

(Through the Bible) Luke 23-24

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith's sermon explores the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, emphasizing themes of injustice, forgiveness, and faith in the face of suffering.

Duration: 55:44

Scripture: Luke 23:46-47, Luke 24:27, Luke 24:45

Topics: "The Crucifixion", "Atonement"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. He describes the scene of Jesus on the cross and the reactions of the people around him. The speaker emphasizes the shock and difficulty of witnessing such a brutal and painful death. He also mentions the mocking and jeering from the crowd, including one of the thieves crucified alongside Jesus. The sermon concludes with the mention of Pilate's role in delivering Jesus to be crucified and the typical Roman procession leading up to the crucifixion.

Transcript

And the whole multitude of them arose, and they led him unto Pilate, and they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, or the Messiah, a king. Now notice, their accusation against him was blasphemy. You're saying you're the son of God.

When they brought him to Pilate to accuse him before Pilate, they didn't make that charge at all before Pilate. Why? Because they knew that Pilate would throw it out. You say, ah, it's just your own problem.

You're religious superstitions. Don't come to the Roman court with that. So when they came to the Roman court, they came with a whole different set of charges.

The charges before the Roman court was that of perverting the nation, seditious. He is a man who said you shouldn't pay taxes to Caesar. That's not true.

He said, give to Caesar that which is Caesar's. And then they also accused him of declaring himself to be the king. And Pilate asked him, saying, are you the king of the Jews? And he answered and said, you said it.

Thou say'st it, equivalent today of saying, hey, you said it. And then said Pilate to the chief priest and to the people, I find no fault in this man. And they were the more fierce, saying, he stirs up the people.

Teaching throughout all of Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. Now, Galilee was the place where all of the rebellions against Rome started. So by placing him in Galilee, they were seeking to place him at the heart of rebellion against Rome.

This man is stirring up people everywhere, up there in Galilee, you know. And it was one of those buzzwords by which they intended to get Pilate excited. But when Pilate heard Galilee, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.

And as soon as he knew that he was a Galilean, he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction. He sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at this time. This is Herod Antipas.

And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad, for he was desiring to see him for a long time. Because he had heard so many things about him. And he had hoped that he might see some kind of a miracle done by him.

Then when he questioned him in many words, but Jesus answered him nothing. This is the Herod, of course, who had beheaded the cousin of Jesus, John the Baptist. And Jesus had nothing to say to him at all.

And so then Herod, with his men of war, set him at knot and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. And the same day, Pilate and Herod were made friends together, because there had been enmity between them for quite some time. And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers of the people, he said unto them, You have brought this man unto me as one that is perverting the people, and behold, I have examined him before you, and I find no fault in this man touching those things whereof you accuse him.

No, nor did Herod. For I sent you to him, and lo, nothing worthy of death has been done by him. I therefore am going to chastise him and release him.

For of necessity it was a custom that he released unto them one prisoner at the feast. And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas, who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder was cast into the prison. Now Barabbas was guilty of these very charges which they were making against Jesus.

False charges against Jesus, they were true against Barabbas. Pilate therefore willing to release Jesus spake again to them, but they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. And he said unto them the third time, Why? What evil has he done? I have found no cause of death in him.

I therefore will chastise him and let him go. And they were instant with loud voices requiring that he might be crucified. And the tragic scripture and the voices of them and of the chief priest prevailed.

How sad when the voices of the mob prevail. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired, but he delivered Jesus to their will.

And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon a Cyrenian coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus. Now the procession, typical Roman procession, was they had four Roman soldiers, two going slightly ahead and two slightly behind, and the prisoner in the middle. And then one soldier would lead the procession.

And the soldier leading the procession had a sign with the accusation against the person to be crucified. In this case, the sign said, The King of the Jews. And when they came to the place of crucifixion, this sign was then nailed to the top of the cross so that the people would all know the reason why this man was being put to death by the Roman government.

As they would go through the streets of the city, they would usually take the longest route. And of course, there was always a lot of noise and a lot of clamor, and this was intended to draw the people out to see what was happening. And they would see this man walking in the midst of the Roman soldiers pulling his cross along, and they knew that he was going to be crucified, and the accusation against him was in front.

And it would strike terror in the hearts of the people trying to rebel against Rome. Jesus, weakened by the chastening, was probably physically unable to bear the cross any further. And so they compelled this man Simon, who was a Cyrenian, to bear the cross.

What the Roman soldier did was just take his sword and lay it flat on your shoulder, and he could order you to carry his bags for a mile. And that was Roman authority. I mean, you couldn't say no.

You couldn't say, well, I'm busy, or I've got to get this quarter of a mile home to my wife. You know, she's baking cookies or something and expecting me to come home. Couldn't do that.

He laid that sword flat on your shoulder, and he'd tell you to do something, man. No arguments. You had to do it.

And so they laid the sword flat on Simon's shoulder and said, carry this man's cross. And Simon began to carry the cross. Now, according to Josephus, the Roman government, the Jews would not allow a census to be taken since the time of David, when the judgment of God came against Israel because David numbered the people.

And so, the Roman government wanted to know approximately how many people there were, and so they counted the number of sheep that were killed for the Passover at the time of Christ. And according to Josephus, there were 26,572 sheep killed for this one Passover. And there was, according to the law, a minimum of 10 people to eat the one lamb.

You had to have at least 10 people. So, the number of people at that particular Passover was over 2,700,000. Of course, it was the longing desire of every Jew to go to Jerusalem for the Passover sometime in his life.

If you lived within 15 miles of Jerusalem, a male, adult male, you were required to be there. Further away, it was always your dream, and so when they would partake of the Passover, they'd say, this year here, next year Jerusalem. Even to the present day, it's a traditional part of the Passover feast.

This year here, next year Jerusalem. Simon had no doubt come from Tripoli, for that is a Cyrenian who was from Tripoli, for this Passover. It could be that he was very upset when that Roman sword was laid on his shoulder and he was compelled to bear the cross.

We do not know, but we are told that this Simon was the father of Rufus and Alexandria. The fact that his sons are named, I believe it's in Mark's Gospel, it means that his sons were well known by the Christians. So, there is a very good likelihood that this Simon, as a result of his encounter with Jesus and bearing the cross of Jesus, was converted.

And his sons became well known in the early church, Rufus and Alexandria. As Paul is writing to the church in Rome, he said, and greet Rufus, who is as my brother, and his beloved mother, who is as my own mother. It could be the very Rufus, the son of Simon, who was compelled to bear the cross of Jesus.

And there followed him a great company of people and of women, which also were bewailing and lamenting him. And Jesus, turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, don't weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming in which they will say, Blessed are the barren.

Now, that, of course, to be barren was a curse. They'd always say, Cursed are the barren. If a woman could not bear a child, that was cause for divorce, legal cause for divorce.

An acceptable cause for divorce. If you could not bear a son for your husband, that was an acceptable cause for divorce in those days. And they would say, Oh, she's cursed.

She can't bear children. But Jesus said the day is going to come when they're going to say, Blessed are the barren. And the womb, which has never borne, or the breast, which have never nursed.

Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us into the hills, cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, that is while I am here, the light of the world, what are they going to do in the dry? These days did come. In less than 40 years, the Roman troops came and ravaged the land of Palestine.

And the majority, the vast majority of the Jews were killed. In the final assault upon Jerusalem, according to the account of Josephus, over a million Jews were killed, and 96,000 were carried captive back to Rome to be slaves for life. There were also two other malefactors who were led with him to be put to death.

And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment and cast lots.

This statement of Jesus, Father, forgive them, they know not what they do, according to Luke's gospel here, was made as they were preparing them for the cross. That is, they would lay the cross down on the ground, which was in a shape sort of a T, and they would stretch out the prisoner's hands on the crossbars, and they would drive these spikes through his hands. Last year when I was in Jerusalem, I was visiting in a house of Theo Seidenbaum, who had excavated under his house and had come back to the Roman period and had found there this large spike, which looks like a railroad spike.

And he said to me, these are the spikes that it is believed the Romans used in crucifixion. I said, Theo, I've got to have one of those spikes. I don't care what it cost, I want one.

I hope that he has one for me when I go back. I'm going to call and see. He said he thought he could get me one.

I want to show you what the Roman spikes look like that they have uncovered there in Jerusalem. But they would drive these spikes through the hands on the crossbars. And in the case of Jesus, they drove the spikes also through his feet as they nailed him to the cross, and then they would implant the cross in the ground.

Now, while they were nailing him, Jesus said, Father, forgive them. They know not what they do. Here we find that Jesus, having been brought to the place physically where he could no longer go around touching the blind eyes, touching the deaf ears, because his hands are now held fast to that cross.

Though he cannot minister in an active way walking around their villages anymore, still, there is one avenue of ministry left, and he exercises it, the ministry of prayer. And he prays for them. And the prayer of Jesus was answered on the day of Pentecost, some 50 days later, when they were again gathered in Jerusalem for that celebration, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the early church and the people gathered to observe the phenomena that accompanied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Peter stood up and he said, You men of Israel, hearken unto me, for these men are not drunken as you suppose. It's only 9 o'clock in the morning. But this is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel when he said, In the last days, saith the Lord, I am going to pour out My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters are going to prophesy, and your young men are going to see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.

And upon My servants and handmaidens will I pour out My Spirit in that day, saith the Lord. And there shall be blood and fire and vapor of smoke, and the moon shall be turned to blood and the sun into darkness before the great and notable day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

And Peter said, Jesus of Nazareth, a man who proved himself to be of God among you by the marvelous works that He did, whom you, according to the predeterminate counsel and foreknowledge of God, with your wicked hands have crucified and slain, but God raised Him from the dead because it was not possible that He could be held by death. For David, by the Holy Spirit, said, Thou will not leave my soul in hell, neither will you allow the Holy One to see corruption. And Peter said, This was fulfilled for His soul was not left in hell, neither did the Holy One see corruption, but this same Jesus hath God raised from the dead who ascended on high and has now given this which you see, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

And they were convicted in their hearts. And they said unto them, Men and brethren, what shall we do since we've crucified the Lord of glory? And Peter said, I realize that in ignorance you did it, but repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Now, Father forgive them.

They know not what they do. Peter said, You did it in ignorance. And 2,000 souls were added to the church.

The prayer of Jesus was answered. Those who had ignorantly put Him on the cross had found forgiveness and were now a part of the body of Christ. And the people stood beholding, and the rulers also with Him derided Him, saying, He saved others.

Let Him save Himself if He is the Messiah, the Chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him and offering Him vinegar and saying, If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself. And a superscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek and Latin and Hebrew, This is the King of the Jews.

Now, this was the cry, the taunt, the jeer of the people. Save Yourself. Do you know where the inspiration for that cry came? It came from the pit of hell.

For had Jesus saved Himself, He would not be able to save you. That cry was coming from the pit of hell. It was a taunt.

It was a jeer. The high priest said, He saved others. Himself He cannot save.

Let Him come down now if He is the Son of God. Let God save Him if God will have anything to do with Him. Because He said He's the Son of God.

And this was the mockery. This was the cry. The soldiers, Hey, if you're the King of the Jews, save Yourself, man.

The people, they picked up this chant, this cry, Save Yourself. Let Him come down now from the cross and we will believe Him, the priest said. And one of the malefactors, which were hanged, railed on Him, saying, If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us.

So the same taunt that was coming from the crowd, this thief picked up. During the time of great psychic experiences, emotional experiences, emotions are close to the surface and it's very... There's this mob psychology and there's this bit of... People begin to act like something other than people when they get into crowds many times. Even in football games.

You know, people put on chicken suits and do all kinds of weird things. And everybody accepts it. Everybody laughs.

You watch some of these people, you know, the weird get-ups. People do weird things in a crowd. There's sort of an anonymity in a crowd that people like.

Nobody knows me, so I can act like a freak and everybody laughs and has a good time. And there is that thing with the crowd of wisecracking. You ever been in the crowd when things were going on and people began to make their smart remarks and then it gets a little competition of who can make the smartest or cutest remark.

And of course, you measure them on the laugh scale. You know, you got an 8, well you got a 5, well I got a 10, you know. And these things to play on the emotions of the people, especially if it's a very shocking thing.

I can imagine that to watch a man dying on a cross would be an extremely shocking thing to your psyche. I would think that that would be extremely difficult to just watch a man hanging there, watching him as he is fighting for breath, watching him as his body heaves, knowing the pain and just seeing him as he is gradually being worn down by the pain and the suffering and know that he is dying. That must be a tremendously shocking thing for the psyche.

And so, I imagine that because you can't really think on that too long without really getting bugged by it, that, you know, there would be those that would make these offhanded remarks to divert the attention for a while and to bring laughter because just the shock of this thing settling in would be too hard to take. And because it was the cry of the crowd and the common mockery and jeering against Christ, the thief, probably just to get a rise out of the crowd and maybe some sympathy towards himself by joining with them, reviled Jesus and said, Hey, why don't you save yourself and us? Oh, funny, funny. And there probably went the ripple of laughter through the crowd.

But the other thief turned to him and he said, Don't you fear God? Seeing that you're in the same condemnation? Hey, you're in the same boat, man. You're dying. Don't you fear God? It's the hour of death.

Don't you realize that we're going to be facing the judgment of God soon? Don't you fear God? We indeed are here justly. Justice is being served for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds. But this man has done nothing amiss.

Pilate said, I find no fault in him. The thief testified he has done nothing amiss. Judas said, I have betrayed innocent blood.

And he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom. How did he know that Jesus was a king? Because above the cross there was written the word, the King of the Jews. But this shows us that salvation faith has to come from God.

For somehow His faith transcended even that of the disciples. And somehow by God He knew that though this man was dying, he was yet to come into His kingdom. He had a faith greater than the disciples because at this point the disciples had been wiped out.

They had forsaken Him and they had fled. They had given up hope. We had trusted in Him for the salvation of Israel, but He now is crucified.

It's all over. But somehow God planted faith in the heart of this man. For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God and not of works, lest any man should be saved.

He boasts. God planted faith, saving faith in the heart of this man. And He somehow realized that even though He was dying, there was a message, just a short message.

This is the King of the Jews. And He believed it. It had to be the faith of God planted in His heart.

And so He said, Lord, when You come into Your kingdom, would You remember Me? Not would You honor Me? Not would You exalt Me? Just remember Me, Lord. The disciples were the ones that were saying, Lord, when You come into the kingdom, exalt Me. Let me sit at Your right hand.

Let me sit at Your left hand. Let me be prime minister. Let me have Hawaii.

This man was just saying, Lord, would You just remember me when You come into Your kingdom? Oh, what a simple prayer. But it brought him salvation. Oh, how close each of us are to salvation.

It's just a simple prayer. God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Lord, remember me.

We read, Wherefore He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. For Jesus said, And whosoever cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out even a dying thief in his last hour, who says, Lord, remember me, can find salvation. And Jesus said, Today you will be with Me in Paradise.

This word, Paradise, is a word that was used for the garden of the king where he would invite his special guests to come and walk with him. Jesus said, Today you will be with Me in Paradise. It was about the sixth hour.

That is noon. It's interesting that this all transpired before the miracles of the day. Before the earthquake.

Before the sun became dark. God had planted the faith in the heart of this thief to bring him salvation. It was about the sixth hour and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour, three o'clock in the afternoon, and the sun was dark and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

The sun was dark and that is nature refused to look at this horrible sight. Nature revolted against man. There was a great earthquake.

The rocks were torn. Nature revolting against man. Had God not restrained it, I'm sure that nature would have destroyed man at that point for his heinous crime.

The veil of the temple was rent in the midst. We are told in another gospel from the top to the bottom. Oh, how significant.

The veil of the temple was the testimony of how unapproachable God was to man. No man dared to enter beyond that veil except the high priest and that only one day in the year and that only after many sacrifices and washings and that only with great reverence and fear having these bells tied on the bottom of his coat and a rope tied around his foot so that those outside of the veil would listen for these bells to be tinkling inside and if they would stop, then they would pull the guy out by his foot knowing that he went into the presence of God with some blemish and God smote him dead. And so the ropes so they could pull him out wouldn't even have to go in to get him.

God was unapproachable by man. Man's sin had alienated from God. God's hand was not short.

His ear was not heavy, but sins had separated people and the veil represented that separation of the unrighteous man from God. But at the death of Christ, the way was made by which man might come to God and God ripped that veil from the top to the bottom saying, calm, calm, it's open. The way is now made through Jesus Christ for you, for me, to be able to come directly to God.

When Jesus had cried with a loud voice, Luke doesn't tell us what He said, but the other Gospels do. He cried, It is finished. He then said, Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.

And having said thus, He dismissed His spirit. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. And all of the people that came together to that site, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and they returned.

And all of his acquaintance and the women that followed him from Galilee stood afar off beholding these things. And behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counselor, and he was a good man and a just. And the same had not consented to the counsel and the deed of them.

He was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews, and who also himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. And this man went unto Pilate and he begged for the body of Jesus. And he took it down and wrapped it in linen and laid it in a sepulcher that was hewn in stone, wherein never a man before was laid.

And that day was the preparation and the Sabbath was drawing on. And the women also which came with him from Galilee followed after him, beheld the sepulcher and how his body was laid. And they returned and prepared the spices and the ointments and they rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment.

Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the sepulcher bringing the spices which they had prepared and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher. And they entered in and they found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

And it came to pass as they were very perplexed, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. And as they were afraid and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen. Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and the third day rise again? And then they remembered His words.

And they returned from the sepulcher and told all of these things unto the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women that were with them which told these things to the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales and they believed not.

Oh, hysterical women. Lord deliver us, you know. They just didn't believe.

Just... Well, of course we find Jesus talking to them about that in just a moment. Then arose Peter and he ran to the sepulcher and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves and he departed wondering in himself what it all meant. What's happened? And behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus which was from Jerusalem about three score furlongs or about eight miles.

And as they talked together of all of these things which had happened, it came to pass that while they were communing together and reasoning, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him. So God sort of put blinders on them.

They didn't recognize Him. And He said unto them, What are you guys talking about as you're walking along here? How is it that you look so sad? And one of them whose name was Cleopas answering and said unto him, Are you a stranger in Jerusalem? You don't know the things which have come to pass in these days? And Jesus said unto them, What things? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and they've crucified Him. And we trusted... It's past tense.

We had trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel. And besides all this, this is the third day since these things were done. Hey, man, you must be a stranger.

You don't know the things that have happened around here. There was this fellow, Jesus of Nazareth. Oh, great guy.

Mighty in power and God. And He went around doing good. Oh, He brought us hope.

We had hoped. We had trusted that He was going to be the one to bring deliverance. But they crucified Him and this is the third day.

And there were certain women also of our company which made us astonished. They went early to the sepulcher. And when they did not find His body, they came and said that they had had vision of angels which said that He was alive.

And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher and found it was even as the women had said, but they did not see Him. Then He said unto them, O fools, slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. What does He do? He takes them right back to the Word.

Right back to the prophecy. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. And I'll never forgive Clopas for not writing them down.

This is one of the messages of Jesus that I would give anything to have. How I would love to have heard Him start with Moses and go through the Old Testament and bring out all of the Scriptures that related to Him. Three hundred prophecies that He fulfilled by His birth, life, death, resurrection.

Oh, what I wouldn't give to have this sermon recorded. Wouldn't it be great if they had cassettes or something and we could listen to this message? Oh, my. And they drew near to the village where they were going.

And Jesus acted like He was just going to keep going on further. But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us, for it's toward evening and the day is almost over. And so He went in to stay with them.

And it came to pass as He sat at meat with them, He took bread and He blessed it. And He broke it and He gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they knew Him.

And He vanished out of their sight. It's interesting to me that it was when He handed them the bread that they recognized. Is it possible that they then saw the nail prints and their eyes were opened? And then He vanishes out of their sight.

Disappears. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way and while He opened to us the Scriptures? Have you ever had a burning heart as you read the Word of God? Has it ever just kindled a fire within your heart? There are a lot of people who look for excitement in their religious experiences. They look for emotional highs.

They look to discover some kind of a miracle or phenomena that they can get all excited about. An angel appeared or some other type of phenomena. These men said, Did not our hearts burn when He talked to us and opened the Scriptures to us? I think that it is a sign of spiritual health and maturity when a person begins to get that burning heart as he searches the Scriptures.

As the Holy Spirit begins to open the Scriptures to him. Oh, I'll tell you, I get so excited just reading the Word of God. I get so excited there are times when I just really can hardly contain myself as God's Spirit begins to open up the Scriptures to me.

And just as I'm reading and the Spirit of God just begins to open them up. And I just get so excited. I can't describe to you just how exciting it is to be taught of the Spirit.

The truth of God's Word. And suddenly just have the understanding given to you. And the Scriptures just opened up to you.

That's healthy. There are some people that get excited when people speak in tongues or when people utter prophecies. They're all, I get excited over the Word of God.

Some people get excited with visions or dreams. I get excited over the Word of God. And so, they rose up in the same hour.

They returned to Jerusalem. I'll bet they got back to Jerusalem a lot faster than they got to Emmaus. And they found the eleven gathered together and those that were with them.

And they said to them, Hey, the Lord is risen indeed. He appeared to Simon. Telling these two fellows that came in.

The Lord is risen. He appeared to Simon. And they said, Hey, we had an experience.

And they told what things were done as they were on the path and how He was known to them when He broke the bread. And as they were talking about this, Jesus Himself stood in the midst and He said unto them, Shalom. Typical Hebrew greeting.

But they were terrified and frightened. They thought that they were seeing a ghost. And He said unto them, Why are you troubled? Why do these questions arise in your minds and in your hearts? Behold My hands, My feet.

It is Me. Handle Me and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see Me have.

Now there are some people that find difficulty here because Jesus is saying, Look, handle Me. See if it isn't Me. When earlier in the day He said to Mary, Touch Me not.

I'm not yet ascended to My Father. The words of Jesus to Mary, Touch Me not. The words, Touch Me not, are a poor translation of the Greek.

In the Greek it reads, Don't cling to Me. Mary was no doubt touching Him already. She no doubt had a death grip on Him.

You got away from Me once, you'll never get away from Me again. Alright, you know. I'm not going to let you go.

And He said, Don't cling to Me, Mary. Go and tell My disciples that I'm risen. So it wasn't, you know, Don't touch Me.

There's some mystic thing. But it's just, Don't cling to Me, Mary. Go tell My disciples I'm risen.

Here He's saying, Look, handle Me. See if it isn't Me. Ghosts don't have flesh and bones as you see Me have.

And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, now it was just too much. Oh, I can't believe it.

It's just too much. And they were wondering. He said unto them, Do you have any meat? And they gave Him a piece of broiled fish and some of a honeycomb.

And He ate it before them. And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all of the things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms. The Psalms are filled with prophecies concerning Jesus Christ.

There are entire Psalms that are known as Messianic Psalms. Psalms 22. Graphic description of the crucifixion.

Psalms 110. The priest after the order of Melchizedek. Psalm 118.

And just over and over. Many Psalms. And so He said, Didn't I tell you that these Scriptures must be fulfilled as Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms? Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures.

That's a glorious gift. When God opens your understanding that you might understand. And that happens when you're born again.

If you try and read the Scriptures without being born again, they're a mystery to you. For the natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit neither can he know them. They are spiritually discerned.

But he which is spiritual does understand all things though he is not understood by any. And He said unto them, Thus it is written and thus it behooved the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem.

And you are the witnesses of these things. So, here He is commissioning them that they should go out and preach the repentance and the remission of sins to all nations. And behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you.

This is the promise, no doubt, made to Joel in the second chapter of the prophecy of Joel when God said, And in the last days, sayeth the Lord, I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh. I send the promise of My Father upon you. But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with this power from on high.

The promise of the Holy Spirit. But they were to wait in Jerusalem until the promise was fulfilled. Now, this translation, tarry ye in Jerusalem, was picked up by the Pentecostal churches and they had traditional tarrying meetings where people gathered to tarry to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

That's unscriptural. Jesus said, Tarry in the city of Jerusalem. So to tarry in Santa Ana would not be scriptural.

Jesus was not prescribing the method by which the Holy Spirit should be poured out upon all believers during church history. There was to be that initial day in which the Spirit of God would be poured out upon the church as an abiding gift. They were to wait for that day.

They were to wait in Jerusalem for that day. Once the day of Pentecost was fully come and the Holy Spirit was poured out as an abiding gift upon the church, it was never necessary for them to tarry again to receive the Holy Spirit. All that was necessary was for them to by faith receive the gift of God.

You don't have to tarry to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It's God's gift. You receive it by just faith.

This gift is unto you and to your children and to those that are far off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And so He led them out as far as Bethany. And He lifted up His hands and He blessed them.

And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. Now, notice He went as far as Bethany. Lifted up His hands and blessed them.

And as He was doing it, He was lifted up and went on into heaven. This was 40 days after His crucifixion. He had been around among them for 40 days.

When you go to Jerusalem today on the Mount of Olives, I think there are three different sites where great churches have been built over the spot where Jesus ascended. The Russians have the Church of Ascension. The Lutherans have the Church of Ascension.

And the Catholics have the Church of Ascension. All on the top of the Mount of Olives. In one of them, they'll even show you the footprints that He left in the rock when He ascended.

Interesting, they're all on the top of the Mount of Olives when the Scripture said He went as far as Bethany. I'm glad there's no Church of the Ascension in Bethany, so you can just go to Bethany and just look around and think, somewhere in here, Jesus ascended. But you don't have a spot.

Nor do you have a lot of baubles and trinkets and souvenir salesmen. Where He ascended is not so important as the fact that He did ascend. They're from Bethany.

And they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.

They were continually in the temple, which means that when the Holy Spirit descended upon the church, they were probably in one of the rooms of the temple. Because it was ten days after this that the Holy Spirit did descend. And the fact that they were continuing daily in the temple praising and blessing God means that this phenomena probably took place right there in the temple, in one of the rooms of the temple where they had gathered to worship and praise the Lord.

We'll get to that when we get to Acts 2, but we won't get to that until we get to John, which we will start next week. The first two chapters of the Gospel according to John. Father, give us burning hearts by unfolding to us the truth of Your Word.

And may we feel that excitement, that rush, that thrill of having Thy Spirit, Lord, just opening up the truth and giving us understanding and helping us to know You, Your love, Your way, Your will. Lord, as we go forth this week, guide us. May this be a week of spiritual growth.

May this be a week of deepening relationship. May we draw closer to You, Lord. And may You work in our hearts and lives by Your Holy Spirit as You would conform us into the image of Christ and make us true and faithful witnesses of our Lord.

Lord, bless us, strengthen us, help us, Father. In the name of Jesus, our Lord, Amen.

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