And it has been being formed for 2,000 years. Some right now are even what we call dead in Christ. Though the dead in Christ will rise first and we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The Lord is forming his body. And so this ascension of Jesus Christ ties together what he did personally here and he said that it's to your advantage that I go away so that I might send the Spirit because he dwelleth with you but he shall be in you. And so Christ leaving and ascended into heaven was not so much a sunset in many ways as it was a sunrise.

It was the beginning of something new. Now Jesus begins to build the church from the seeds of Israel. And as you read through the book of Acts the first seven chapters take place in the city of Jerusalem.

And the man who's being used is mostly Peter. But then in chapter 8 through chapter 12 we notice that there's a shift from Jerusalem to another city. And the city that begins to be important is the city of Antioch.

And you have both Peter and Barnabas and also Paul beginning to be involved in this work. But then in chapter 13 of Acts through the end to chapter 28 the focus is now moving towards the city of Rome, the world city. And finally Paul is the man that is so greatly used to take the gospel all the way to this world city of Rome.

And we'll notice as we go through Acts reading that he would pioneer the gospel by going to great seaport cities to the most popular traveled routes. And actually it was the Lord's strategy not Paul's since Acts 13 when the Holy Spirit called him out and led him to go and set up elders in the different cities and then to teach and to write about being in Christ. Paul was living today there's no doubt he probably would be using the most popular traveled routes of communication including the internet and all that was available to him.

But let's get back to the transition between the Gospels and the Acts. And if you'll turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 9 verses 14 through 17. Jesus said that the disciples of John came to him saying, why do we and the Pharisees fast but your disciples do not fast? Jesus said to them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them and then they will fast.

But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment for the patch pulls away from the garment and a worse tear results. Nor do men put new wine into old wineskins otherwise the wineskins burst and the wine pours out and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into fresh wineskins and both are preserved.

Sometimes we get so hung up on these things that we forget to see the big thing. And the big thing Jesus is saying is that there are days coming, things are going to change. Yes, what's going on right now is not always going to be what's happening.

There's going to be something new going on in the future and he's letting them know. Because when it does happen he wants them to know that they're not supposed to try to take an old patch and put it on the new thing and they're not supposed to put new wine into old wineskins. And he wants them to know that there is a new thing coming and they need to be prepared that it's coming.

Now in Matthew 16 verses 13 through 19 we have Peter's great confession of Christ. Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi he began asking his disciples saying why or who do people say that the Son of Man is? And they said well some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. He said to them but who do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered and said to him blessed are you Simon Barjona because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it or prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be have been bound in heaven and whatever you shall loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

And any one of his disciples should tell no one that he was the Christ at that point. But Jesus is letting them know that this new thing that's coming, this transition that's taking place is going to be built upon that

statement that Peter made. Christ will build his church on the fact that there will be revelation from the Father from heaven that I am the Christ, that Jesus Christ is the very Son of the living God.

Now in Matthew 21 verses 33 to 43 Jesus instructs them a little more on it. He tells a parable of the landowner. He says listen to another parable.

There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it and built a tower and rented it out to vine growers and went on a journey. And when the harvest time approached he sent his slaves to the vine growers to receive his produce. The vine growers took his slaves, beat one, killed another, stoned a third.

Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first and they did the same thing to them. But afterward he sent his son to them saying they'll respect my son. But when the vine growers saw the son they said among themselves this is the heir.

Come let's kill him and seize his inheritance. And they took him, cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes what will he do to those vine growers? Well they said to him he'll bring those wretches to a wretched end and will rent out the vineyard to other vine growers who will pay him the proceeds of the proper season.

Jesus said to them did you never read in the scriptures? And he quotes from Psalm 118. The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone. This came about from the Lord and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Therefore I say to you the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it. So Jesus is letting them know again there's a change coming. We're in transition and the kingdom is going to be taken from them and given to a nation that will produce the fruit.

Which must have sounded extremely strange to them because God has been building this nation since the book of Genesis. So you're telling me he's going to turn to another nation? And yet we know that it was not another nation such as turning to Syria or turning to Egypt or to Lebanon or something. But that this was the nation that Isaiah and others spoke of.

This was the church, the holy nation that God is beginning to build. And then in Matthew 28 beginning in verse 16 after fighting that tremendous battle at Golgotha, most important battle that was ever fought on planet earth. Where we were justified and sanctified and glorified at the cross.

But Jesus won a complete victory there it is finished and here in his love that evidences to us the love of God. Not that we loved him but that he loved us and gave himself to be the propitiation for our sins and not for us only but for the sins of the whole world. And the righteousness of God is revealed in it in this gospel.

Romans 1 18 says and God has purchased unto himself a people for his own possession. He's done so by the lamb the foundation stone of the new Jerusalem. The object of worship forever and ever and ever.

The blessed lamb of God and here he is Jesus risen from the dead ready to show and demonstrate publicly the victory that he has conquered death. That he is bodily risen and I wish we had time to turn to first Corinthians 15 and read more of the resurrection. But just to think that here is Jesus Christ in a new resurrected glorified body and that he'll remain a man eternally.

And that even now there is a man sitting at the right hand of God the father almighty. A man who understands everything about us and has proven that matter is capable of transfiguration. And what a hope we have in Christ.

The hope of glory. The hope of the new heaven. The hope of the new earth.

But Christ comes in his resurrected glorified body and it says in verse 16 but the 11 disciples proceeded to Galilee to the mountain that Jesus had designated and when they saw him they worshipped him. I imagine so but some were doubtful and Jesus came up and spoke to them saying all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and to make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the holy spirit teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.

And lo I'm with you always even to the end of the age. And so after the resurrection Jesus reveals a little more of this change in this transition that's taken place because now they're to make disciples of all the nations. Not one, not two, not a dozen but all of the nations.

And so as the father had sent Jesus, Jesus says that I will send you. Now there's a new channel through which God is going to proclaim salvation to the world. He's going to give his holy spirit to testify of his resurrection because the holy spirit is the spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

And with this authority he's going to work through this new group of people. Now there's still a transition going on because we see in Acts chapter 1 and verse 6 they come and they ask Jesus a question. Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? And Jesus' answer is simple.

It's not for you to know. In other words, I'll take care of that at the proper time. Right now there's something else going on.

You have a job to do and we need to focus on that. But of course Jesus will take care of it at the proper time. He said it's not for you to know the times or ethics which the father's fixed by his own authority but you shall receive power when the holy spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses.

That's what you are to be. Both in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and even to the remotest part of the earth. Be my witnesses.

And so the old channel Israel is set aside and God begins working through his new channel the church. And if you can read Romans 9 through 11 it deals with this issue of God rejecting Israel for a time but not forever until the fullness of the gentiles comes in. But the church right now is much more suited for carrying out this commission to all the nations.

It's much more suited for the whosoever will for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. The church is suited to proclaim this message because there's a difference between a nation and the church though they're alike in many ways. A nation is exclusive but the church is universal.

The nation is national it's just Jewish but the church is international. People from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. The nation was in one particular location but the church can be anywhere.

The indigenous local church is in every community where two or three gather together in his name. The nation is so political but the church is non-political. It's about faith and obtaining the outcome of our faith the salvation of our souls and and it's to this salvation the prophets prophesied of the grace of Christ the sufferings and the glories that were to follow.

It's a non-political thing and we can go into any country but if the nation Israel tried to go into another country to take the hidden news that would be seen as an invasion. And God dwelt in a temple building but now God dwells in us in believers and so we're much like what God did in building the nation because you have to have a people with a language and we are a people with a language. We speak the language of Jesus Christ.

We speak the language of the spirit. We pray in the spirit and we sing the spirit. We walk in the spirit.

We live by the spirit. Everything we do is in the spirit and we are a people. We have a language and we have leadership the most versatile and all the wise leadership that's ever been.

The spirit of God leads us directs us. He's the administrator of the church he's the shepherd of the flock and as he said in first Corinthians 12 there's different administrations but it's the same spirit. So we have a tremendous leadership.

The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus is ours and we have a homeland. Yes I mean obviously yes we set our affection on things above and those verses go through our mind and we look forward to the new Jerusalem but what I mean is the church we have a homeland right now just like they had a homeland we have a homeland and it's the world. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.

The whole world is ours. He said go into all the world. The world has become our homeland.

Numbers 14 21 says it as truly as I live says the Lord all the earth shall be filled with my glory. The glory of the Lord and Habakkuk 2 14 is the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall fill you know the earth. It'll be like the waters covering the sea and so we we have a homeland as well.

But God is setting aside this whole channel. Now we need to remember that as Peter was preaching in Acts chapter 2 and verses 24 through 32 he made it real clear that Jesus had the right to the messianic Davidic throne. He says for David says of him I was always beholding the Lord in my presence for he's at my right hand therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exalted wherever my flesh also will abide in hope because that will not abandon my soul to Hades nor will allow thy holy one to undergo decay thou has made known to me the ways of life thou would make me full of gladness with thy presence.

Brethren I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried and his tomb is with us to this day. And so because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants upon his throne he looked ahead he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ that he was neither abandoned to Hades nor did his flesh suffer decay. This Jesus God raised up again to which we are all witnesses.

Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received from the father the promise of the Holy Spirit he has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven but he himself that is David himself says the Lord said to my Lord set at my right hand until I make thine enemies a footstool for thy feet. Therefore let all the house of this will know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucify and it is the same Jesus who ascended

into heaven who will return again in like manner.

But the old channel has been set aside and now the new redemptive instrument is the church and the Bible uses several figures for the church. Three favorite ones of mine is that we're like a temple for God to dwell in. And we're like a body for Christ to be the head of to direct.

We're like a flock for the shepherd for the spirit to guide. We are definitely a new thing and yet as a church we still must exist within another society or else we would perish and yet we're not political. And in church history whenever the church moves into politics it always loses its ministry.

We should be witnessing now the good confession that Jesus Christ confessed that Paul talks about in first Timothy chapter 6 and verse 13 when he says I charge you in the presence of God who gives life to all things and of Christ Jesus who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate. And we know that Christ only spoke three times in John 18 36. Jesus said to Pilate my kingdom is not of this world and if it was of course my servants would be fighting but my servants are not fighting because my kingdom is not of this world.

It's not really a political kingdom. And then in John 18 37 Jesus spoke a second time and said those who are of the truth will hear my voice. He said I've really come to bear witness to the truth and those that are of the truth will hear my voice.

And that's why it's so neat to go out and share the good news of Jesus Christ with people to me because my job is just to share the good news of Jesus and it's the Holy Spirit who will work in people's hearts and lives and if they're of the truth that they receive him then the Spirit will do that work. I don't have to do it. I just have to tell the good news and it's just such a privilege to go out and speak of the truth.

And then Jesus spoke a third time he said there's no power but of God. Pilate was making a point that he himself had power to let Jesus live or to crucify Jesus and Jesus said no not really. If you have any power it's been given to you by God.

And you could have no power at all against me except it was given thee from above. And he I guess was kind of summing up what we learned in the book of Daniel that there's Elion the possessor of heaven and earth who is above all and has all power. And so that's really the good confession that we should be witnessing today as a church that the kingdom's not of this world that it's those that are of the truth that will hear they'll be saved and there's really no power but of God because Jesus told him in Luke 23 69 he says soon hereafter he says you're going to see the son of man and he'll be you know sitting at the right hand of the power of God coming with all of his holy angels and it's awesome.

And so that's our testimony between the two resurrections that this kingdom's not of this world it's not that political and it's about truth and all that are of the truth will hear his voice and there's no power but of God. And so with the political element removed we as the Lord's people can go to any nation and be ambassadors for Christ. We are ambassadors for Christ as though God were entreating through us.

We beg you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God. We speak for Christ as though God were working by his spirit through us and treating people and we beg them on the behalf of Christ who came and died and rose and ascended and is coming again for them and loves them then be reconciled to God. It's just so great to have this relationship with the Holy Spirit that he's with us he is there before we get there if we go to heaven he's there if we descend to lowest parts of the earth he's there and there's just nowhere we can

go where he's not there and he's in us living dwelling both willing within us and causing us to desire to do the will of God and he comes upon us with power to do the will of God he causes us to be overflowing with the love of God and so we are ambassadors not just something that we do but it's something that we are because of our relationship to Christ through his spirit.

Now watch Jesus begin to build his church from the seeds in Israel. Who was there in the upper room? Who was there on the day of Pentecost? Well there were the seeds of Israel men like Peter, John, James, Philip and later we see Paul and people often ask well were they Christians before Pentecost? In a sense well yes they were following the Lord they were disciples but they were constituted the church the body of Christ by the descent and spirit baptism at Pentecost. Pentecost was such a tremendous change in the life of Peter and all of these guys before Pentecost even after the resurrection even after the transfiguration Peter was still able to be sifted and to deny the Lord but after Pentecost it was such boldness on Peter's part he had a power to witness and he would stand up and say this is that which Joel 2 talked about and boldly proclaim that Christ is risen and that it was not possible that he should be held in death and so there was a tremendous change that took place after Pentecost.

Pentecost is Christ sending his spirit to empower the church for the new work and what's the new work?

You shall be my witnesses but the believers still wanted to continue in the temple at Jerusalem and the first seven chapters of the book of Acts are pretty much what takes place in Jerusalem they continued there however God had to move them out into the world if the church was to be established in every culture it must move out into other lands but while they were in there in Jerusalem there's this rapid growth taking place in the church it almost reminds you of how they became a nation in exodus multiplying and there were 120 people devoted to prayer there in Acts 1 and then in Acts 2 there's 3,000 people added that day to the church in Acts 4 there are 5,000 men who heard and believed in Acts 5 it says more believers were added in Acts 6 it says the disciples increased and Acts 6 10

says that even the synagogue leaders were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which Stephen spoke God has empowered them by his spirit I mean listen to the progress that's made just in Jerusalem in Acts 2 41 it says they were added that day about 3,000 souls and verse 46 says day by day continuing with one mind in the temple and breaking bread from house to house they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart praising God and having favor with all the people the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved it's God's work he's doing it Jesus is building in Acts 3 1 we see Peter and John are going up to the temple at the ninth hour the hour of prayer and that's what they met the lame beggar and they healed him and they

explained to him you know men of Israel why do you marvel at this why do you you know gaze at us as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob the God of our fathers has glorified his servant Jesus and they were so faithful in proclaiming Jesus that in chapter 4 Peter and John were arrested it says that as they were speaking to the people the priests the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees all came upon 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 believed and the number of the men came to be about five thousand they were so

excited and the spirit was working so strongly among them that even when you get to chapter five that Ananias and Sapphira who lied and kept back some of the price for themselves were exposed by the Holy

Spirit because Jesus is Lord of all or he's not Lord at all and so they were judged and they they breathed their last they were buried beside each other and great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard about these things but it says that they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico and none of the rest dared to associate with them I guess so however the people held them in high esteem and all the more believers in the Lord multitudes of men and women were constantly added to their number to such an extent it says they even carried the sick into the streets laid them

on cots and pallets so that when Peter came by at least a shadow might fall on any of them tremendous work of the Lord building his church by his spirit through his people his chosen ones and in chapter six verse seven we get the final progress report of what happened in that city of Jerusalem these tremendous things it says in the word of God kept on spreading and the number of disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith wow the work of the spirit those that were chosen according the foreknowledge of God the father by the sanctifying work of the spirit that they might obey Jesus Christ even those priests were coming to know the Lord tremendous work going on in Jerusalem but God needs to move them out into the

other areas into Judea into Samaria into Galilee and so we read in Acts chapter 8 verses one beginning it says Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death that is Stephen and who later became Paul the great apostle and yet here he is agreeing to put Stephen to death and on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles and some devout men of course buried Stephen and Paul began to ravage the church and to seek from house to house people who believed in Christ and to drag them off men and women so he could put them in prison and this persecution scattered the people and the apostles remained there in Jerusalem for the time being so who's doing the work well it's guys

like what you read in verse 30 of chapter 8 there and Philip had heard this guy reading in the chariot Isaiah the prophet and said do you understand what you're reading and he said well how could I unless someone guides me and he invited Philip to come up and sit with him here's Philip who has gone down to join himself to this you know Ethiopian eunuch who receives Jesus Christ and then goes back to his home no doubt and shares Jesus Christ God is continuing to work but he's got to move him out of Jerusalem and get him to these other areas of the world and he does it supernaturally by his spirit orchestrating these divine appointments for guys like Philip and this Ethiopian eunuch and he's still building his church today and you're his instrument you're his chosen one he has divine

appointments for you and there are people in your life that you simply need to share the good news with tell them the great news about Jesus and what he's done for them and that they should just be reconciled to God the spirit is working Jesus is building his church from heaven and so we read the progress report in chapter 9 verse 31 says so the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace being built up and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it continued to increase and to know that they were chosen by God how perfect the law of the Lord was and just in that tremendous peace they were being built up in reverence and respect for the Lord but in that comfort of the Holy Spirit and so it just continued to increase as the Lord's

building his church from these seeds of Israel he's moving them out do you see how there's a transition taking place from the old channel to the new channel and God calls Paul in this chapter to begin to preach the gospel he's getting ready to move them further and open the door to the Gentiles and so while we'll see now in chapter 9 through chapter 12 the political systems of the world they change Herod dies but the

door opens to the Gentiles and the gospel outlives Herod in all political systems it continues on and it's taking time for these guys to make the transition Peter is just healed a little girl Tabitha and the news has spread throughout the region and many believed in the Lord but it came about that he stayed many days in Joppa with a certain tanner named Simon and as we know

the tanners were unclean and they were supposed to have their houses even at least 50 cubits outside of the city because of the dead bodies and things that they dealt with made him unclean but Peter's already I mean here he is staying with this guy and it says chapter 10 there was a certain man at Caesarea named Cornelius a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort devout man who feared God and with all of his household gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually in about the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had just come into him and said to him Cornelius fixing his gaze upon him and being much alarmed he said what is it Lord and he said to him your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God and now dispatch

some men to Joppa and send for a man named Simon who is also called Peter he's staying with a certain tanner named Simon whose house is by the sea and when the angel who was speaking to him and departed he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were in constant attendance upon him and after he had explained everything to them he sent them to Joppa as you read this you know it's neat that God wants to use us I would have said well you know why don't you just send an angel down there then if you can send an angel here to speak to me tell me to do these things why not just get the angel to go do those things but God loves us so much and wants us to be part of what he's doing and he invites us to have a place of service and to cooperate with him it's tremendous that

God would allow us to be part of what he's doing building his church on earth well first dining on the next day as they were on their way and approaching the city Peter went up on the housetop about six hour to pray about noon and he became hungry which is a very common experience to me when I ever get away to pray or just get settled to pray it seems like you know you start realizing well I'm hungry or I'm thirsty or this or that and our bodily needs become more evident but he's there he gets hungry and he was desiring to eat but while they were making the preparations must have took him a while he fell into a trance and he beheld the sky opened up in a certain object like a great sheet coming down lowered by four corners to the ground and there were in it all kinds of four-footed

animals and crawling creatures on the earth and birds of the air a voice came to him arise Peter kill and eat Peter said by no means Lord for I've never eaten anything unholy and unclean and again a voice came to him second time what God has cleansed no longer consider unholy and this happened three times and immediately the object was taken up into the sky now while Peter was greatly perplexed to what the vision which he had seen might be behold the men who had been sent by Cornelius having asked directions you know for Simon's house appeared at the gate and calling out they were asking whether Simon who was also called Peter was staying there and so Peter ended up going down saying yeah I'm the guy you're looking for and he invited them in and uh you know gave them lodging God is

beginning to teach Peter to break down the walls the barriers between the Jews and the Gentiles that now there is the church of God the church of Jesus Christ and it's not whether you're Jew or Gentile and so Peter finally acknowledges in verse 28 he said to them you yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean wow God is teaching still Jesus is making things clear to Peter that it's not Jew or Gentile but it's the church of Jesus Christ who he died for who he rose for who he's ascended for to

represent and to be their advocate who is preparing them a place and who's coming back for them again and it's taken time but we're seeing the transition take place

from the old channel to the new channel and so here it is years after Pentecost Peter is still learning and he says in verse 34 I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality but in every nation the man who fears him and does what's right is welcome to him the word which he sent to the sons of Israel preaching peace through Jesus Christ he is Lord of all you see Peter originally thought Jesus came just for Israel but now he knows that he's the Lord of all of every nation and every man and that he's the holy one he's been appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead and it's so glorious to read in verse 44 that while Peter was still speaking these words the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message and all the circumcised believers

who had come with Peter were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also and so Peter basically takes this report back to Jerusalem and tells the people there you know what could I do who was I that I could stand in God's way he said God is the one that's granted to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life and verse 19 says so then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenician Cyprus and Antioch speaking the word to no one except to Jesus alone but there were some of them men of Cyprus and Cyrene who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also preaching the Lord Jesus you see the the transition from Jerusalem to Antioch is taking place and the hand of the Lord

was with them and a large number who believed turned to the Lord as they were cooperating with God many of the Gentiles are coming to know the Lord and the news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch now you know Barnabas was from Cyprus and they sent him down and said look you need to check this thing out and we hear reports about what's happening then when he had come and witnessed the grace of God he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord for he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith and considerable numbers were brought to the Lord and he left for Tarsus to look for Saul and that was just wisdom on his part because he knew Saul was a man who could relate Saul was a

man yes born of Jewish parents but he was educated by the Greeks with a tremendous education and he had Roman citizenship it's a very choice man for the kingdom of God and when he found Saul he brought him to Antioch and it came about that for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch and so persecution has scattered the church and brought them to the place now where there's been a change a transition from Jerusalem to Antioch being the headquarters and of course Herod dies end of chapter 12 because he was claiming and receiving the glory that belonged to God and because he did not give God the glory he was eaten by worms and died but the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied and now

beginning in chapter 13 God is going to take Paul and Barnabas and begin to go to all the nations of the world an activity which continues to our day right now as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting the Holy Spirit said set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work which I have called them to and when they'd fasted and prayed they lay their hands on them and they sent them away they were sent out by the Holy Spirit Jesus is building Jesus is directing his church and this transition was not easy because they finally had that council in Acts chapter 15 where they met at Jerusalem it was hard to give up you know the seat of power so to speak and to see that God was moving and they had their discussion going on we don't have time to read it but let's just notice in verse 13 that

after everyone had said what they needed to say after they had stopped speaking James who was the pastor of the church there in Jerusalem the Lord's brother answered saying brethren listen to me Simeon has related how God first concerned himself about taking out from among the Gentiles a people for his name and with this the words of the prophets agree just as it's written after these things I will return and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen and I'll rebuild its ruins and I'll restore it in order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord and all the Gentiles who are called by my name says the Lord who makes these things known from of old now this is James the just the religious observer of the law who is not just giving an explanation but he's had a revelation and

he knows the Gentiles are equal he understands that what is going on here calling out of people is something God is concerned about and the prophets agree they tell us what James said in verse 14 God first concerned himself about taking out from among the Gentiles a people for his name oh God is so concerned today still about taking out a people for his name among the Gentiles and so we're still going to all the world to every country and every tribe and every people because the Lord's directing his church and Jesus is still building may we be so sensitive and open to the leading of the Spirit of God as he sovereignly prepares the mission fields of this world and find ourselves harvesters find ourselves workers find ourselves laborers in the harvest because the harvest is plenteous but

the labors are few may God direct us well the progress report at the end in chapter 16 verse 5 says so the churches were being strengthened in the faith and were increasing in number daily so they've moved from Jerusalem they moved out into Judea into Samaria into Galilee and they've now taken missionary journeys two of them into throughout Asia but as Paul continues on from chapter 16 to chapter 19 verse 20 we'll see another section where Paul is directed by the Spirit to go into the realm of Europe and while he's there God prevails and it says in chapter 19 verse 18 many also of those who had believed kept coming and confessing disclosing their practices they were into all kinds of things and many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the

sight of all and they counted up the price of them and found that it was 50,000 pieces of silver so the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing and now the gospel has gone out through Europe and yet Paul is being moved on by the Spirit of God towards Rome the capital city of the world and so at the end of the book of Acts we read in chapter 28 verse 30 that Paul stayed two full years in his own rented quarters there he is in Rome and was welcoming all who came to him preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness unhindered yes chained to a soldier but unhindered because nothing can stop the progress of the gospel nothing can stop the word of God from its work it will not return void and so they've been made witnesses until the

end of the earth and we've gone from Jerusalem to Antioch and to Asia and to Europe and now at the very capital city of the world Paul was such a great man and how he moved and traveled to get the gospel out from when he left on his first missionary journey in Antioch went to sail to Cyprus and then on to Perga and to Lystra and Iconium and Derby and back again it says in Acts 14 23 so when they had appointed elders in every church and prayed with fasting they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed and so Paul and Barnabas and Mark set out for Cyprus and God did tremendous things yes Mark did turn back when they hit that area of Perga but God still used it and then Paul decided to go out again the next time Paul and Silas go out and Paul and Barnabas had the falling out over

Mark there but it says in Acts 16 5 that so the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily and Paul was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go to Asia or back in you know to Bithynia but

he received that Macedonian call then after returning and having ministered in Macedonia and Greece Paul learned of a plot by the Jewish leaders and so he returned through Macedonia and on his third journey he says in Acts 20 27 says for I've not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God and there's something so special in Paul's fourth missionary journey as he sails you know off to go towards Rome then he says in Acts 28 verse 20 it's for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain and so although Paul is the man used to spread the gospel worldwide still he can say in

his heart that it's for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain and as this transition takes place from the old to the new channel God begins to get the gospel out through this man if we remember that yes this is for a time this is for a season that God has fixed and then the Lord will return and those prayers of men like Paul and others throughout the centuries they will be answered and we will see as God turns again to his people whom he's not cast off his people whom he foreknew and we'll see a tremendous work of God among the Jewish people and so the great commission will continue until Jesus Christ says to stop and the way Jesus is going to say stop is going to be dramatic it's going to be by way of the rapture of his church and just like we saw the transition here going from

the old to the new channel beginning with the rapture of the church of Jesus Christ will be introduced a transition to the kingdom age that we call the millennium and as we saw persecution was involved in that first transition this next transition phase will have that which is called the tribulation period so until that time comes when Jesus says stop let's concern ourselves as James wisely advised there in that council in Acts 15 let's concern ourselves with that which which God is concerning himself let's have his heart let's have his concerns on our heart and that's taking from among the Gentiles the people for his name God who gives breath and life to all has made from one every nation of mankind from one blood to live on all the face of the earth having determined their appointed

times and the boundaries of their habitation that they should seek God if perhaps they might grope for him and find him though he's not far from each one of us for in him we live and move and have our being therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance God is now declaring to men that all men everywhere should repent because he has fixed the day in which he will judge the world in righteousness through a man the man whom he has appointed having furnished proof to all men by raising him from the dead the same Jesus who was working on earth is still working building his church and he has a place and a part for you acknowledge his presence working with you said he'd be with you to the end he'd be with you always right up until the job is done Jesus ministry has not ceased he continues

it through men he anoints with the holy spirit women so just ask him to baptize you with his spirit to use you and to live in that immediate anticipation and expectation that at the right time he's going to return and we have signs that let us know that time is near and we're getting very close to that transition time when the dead in Christ will rise and we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together to be with the Lord thank God for the overflow of his spirit that works in you and creates the desire in you to tell others the good news about Jesus and to be bold as a witness to preach and teach the word that's inspired and inerrant to say this is that which the prophet spoke of to say this is that which Jesus spoke of to say this is that which Paul spoke of to say this is that

which Peter spoke of and James spoke of may the Lord bless you as you continue to work with Jesus as he builds his church

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