

**“Great Dispensational Moments -
The Pentecostal or Holy Spirit ‘Dispensation’ - Part 3”**

Our Outline:

- **God blesses Israel with Pentecostal glory - Acts 2 - 5 (Review)**
- **God offers Israel one “Final” Opportunity - Stephen’s Sermon - Acts 7a**
- **The Jewish leaders stone Stephen - Acts 7b**
- **God rejects Israel and saves Saul, the “chief” of sinners - Acts 9**

I. God Blesses Israel with Pentecostal Glory (Acts 2 - 5) (Review):

- **What we have been seeing as we looked at the earlier chapters in the book of Acts is that God holds both the nation as well as individuals accountable in the preaching of the Kingdom. We saw that clearly in Peter’s first sermon on Pentecost:**

Acts 2:32-40

32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, **The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,**

35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool. [The most quoted scripture in the Bible, 23 times. The second most quoted is quoted 7 times.]

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

37 Now when they heard [this], they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men [and] brethren, what shall we do?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, [even] as many as the Lord our God shall call.

40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

- *So the exhortation was both personal and corporate; the nation was being called as well as the individual. How often had this occurred? Would they respond this time is the great question — and it is a question for them. Not all would be saved as verse 40 implies, but many could. The elect of God, both individually and nationally was clearly Peter’s focus that day.*
- *But of course they were ignorant of God’s perfect timing for he knows the end from the beginning. What about us today?*

Acts 3:17-24 [Peter’s second preaching]

17 And now, brethren, I wot [*know*] that through ignorance ye did [it], as [did] also your rulers.

18 But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

23 And it shall come to pass, [that] every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

- *What had God done on behalf of his people and his nation? Everything. But would they hear him? We shall see . . .*
- *“A prophet . . .”: Note that this does not say “the prophet”, the prophet above all others. But it was he that all the prophets had spoken of, wasn’t it? It was He, God in the flesh, indeed.*
- *“These days”: So these days were revealed here to be turning points. But would they hear the word of the Lord?*
- *Summarizing all of chapters 4 and 5, you will remember the story of Ananias and Sapphira. Signs and miracles and judgment accordingly. What a different time from what we are living in today.*

II. God Offers Israel One “Final” Opportunity (Stephen’s Great Sermon):

- ***Now we reach chapters 6 and 7. These are great chapters indeed in Israel’s long history. There will now be yet one more opportunity for national (and personal) repentance and faith.***
- ***What they could not know (unless Stephen had revealed it, and he seemed not to know it himself) was that this was to be their final opportunity:***

Acts 6:7-15

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called [the synagogue] of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. [It was the Holy Spirit, of course, which they did not recognize]

11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and [against] God.

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon [him], and caught him, and brought [him] to the council,

13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:

14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

15 And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

[READ] Acts 7:1-7, 37-42 [Stephen’s great sermon, one of the greatest in all of human history]

1 Then said the high priest, Are these things so?

2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,

3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.

4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.

5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not [so much as] to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when [as yet] he had no child.

6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat [them] evil four hundred years.

7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.

...

37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.

38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and [with] our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

39 To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust [him] from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,

40 Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for [as for] this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

42 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices [by the space of] forty years in the wilderness?

Acts 7:44-50

44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.

45 Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus [Joshua] into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;
46 Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.
47 But Solomon built him an house.
48 Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,
49 Heaven [is] my throne, and earth [is] my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what [is] the place of my rest?
50 Hath not my hand made all these things?

- *So we see here in Stephen's sermon the larger picture or the higher level view of what God was doing in this day in Israel.*
- *Israel's leaders could not see the forest for the trees. For them the issue was a building, its customs and their place in that religious system. These things for many centuries had been in the center of God's redemptive plan for his people but now that our Lord Jesus, Israel's Messiah had now come, those things of the Law were now about to be set aside, though they did not know it.*
- *This is Stephen's defense - but really it is Stephen's defense of almighty God, is it not? They had crucified the Lord of glory. What would they do now? Would history repeat itself, as it were?*

III. The Jewish Leaders Stone Stephen:

- *Go holds the nation and the people accountable for the death of Christ.*
- *The event now about to be accomplished will be the most significant event in this period of Israel's more recent sacred history, for it will be the point at which the Lord God will now cast them aside for a time and will turn to the Gentiles, raising up a new apostle, a most unsuspected apostle indeed, Saul.*

[READ] Acts 7:51-54

51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers [did], so [do] ye.
52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept [it].

54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with [their] teeth.

[READ] Acts 7:55-60

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58 And cast [him] out of the city, and stoned [him]: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon [God], and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

[READ] Acts 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

- ***This is therefore the final opportunity for the nation to receive its Messiah. But now it becomes very personal, at least for one man, this man Saul!***
- ***The Lord God was refused at every turn in Israel's long history. At east intersection it was again demonstrated that they were a "stiff necked people". But the Lord continued mercifully again and again and again.***
- ***But now — the final chapter has been written. All will now change as Saul will now be raised up as a new apostle, an apostle of the Gentiles. Israel will be temporarily set aside as God beings a new program. Amen and amen.***

IV. God Rejects Israel and Most Graciously Saves Saul, Chief of Sinners:

Acts 9:1-25

1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: [it is] hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord [said] unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought [him] into Damascus.

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

10 ¶ And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I [am here], Lord.

11 And the Lord [said] unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for [one] called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting [his] hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, [even] Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

21 But all that heard [him] were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let [him] down by the wall in a basket.

- *This marks the end of the Pentecost or Holy Spirit dispensation. By his great grace, God's arch enemy, Saul, has been gloriously saved and set on a course that will change the world. He does not go only to the Jews as the Twelve apostles had, but to the the Jews first and then the Gentiles. Eventually, Paul goes only to the Gentiles (after Acts 28).*
- *Paul spends his life and ministry respecting the Mosaic Law but not promoting it.*
- *What we have been learning here in our Long War Against God series is that the word of truth must be "dispensationally divided" as he indicates in 2 Tim. 2:15, "rightly dividing the word of truth".*

Conclusions and Exhortation:

- *We will continue here in our next meeting, Lord willing. Saul's salvation is so significant and has such consequence that we all need to know it well. He commented often on it in his letters to the churches and used his testimony to underscore his apostleship over the Dispensation of the Grace of God.*
- *Apart from the Pauline example and his very distinctively "grace" message, the church today would be a branch of Judaism. Even liberals acknowledge this. Even as it is, though, much of the church is promoting one variety or another of "law keeping" because they think pure grace is an avenue for sin to take advantage of us. But the apostle teaches otherwise at length in Romans and other of his letters. The power of grace in ones life is short-circuited by law keeping and the enemy knows this full well since human religion is his special domain.*
- *What a blessing it is indeed to leave behind the law completely and cast ourselves at the mercy of God's abundant grace. It is so transforming, so liberating, so energizing. And it exalts the completed work of Christ so completely. God's riches at Christ's*

expense is a simple definition of the word “grace” and it is not a bad one. We are so rich through him! Amen.