

09a ACTS

At the beginning of our study, to pause and set aside in our minds the burdens and cares of the day and of the week, we have an opportunity to refresh ourselves through the study of God's Word. It always reminds me of the caravan of camels that have trekked through the desert for days and days, and they finally come to the oasis, and the camels get down on their knees, and the packs and burdens are removed, and all of the men in the flowing robes go to the well and draw water for the camels and water for themselves, and they just relax. They don't have to fight the burning sands.

They may have more of the journey ahead, but for that period of time, it is refreshment, it is relief, it is rest and recuperation, and that's what we find for ourselves in God's Word. Shall we pray? Father, thank You for calling us to the life that You have described for us in Your Word, and thank You for providing the means to accomplish that goal and fulfill that calling. We know that we are not sufficient in and of ourselves to even begin to approach to the standard of righteousness and the standard of obedience, the standard of faith that has been exemplified for us by the Lord Jesus Christ, but You have given us Your Spirit, You have given us Your Word, and through those resources we can live up to and fulfill and reflect Your glory through this life that we lead.

We thank You especially for Your Word and for the faithful men who have communicated it, who have preserved it, who have given their lives so that we can have a copy to hold in our hands. We pray that tonight as we study together that God the Holy Spirit will find our hearts ready and able to receive the engrafted Word so that we are transformed and are equipped for every good work. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, once again this evening we find ourselves studying the book of Acts. This is Luke's second volume of the history of Jesus Christ and of the Church.

We are in chapter 2. We resume at the point where Peter is concluding his first great speech on the day of Pentecost. We are in section roughly verses 36 through 38. One of the things I had you do in your copy of the Word of God, if you are so inclined.

Some people are really disinclined to make any marks in their Bible. Others of us just mark it up all we can. But if you will pay attention to who is in view.

It's all about Israel. How many different times have we seen Israel? Men and brethren, Israel. Men and brethren, Israel.

You get down to verse 36. Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. When these men heard this, these Jewish men in Jerusalem, they were cut to the heart.

They said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do?

Peter said to them, change your mind and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ with a view toward remission of sins. And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is to you and your children and to all who are far off as many as the Lord our God will call.

Now, if we remind ourselves of the place in history where this occurs, the disciples as yet have no inkling that the Gentiles are going to be included in God's plan. Peter and for the first 17 years after Pentecost, the church is all composed of Jews. The disciples are all Jews.

The apostles are all Jews. It's a Jewish thing. The churches are established by Jewish people and they continue to observe their customs and their feasts.

It's a very fascinating thing. And we'll see in the latter chapters of this book that the Apostle Paul still goes to the synagogue and he still observes the feasts, even though he's in the age of Israel. We kind of scratch our heads over that.

But remember, this is a transitional time and they don't just drop the law like a hot potato. They were born under the law. They are steeped in the law.

It is their mode of expression for worship. And God does not tell them now when the spirit comes on the day of Pentecost, drop all of that law stuff. There's a transition.

God says, you know, this is a new thing. I can't teach you all about it all at once. Now, this has application for us because a lot of times you think about missionaries in the historical past, missionaries in the present who will go to a country.

You know how they used to go to deep, dark Africa and evangelize the natives and immediately want to teach them everything. You've got to wear clothes. You've got to have civilization.

You can't have multiple wives. They came in and changed everything immediately. And it just put them into shock.

And a lot of them wound up with spears sticking out of their backs because the natives just couldn't react that fast. It takes time. It takes growth.

We have to grow into our knowledge of the faith. And the application of that for you and for me is we need to be patient with one another. As we, whether we first come to salvation or as we grow in grace and knowledge, all of us come from somewhere.

These men all came out of Judaism, all came out of the law. And God himself did not send the angel Gabriel down with a big long sermon about no more feasts, no more circumcision, no more sacrifices, no more food ordinances and so on, did he? He said, let me teach you these new, we're going to gradually ease our way into it. And there's going

to be some special grace, some supernatural help in the form of these temporary gifts of healing and so on to authenticate and validate this new message, to give you time to digest it, to give you information to get you through these first couple of decades until the new truth of the mystery of the church can be promulgated, can be understood, can be hooked into the frame of reference that you already have.

It takes time. God was patient in the same way that he was patient with the nation of Israel. He didn't run them right up into Canaan to fight the Philistines three days out of Egypt.

He said, let me take you, let me spend some time with you in the wilderness, let me teach you, let me find out what's in your heart, let me give you some time and some teaching so that you can grow into your new status. Well, we need to be patient. We're apt, especially when we're excited because we've learned something and we've come to a new grip on things and a fresh perspective and the first thing we want to do is run out and get everybody on board.

Jump on my train. I have got it on the tracks and I am on the glory road here so everybody hop on board and if you don't hop on board, there's something the matter with you. Well, not necessarily.

A lot of times something clicks and the puzzle pieces fall into place and it finally makes sense and we're excited but this is where God provides fellowship and we are a little bit careful about finding those who are sort of in step with us who are at about the same place as us to share our joy and our enthusiasm and our excitement about things because if you go to someone and say, well, I know you don't understand any of this but let me tell you what I have just learned and you are now going to be their Holy Spirit and you're going to infuse them with all of your newfound knowledge and they don't have the foundation that God has given us yet. They don't have the time and the faith yet and you couldn't take Peter, James, and John and the disciples of Jesus on the day of Pentecost and give them what the Apostle Paul is going to be able to teach in Philippians and in Colossians and in the Laodicean letter and in Romans. It has to mature.

It takes time. There has to be a foundation built. So, for now, God says, fine, we're just going to keep this church thing percolating along within the house of Israel.

It's going to be an Israelite thing for about two decades. We don't realize when we read Acts that these first ten chapters cover about twenty years before there's any inkling that there's going to be a legitimate replacement for Judas. There is going to be a twelfth Apostle and he's going to come out of the ranks of the Pharisees and out of the ranks of the Hebrews of the Hebrews and his name is going to be Saul and he's going to be struck down blind on the road to Damascus as a persecutor of the church and he is going to be miraculously commissioned to be that replacement Apostle and he is going to be the one to reveal a lot of these new truths many years down the road from the day we're looking

at here.

Well, this is important. In fact, it is not just important. It is critical to understand.

It is critical that we understand this point that the eleven disciples fully expect this commission from Jesus Christ to be fulfilled in the nation of Israel. Jesus did not give them an inkling that it was going to go beyond. Now, we have already seen this in a couple of places.

Do you remember back in chapter 1 of Acts the corrected translation I gave you of what Jesus said in verse 8? Jesus said, John baptized with water, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. When they had come together, they asked him, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to whom? To Israel. They are all about Israel.

Jesus says, It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has set in his own authority, but you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses to me where? In Jerusalem and in both Judea and Samaria. And what was the right translation of that last phrase? Until the end of the age. Until the end of the age.

It does not say unto the uttermost parts of the earth. It does not say to the end of the earth if you have a new King James. The word is not unto in the sense of distance.

This is an adverb of time. Until the end of the age. That is critically important.

We corrected that in our understanding for a reason. Until the end of the gaze. The earth.

The world. The age as it were. Now, stay with me on this because we are going into very poorly traveled ground.

The beaten track goes this way. We are going this other way. So, hang with me.

If you understand what Jesus said in verse 8. He said, who is he talking to? In verse 8. How many people? Eleven. Count them. Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, etc.

Eleven. Eleven disciples get told you will be witnesses to me where? Inside the historic boundaries of Israel. Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria.

Northern and Southern Kingdom. Until the end of the world. Your mission, you eleven men, is to Israel.

Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. He does not say unto. He could have so easily said unto the nations.

The ethnic. But he does not. He says until.

HEOS. H E O S. Circle it. Underline it.

It is an adverb of time. Always. Until.

Their mission, those eleven, is always to Israel until the world ends. That is who they are talking to. So, on the day of Pentecost.

Now, you say, wait a minute. Wait a minute. I seem to remember.

Matthew 28.19. What does he say? Let's turn to it. Matthew 28.19. The quote unquote great commission. In the New King James, it says, Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.

Well now, what about this? All the nations. Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things.

And so on. This translation is pretty good, but not great. Matthew 28.19 begins with a Arist passive participle.

You have heard me say this before. I will say it again. The action of the Arist participle precedes the action of the main verb.

Just commit it to memory. It will help you anytime I mention an Arist participle. The action of the Arist participle precedes the action of the main verb.

It is a law of Greek. When you have a sentence and there is an Arist participle anywhere in there, whatever action is in that participle, that took place before the main thing that happens in the sentence. So, having traveled.

This is porou o mai. And it is a passive. Having been caused to travel.

Having journeyed. Something, some business took you somewhere. It does not say go.

It is not an imperative. It is not a command. He does not say go ye therefore.

That is a mistranslation. It is a conscious perversion of what it says in the Greek. It is not an imperative.

It does not say go. It says having been caused to travel. That is the literal translation.

It is an Arist passive participle. You have been caused to travel. Business took you somewhere.

Maybe the spirit led you. Some factor has caused you to journey. Having journeyed.

Because you have been brought to a certain place at a certain time. Having journeyed.

Make disciples.

This is the only imperative in these two verses. He says, and this is from Matetuo. Matetes means to be a disciple, to be a follower.

And this is Matetusate. It is the second person plural Arist active imperative. He says, make disciples.

Make followers. You have traveled. You have come across some people.

They are receptive. Teach them to be followers. Make disciples.

Then it says, Panta ta ethne. Panta is all. Ta ethne is the nations.

Ethnicity. The ethnics. Make disciples of all nations.

So you say, now see, you have gone to the Greek. Here is all the nations. Where are you getting this Israel only business? Well, keep your finger in Matthew 28, 19.

Go back to Acts chapter 2. And read for me to yourself verse 5. Acts chapter 2 and verse 5. I would even write this reference next to Matthew 28, 19 if it were me. There were dwelling in Jerusalem who? Jews. Devout men from where? Panta ta ethne.

Every nation. So when Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Simon, James the Less, and all these other guys heard Jesus speak the words of Matthew 28, 19. And he said, make disciples from all the nations.

What is he saying? The very same thing that Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 1. Peter writing to the pilgrims. Scattered. The Jews who have been scattered in Cappadocia, Bithynia.

All of these places in Asia Minor. Peter said, you know what my commission is? It is to Israel. Israel, whether they're among the nations, whether they're in Jerusalem, Judea.

That's who I'm talking to. Israel. That's all you ever see them talking to.

In these first 10 chapters is Israel. And this is important. It's an observation.

It's verifiable. Just look at it. But there was no thought.

Why? Because for 1,500 years, they've had the law of Moses that says, if you come to God, you come to Israel. If you come to God, you engage in the covenant, and you perform the covenant symbolic rite of circumcision, if you're a male, and you join Israel. And so there is always a distinction between the circumcised, whether you are a Jew by birth, or one who has come, like Uriah the Hittite, or Naaman the Syrian, or Rahab the harlot, or one of these others, from a foreign country, and have joined the nation of Israel.

If you're going to be a worshiper of God, you become a member of the nation of Israel. That's how it worked in the Old Testament. You don't have pagans worshiping God.

If you're going to worship God, you join Israel, and you get circumcised. If you're not, and by circumcised I mean this is the head of the household, this is the man, this is a male thing, because that is the sign. And anyone who is not circumcised, and who will not submit to that rite, is cut off from his people, and does not inherit, and has no part in Israel, and is disqualified from worshiping God.

So it's all tied together. The people of God are the people of Israel in the Old Testament. That's how it works.

Well, it's been that way for nearly 1,500 years on this day of Pentecost. What is Peter going to assume when he hears Jesus say, as you travel about, make disciples of all nations, teaching them, and this is another participle, this is a present active participle, you have already traveled, you've bumped into some people, you've made them disciples, and you're teaching them. It's an ongoing action.

Greek is great for giving you duration, and expanse, and extent of verbs. And participles are wonderful, because they tell you, is this something that starts at a point of time and continues? Is it something that wasn't happening and needs to start? Is it something that was going on and needs to stop? Is it something you were already doing and you need to keep on doing? There are wonderful things that you can do in Greek with the participles, and with the imperatives. But this is the *eris* passive participle.

As you journey, as you're traveling, God's going to bring you in contact with people who are receptive. Teach them to be disciples. Make them disciples, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

Well, what did Jesus command the disciples? To live in the bounds of the law. Jesus said, I didn't come to destroy the law. I've come to fulfill it.

He taught His disciples to exceed the law. The law says an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. I say to you, turn the other cheek.

If He asks you to go a mile, go with Him twain. All of the law and the prophets are summed up in, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. He didn't say, we don't really have to keep the law anymore.

He taught His disciples, fulfill the law by fulfilling the law of love. Love your God. Love your neighbor.

Well, we're building a foundation here. We're establishing our frame of reference and our context for what Peter says back here in Acts chapter 2. By the way, just to finish back

there in Matthew 28 and 19, since I gave you the beginning of the translation, let me give you the rest of it. As you have journeyed, or having journeyed, therefore... By the way, the therefore, you know, the old saying, what's it there for? Why do you have the word therefore? What's it there for? Well, look at the preceding verse.

Jesus says, all exousia, all authority has been given to me in heaven and in earth. Therefore, as you're journeying, make disciples. Why are these eleven men to make disciples? Because authority has been given to Jesus Christ.

And what is He, in effect, saying here? I am passing on to you, I am giving authority to you because it has been given to me. You have authority to make disciples in Israel. You have authority to make disciples from all the nations.

And what are they thinking? These Jews from all nations, Jews have already scattered in the Diaspora, throughout the Near Eastern region there, Asia Minor, and up into Rome, and all around the Greek Empire, Roman Empire. And they occasionally have Gentiles who decide to become Jews, and they proselyte in, and they go through this ritual of baptism. So, He says, baptizing them, and once again, notice the ING.

If you have an ING ongoing, having gone, therefore, make disciples of all the nations. Baptizing is a participle. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. He mentions the end of the age here.

He's going to mention the end of the world in Acts chapter 1. And the end, in both cases, is a form of this word telos, or telios. But here, we have the very same adverb. Remember I told you it's not unto the ends of the earth, Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, unto the uttermost parts of the earth, that it's heos, and it means until.

Very same word right here. He says, Lo, I am with you always, even until heos, the end of the age. Heos.

Very same adverb. Until. Verb of time.

Adverb of time. Okay. So, that is their commission.

As they go. Now, where are they supposed to go as they are journeying? Where will their journeys take them? Well, that's what Acts chapter 1 and verse 8 tells us. He says, Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria.

Until the world ends, your bailiwick, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria. Did you ever notice how the Word of God does not tell us about any far-off travels of Peter, or any far-off travels of the other disciples outside of Israel? It all comes to us from church tradition, that they

went to all these far-off places. The Bible doesn't mention it.

Why? Because you find all the way through the first ten chapters of Acts, that the disciples remain in Israel. They build up the church in Jerusalem. They have the Jerusalem Council there.

And that's where they operate. You don't see Peter in Rome. Now, he'll greet people at the end of one of his epistles from Babylon, and people assume that that might be Rome.

But you see the disciples in Israel. Now, we're back in Acts, and we're back in chapter 2. This is a lot of laborious groundwork here to get us to a particular point, because in Acts chapter 2, we have Peter saying something that we need to be sure we can properly interpret. Peter said, Change your mind and let every one of you, you Jewish men here assembled in Jerusalem, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ with a view toward the remission of sins.

This is water baptism. What is the deal on water baptism? Should we today practice water baptism? 99.5% of your conservative evangelical churches, 100% of your Baptist churches, believe that water baptism is an ordinance, that it is an essential function of obedience for every Christian. If you've believed in Jesus Christ for your salvation, you should be baptized in water.

If you want an interesting exercise, if you want to see why people believe this, get up on the World Wide Web, get your Google search engine up, put water baptism in quotes, and then put the word ordinance after that, and you'll get page after page after page of wonderful, complete scriptural defenses of why so many churches believe that water baptism is an ordinance to be perpetuated all the way through to the present day. My question for you is, have you been water baptized or not? And if not, do you know why not? And should we be? Well, this is where our path diverges, because we're not going to be with lo, the many, and lo, the... I grew up a Baptist. My family's been Baptist since the Dark Ages.

Probably John the Baptist started out. Baptized some hull back there in the Jordan, and they've all been Baptist ever since then. I grew up a Baptist.

I was baptized in the Baptist church. And I love the Baptists, but I will tell you right now that we're going to see something interesting here in the Scriptures. Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, with a view toward the remission of sins.

Now, one thing everyone will agree on. John the Baptist was a Jew. Yes? The people that came from Judea and Jerusalem and were baptized by John in the Jordan were Jews.

Yes? That was a Jewish water baptism. Most people will agree, especially when you look

at the language of Jesus being baptized, when it says He went down into the water, He came up from the water, that He was an immerser. He immersed them.

He didn't get a little handful and sprinkle it over their head. He didn't effuse it and sort of splash it down their neck. He took them by the head and smashed them under the water and brought them back up because it's a picture of death, burial, and resurrection.

Now, we don't stand up our corpses in the corner. We don't have them standing there and say, well, there's Grandma. I'm just kind of waiting for the resurrection.

We bury our dead. If water baptism is a picture of death, burial, and resurrection, it makes no sense to sprinkle. You don't get your dearly departed loved ones and just put a little dirt on their head and leave them in the corner.

Unless you're, what's his name, Bates? You put them in the ground. You bury them six feet under, horizontal. They lay there.

They stay there, Lord willing, till the rapture. Okay? So, I think we can dispense. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on the difference between immersion and sprinkling.

Biblical water baptism is immersion. Look at the picture. How can it be a picture of burial if you don't bury, if you don't get under? Okay, so it's immersion.

We're happy with that. Now, when did water baptism start? We know that it was practiced in Jewish days because John the Baptist did it and all these people came out. When did it start? Well, we go back to the days of the Maccabees.

We go back to the couple of centuries before Christ. And it began sometime in there after the return from captivity. There is no baptism in the Bible before the captivity, before 586 B.C. and going out to Babylon, before the return of Ezra and Nehemiah and all that.

You look in vain in any of your Old Testament Scriptures from Genesis to Malachi to find anybody being baptized in water. Never mentioned. Now, what does this tell us? It was not something that pertained all the way through the age of Israel, was it? It cropped up at the end.

It came up near the end. Initially, it was done in these mikvot. There is a thing called a mikvah, which is like a swimming pool.

It is like a cross between a swimming pool and a tennis court. It is a swimming pool with a net across the middle and that net or wall extends down into the water. So, if you are on side A of the pool and you are going to get to side B, you can only get there by dunking yourself under the water and coming up on the other side.

Is everybody clear in how it looks? There are steps leading down on one side, steps

leading up on the other. There is a wall in the middle. You walk down into the water.

You dunk below the wall. You come up on the other side and walk out. It is a baptism of immersion.

They have dug up dozens of these in the Holy Land. They are called mikvot, which is the plural of mikvah. It basically means great big swimming pool.

That is what it was. It was a ritual that was practiced by proselytes. People who had been godless, pagan, barbarian savages off in some other country.

They come to Israel and they want to join. They want to be an Israelite. They are like Sammy Davis Jr. He wasn't born Jewish.

He was a black man. But he converted to Judaism. He wanted to be Jewish.

He signed up. I don't think he went through the mikvah, but if he had been back before Jesus' day, he would have. That was the thing.

What is the significance in the Jewish mind when John is out baptizing in the Jordan? Jewish people are coming out and getting dunked into the water and coming back up. Why would they do this? It is not in the law of Moses. It is not in the writings.

It is not in the prophets. What is this baptism business? John said, Be baptized with a view toward the remission of sins. The very same phrase, the very same terminology that Peter uses.

You say you are recognizing that you are sinful and that you need a return to God. You need a change of mind. You need to be restored to God.

What was the symbolism of John baptizing in the Jordan? The Israelites were admitting that they were living no better than the pagans. For them to return to God, they had to basically go through the same ritual that some godless Egyptian or a pagan Moabite or something would have to go through to become a Jew. And this was very humbling.

To go be baptized was to say I am no better than a Gentile uncircumcised dog. That is what they are saying. I am just how much they look down on the uncircumcised Gentile world.

They were saying, I am no better than a pagan. It is as though I were coming from that distance as I return to God. Looking at their sin, with a view towards sin, they were baptized.

And they were saying, it is as though I have been born into Israel. It would be like an American citizen saying, you know, I have been such a lousy American, I am going to go down and take the citizenship classes and take the oath as though I were an immigrant.

Same type of thing.

So, here they are being baptized and it is a symbol of their sinfulness and their need for change of mind. Are we clear on that? And also, where does it occur in the age? It is not all the way through. God didn't give it to Abraham.

He didn't give it to Moses. He didn't give it to David. It comes up right at the end of their age.

Okay? It is not even scriptural. There is not scripture 1 that says go to the Jordan and be baptized. But Jesus had John baptize him.

Why? Here is a good question. Did Jesus need a return to God? Did Jesus have to have a view towards sin? John says, why am I baptizing you? You ought to be baptizing me. And Jesus says, permit it to be so now, for thus it is necessary to fulfill all righteousness.

What is the baptism of Jesus all about? Here is what I would suggest to you as the answer. The Lord Jesus Christ is the substitutionary Lamb. He is the atonement.

He is our substitute. He takes our place. And we are delivered not only by His death, but also by His life.

It is the fact that He lived His life on this earth in a totally obedient way to God, and that He went to the cross. If He had messed up in His life and had succumbed to temptation, He could not have done the sacrifice on the cross. He had to be perfect.

He had to have been completely obedient. In being baptized, the Lord Jesus represents the nation of Israel. He represents the people of God.

This is what people should have done. Everyone should have dedicated themselves to God. Jesus Christ, in His life, lived His life as an example for His nation Israel and for the entire world.

His example, just like everything else He did, is a teaching example. This is the level of dedication we should have. This is what fulfills righteousness.

Acknowledgement. Jesus did not have personal sin to acknowledge, but in the same way that He did not have personal sin to pay for on the cross. But in the same way that He bore the penalty for sin on the cross, He went through the ritual of baptism in a substitutionary way for us.

It is by way of example, by way of representation, since we haven't fulfilled all righteousness, He did it for us. He was baptized for us at the beginning of His ministry, and He is baptized for us again on the cross. The suffering on the cross, He talks about His baptism.

Well, we've covered Old Testament baptism, if you will. The baptism of John the Baptist. We've covered the baptism of Christ.

Now, when we come back from the break, we're going to look at the baptism that Peter is talking about in Acts chapter 2, and we're going to see whether that carries all the way forward to now. But let's pause here. We're right in the middle of things, but we need to stop here and take our break.