Repentance to Israel

The time when God was giving repentance to Israel

An 8-Lesson Study by Keith Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®

Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Series

These eight lessons are Keith Blades' brief study of the opening seven chapters of Acts: the time when God was giving repentance to Israel before the scheduled day of His wrath was ready to begin. The title comes out of Acts 5, the very expression Peter utilizes to describe what's going on: Israel is being given an opportunity to change their mind about Jesus of Nazareth. After an orientation on time past, now, and what's yet to come, Keith shows that God's program with Israel was going to continue on following the cross, and that the extension of mercy and forbearance in Acts 1 through 7 is a prophesied issue, not part of the mystery dispensation of grace. Lessons 6–8 survey the opening chapters of Acts: three honest opportunities given the nation to change their mind about Jesus of Nazareth, and the Son of Man standing at the Father's right hand; then the Lord Jesus Christ unexpectedly came back from heaven and raised up Saul of Tarsus as a brand new apostle.

www.enjoythebible.org

Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Core Focus
L1	Time Past, Now, and the Ages to Come — Ephesians 2 and 3; II Timothy 2:15: the Dispensation of Gentile Grace Revealed to Paul
L2	John the Baptist and Israel's Prescription for Cleansing — Matthew 3; Acts 1–2; Ezekiel 36: Three Baptisms
L3	Matthew 12: Forgiveness and the Holy Ghost Testimony — Matthew 12; Luke 23; John 15; Acts 2, 3 and 5
L4	Time to Respond to the Sign — Matthew 12:34–40; Luke 11–13, 18–19, 24: the Extension of Mercy and Forbearance
L5	A Prophesied Issue: Extension of Mercy and Forbearance — Psalm 22; Hebrews 1–2; Psalm 110; Isaiah 28:14–16: Israel's Program Continues Following the Cross
L6	The Rejected Stone Laid in Zion — Isaiah 28:16–21; Matthew 21:33–44; Psalm 118; Acts 4:5–13; Acts 1:1–5: an Advancement, Not a Change
L7	Acts 1: Israel's Program Continuing On — Acts 1:4–22: Restore Again the Kingdom to Israel; Replacing Judas' Apostleship

Lesson	Core Focus
L8	Pentecost Fully Come; Three Honest Opportunities — Acts 1:24–7:60: Judas Replaced, Israel's Last Days, Stephen and the Son of Man Standing; Acts 9

Lesson Summaries

L1

Time Past, Now, and the Ages to Come *Ephesians 2 and 3; II Timothy 2:15: the Dispensation of Gentile Grace Revealed to Paul*

Why This Study

- A great number of Christians open up to the gospel accounts and the opening chapters of Acts to get their instructions and promises for today
- That portion of God's word still deals with the nation Israel and God's program with Israel — still Old Testament ground, especially Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
- What took place on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) does not record the birthday of the church, the body of Christ

Three Issues: Time Past, Now, and What's Yet to Come

- Rightly dividing means recognizing that God's word is divided into three issues: time past, now, and what's yet to come
- When Paul looks at all God is doing in His plan and purpose, he breaks it down into time past, now, and the ages to come (Ephesians 2)
- In time past God's dealings were exclusive with the nation Israel; any Gentile dealt with was dealt with through the agency of Israel
- That time past situation extended through the gospel accounts and even the opening chapters of Acts; the Lord's earthly ministry didn't have Gentiles in view

But Now: the Great Dispensational Change

- The law contract functioned as a middle wall of partition, in effect from Exodus 19 on; it kept Israel and the Gentiles apart and was not done away with or fulfilled on the cross
- God did not bring in the change at the cross or on the day of Pentecost, but when the Lord unexpectedly came back from heaven and raised up Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9)
- God is forming one new man, the church, the body of Christ, with Jew and Gentile on the exact same level — not a revamping of what He was doing in time past

The Mystery Revealed to Paul

- The Lord did not reveal this to Peter, James and John in His earthly ministry or during the forty days following the cross and resurrection; the twelve are continuing to deal with God's program with Israel, with no knowledge about a dispensational change that was coming
- God kept this change secret and hidden in Himself until He revealed it to Paul; it was un-prophesied, unspoken about, unanticipated and unexpected in ages and generations past

- God has put His time past program with Israel on hold (Romans 9–11); the dispensation of Gentile grace hasn't replaced Israel's program but has interrupted it

Paul, Your Apostle Today

- Romans through Philemon is the portion of God's Word dealing with now; Hebrews through Revelation deals with the time to come
- If you're a Gentile, Paul is your apostle, because the dispensation of Gentile grace was revealed to him and all its doctrine committed to him
- The cross was a necessary factor in Israel's program; the day of Pentecost and the ministry of Peter, James, John and the twelve are Israel's program

L2

John the Baptist and Israel's Prescription for Cleansing

Matthew 3; Acts 1–2; Ezekiel 36: Three Baptisms

A Prophesied Man with a Prophesied Message

- The kingdom of heaven is the culmination of God's program with Israel: the establishment of God's kingdom on this earth in their land, administered on this earth through them
- John is both a prophesied man with a prophesied message (Matthew 3:3); since God kept the dispensation of grace secret since the world began, John knew nothing about it
- John prophesies about the day of Pentecost without mentioning it as such; God hasn't started something brand new on Pentecost

The Kingdom of Heaven at Hand

- When John began to minister, about ninety-eight percent of the time schedule given through Daniel was fulfilled, so the kingdom really was at hand
- The kingdom of heaven is not heaven itself or a spiritual reign in any man's heart, but the fulfillment of God's covenanted promises to Israel
- It's not the job of the church, the body of Christ, to bring in the kingdom on this earth

Three Baptisms (Matthew 3:11)

- Israel was an unclean and defiled people; to be in the kingdom they had to repent, change their mind about themselves, and participate in the prescription for cleansing
- A baptism is not a burial; three baptisms are part of Israel's prescription for cleansing: water baptism by John, baptism with the Holy Ghost by the Messiah, and baptism by the Messiah with fire
- John began the prescription for cleansing but did not complete it; the other two baptisms will be performed by the Messiah Himself

Pentecost: Baptism with the Holy Ghost (Acts 1–2)

- In Acts 1:3–5 the Lord ties the coming baptism with the Holy Ghost to what they had heard in connection with John
- The Lord would fulfill Matthew 3:11 in the very next chapter; what took place on Pentecost was part of Israel's prescription for cleansing, a prophesied event and day
- The third aspect, baptism by the Messiah with fire, is judgment in the day of His wrath; the unbelieving element in Israel is purged out, and the righteous remnant is gathered as wheat into the garner to enjoy the kingdom

Ezekiel 36: Israel's Prescription for Cleansing

- Ezekiel 36 gives God's indictment of Israel for defilement and uncleanness, for which He cast them out of the land
- John baptized with water because the prescription for cleansing called for it (verse 25); verse 27 is what the believing remnant gets by the baptism of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost

Acts 9: What Ought to Shock You

- The only thing that ought to shock you in Acts is chapter 9, because from that point events are not in accordance with the prophets
- God revealed to Paul a mystery about a dispensation of Gentile grace, setting Israel and their program aside temporarily, to make one new man for a purpose entirely distinct from His purpose with Israel

L3

Matthew 12: Forgiveness and the Holy Ghost Testimony

Matthew 12; Luke 23; John 15; Acts 2, 3 and 5

Repentance to Israel (Acts 5)

- The series title is not Keith's own expression; it comes from Acts 5, where Peter uses it to tell the rulers of Israel what is going on
- A time to change their minds about their rejection of Messiah was granted before He would purge His nation in the day of the Lord's wrath
- Pentecost has nothing to do with this dispensation of grace; the only thing not found in the gospel accounts is the dispensation of Gentile grace

With the Messiah or Against Him (Matthew 12:22–30)

- The Lord casts out a devil — one of the two hallmark signs of the kingdom — and the Pharisees respond negatively
- Israel was being divided into those with the Messiah and those against Him; the believing remnant would get the baptism with the Holy Ghost, the unbelieving portion the baptism with fire

The Threefold Testimony of the Godhead

- From the time God separated Abram until the days of the Messiah, the main testifier to Israel was God the Father; from John the Baptist through the rejection of the Messiah, God spoke through His Son
- Following the rejection of the Messiah — "in the opening chapter of the book of Acts," as Keith says it, and in the portion yet to come when God resumes His program with Israel — the testifier is God the Holy Spirit

Forgiven, and Not Forgiven (Matthew 12:31–32)

- Judicially God had every right to charge them with murder and deal with them in His wrath; marvelously, mercifully, graciously, God would forgive His nation for their rejection of the Messiah
- Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost refers to the Holy Spirit's ministry in the opening chapters of Acts; if it continues during the extension of mercy and forbearance, it won't be forgiven
- Matthew 12 tells you to expect the Holy Spirit's testimony to Israel following the cross; the cross does not cut off Israel's program

The Son's Prayer (Luke 23); No Cloak (John 15)

- The sin against the Son of Man would be forgiven because the Son prayed to the Father to do it; a judicial blindness accompanied the rejection, allowing

God to deal with it on a gracious basis

- So God was not going to bring the day of His wrath upon Israel at the cross, nor begin the unprophesied dispensation of grace at that time
- Through His ministry the Lord took the cloak off their sin; when the Holy Spirit indicts them for crucifying their Messiah, there is no cloak they can wrap around themselves

Repentance Given Through the Holy Spirit's Ministry (Acts 2, 3 and 5)

- In Acts 2 Peter speaks to all the house of Israel; their eyes are open, they can know assuredly, and they will be held accountable
- In Acts 3:17 Peter says they crucified Him through ignorance, just as the Lord said in Luke 23
- Peter does not say God has set Israel aside or is forming the church, the body of Christ; God is giving repentance to Israel through the Holy Spirit's ministry

L4

Time to Respond to the Sign *Matthew 12:34–40; Luke 11–13, 18–19, 24: the Extension of Mercy and Forbearance*

Matthew 12:34–40: "the sign of the prophet Jonas"

- The Lord reiterates that they are a generation of vipers that need to change their mind about themselves; the cloak for their sin has been stripped off them
- What the Pharisees were saying did not come from sound doctrine or a proper understanding of the law contract; to give an account is to be held accountable
- They are not only a generation of vipers but an evil and adulterous generation, cooperators with the satanic policy of evil against God's purpose with Israel
- The resurrection is the sign God would give Israel; the Holy Ghost's testimony focuses on it — whom they crucified, God raised from the dead (Acts 2, 3 and 5)

Time to Respond to the Sign

- A sign has to have time to be responded to; in the opening chapters of Acts the nation is given time to respond to it
- If God broke off His dealings with Israel at the cross, they didn't have time to respond to that sign; it isn't right to say God set Israel aside at the cross

Woes, Apostles and Prophets, the Remnant (Luke 11–12)

- The woes begin to be pronounced: if the negative response continues on, woe is exactly what they get — that's why woes are pronounced in Revelation, dealing with the day of the Lord's wrath
- Sending the Lord's apostles and prophets to Israel is a prophesied issue; its real ministry would be in the opening chapters of Acts
- The kingdom belongs to the remnant of the nation Israel (Luke 12:32); selling all and giving alms is an instruction to a member of Israel's remnant, not to you today

"let it alone this year also" (Luke 13)

- God the Father is like the man with the fig tree; the three years of verse 7 are the years of the Lord's earthly ministry; the vine dresser is the Lord Himself

- Digging about and dunging the tree is what He does through the Holy Spirit's ministry during the extension of mercy and forbearance; if they don't respond during that time, it is cut down and the wrath comes
- Stephen sees the Son of Man standing, ready to make His enemies His footstool (Acts 7); He came all the way through the heavenly places, met Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus and raised him up as a brand new apostle — holding back the day of wrath not for Israel's sake but because of a dispensation of grace to us Gentiles

The Twelve Did Not Understand the Cross (Luke 18)

- The twelve did not understand the cross; for three years they preached the gospel of the kingdom with the Lord to Israel and never said a thing about the cross
- You can preach the gospel of the kingdom and never mention the cross, but not the gospel of God's grace today — Paul calls it the preaching of the cross (I Corinthians 1)

The Nobleman and a Necessary Step (Luke 19; 24)

- The Lord is the nobleman; the historical time He goes into the far country to receive the kingdom is Acts 1; the epitome of their hatred is in their murder of Stephen
- The cross is not a hindrance in God's program with Israel but a necessary step both to the extension of mercy and forbearance and to the kingdom

L5

A Prophesied Issue: Extension of Mercy and Forbearance

Psalm 22; Hebrews 1–2; Psalm 110; Isaiah 28:14–16: Israel's Program Continues Following the Cross

Israel's Program Still in Effect

- God's program with Israel is still in effect in the Gospel accounts and the opening chapters of Acts; the dispensation of grace didn't begin, and wasn't even revealed, until God raised up the Apostle Paul in Acts 9
- Many Christians are taught that the day of Pentecost is the birthday of the Church — "that's not the testimony of Scripture"; seeing the extension of mercy and forbearance is a prophesied issue, it is not part of the mystery dispensation of grace

Psalm 22: Israel's Substitute Redeemer and the Five Mandates

- The first two-thirds of Psalm 22 describe the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as Israel's Messiah functioning as their Redeemer when He died on the cross; just about everything recorded there is probably something He said on that cross
- From verse 22 through 31 He talks about what He will do in response to being delivered from the cross; Adonai Jehovah came in human flesh in the seed of David to function as Israel's substitute redeemer, so He could be their King and Blesser
- The five mandates of the Davidic Covenant — Redeemer, Deliverer, Avenger, King, and Blesser — are the five things Israel needs God to be for them in order for them to be what His plan and purpose calls for
- Psalms 22, 23 and 24 describe those five mandates and the implementation of God's Jehovahness and grace; the last part of Psalm 22 quickly runs through the Deliverer, the Avenger, the King, and the Blesser

The Lord's Brethren: a Church in Israel (Psalm 22:22–31)

- The Lord's brethren of verse 22 are the believing remnant coming out of the nation since the preaching of John the Baptist; they end up being a congregation, a called-out assembly, a church in Israel
- He was rejected not by them but by the nation as a whole; through them the whole nation is going to be called upon to respond (verse 23) — exactly what goes on in the opening chapters of Acts. Israel's program is still in effect following the cross

Hebrews 1–2: the Great Salvation

- Hebrews 1 puts everything before into time past and tells the Hebrew saints that what is going on now is Israel's last days; those last days began to click off in the opening of Acts, then God suspended His dealings with Israel
- The great salvation is the salvation of the nation Israel from their enemies and the establishment of their kingdom in fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant; "confirmed unto us" (Hebrews 2:3) is unto the Hebrew people, not unto Gentiles today
- God didn't suspend His program with Israel at the cross; the great salvation continued to be preached to the nation Israel. The twelve apostles' ministry was to confirm it, and the signs of the day of Pentecost confirmed the reality of the Messiah's resurrection
- The children God had given Him were fulfilling Isaiah 8:18 as signs and wonders in Israel; He hadn't yet functioned as the Deliverer and the Avenger, nor as the King and the Blesser, when God broke the program off "unexpectedly and unprophesiedly"

Psalm 110: Sitting at the Father's Right Hand Until

- In verse 1 the Father tells the Lord Jesus Christ, in view of His ascension to the right hand to receive the kingdom, to sit for a while until His enemies are made His footstool — He's not starting to make the enemy His footstool right away; the psalm says nothing about a dispensation of Gentile grace or suspending God's program with Israel
- Peter quotes verse 1 on the day of Pentecost; the entire extension of mercy and forbearance is framed in by the Lord's sitting and standing at the Father's right hand — in Acts 7 Stephen sees the Son of Man standing, no longer sitting

Isaiah 28:14–16: the Stone Laid in Zion

- Verse 16 refers to what God does with His Son in Israel following His rejection at the cross; it is in Zion — He is still dealing with Israel — and the foundation stone is the Messiah Himself
- A tried stone throughout the Lord's ministry, especially in Satan's temptation; a precious cornerstone, the cross itself; a sure foundation, being resurrected from the dead. The twelve apostles, as instruments of the Holy Ghost, fulfill verse 16

L6

The Rejected Stone Laid in Zion *Isaiah 28:16–21; Matthew 21:33–44; Psalm 118; Acts 4:5–13; Acts 1:1–5: an Advancement, Not a Change*

Israel's Redeemer First; the Sure Foundation Laid in Zion (Isaiah 28:16–21)

- The most necessary thing was for Him first to function as Israel's Redeemer; the other four mandates of the Davidic Covenant — Deliverer, Avenger, King and Blesser — would come in due course. The cross is not a hindrance to the

fulfillment of God's program with Israel but a necessary step in it

- He would deal especially with His brethren, the believing remnant, who would declare to the nation the things He wanted declared; Israel would be given a chance to change their mind, believe upon Him, and not be ashamed when He had His day of wrath
- Following the cross the Lord lays in Zion the tried, precious and sure stone and foundation — in the opening chapter of the book of Acts, through the ministry of Peter, James and John as instruments of the Holy Ghost
- Verses 16 through 21 are a quick run-through of everything that's going to take place in Israel's program following the cross; everything post-cross is in Isaiah 28 except the dispensation of Gentile grace, a mystery. There's going to be time for the foundation to be laid and for the opportunity to believe; He sits until His enemy is made His footstool, and then He rises up. His strange work (verse 21) is a purging work, a breaking down and destroying of that vain religious system in Israel

Matthew 21:33–44: the Husbandmen and the Stone

- The householder's vineyard is like the nation Israel; the husbandmen are the rulers of Israel, set up by the law contract and charged with building the house of Israel; the Messiah has come as the stone it is to be built upon
- Instead of pouring out the wrath right away, He lays that rejected stone down as the head of the corner; the kingdom is given not to the nations, Gentiles, but "to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" — the little flock, the remnant of Israel
- The Lord lays the stone in Zion and gives the nation an opportunity to fall on that stone and be broken before He brings the stone down and starts grinding them to powder

Psalm 118: the Remnant Delivered in the Wrath

- Psalm 118 outlines the time from post-cross until the establishment of the kingdom; "This *is* the day *which* the LORD hath made" is not any old day, nor Sunday, but the day of deliverance and avengement
- The Lord utilized the rejection to produce the redemption, then laid that stone down as the sure foundation; the psalmist fell on the stone and was broken, so he is not ground to powder — a psalm about the remnant that believes during the extension

Acts 4:5–13: Strike One

- Isaiah 28 had the Lord's special message for the scornful rulers; Peter understands that what's going on in the opening chapter of Acts is the fulfillment of Isaiah 28, and what Psalm 118 said — the stone which was rejected of the builders would become the head of the corner
- During the time of Repentance to Israel God gives three honest opportunities to the nation in the person of their rulers to change their mind about Jesus of Nazareth; of the first, here in Acts 4, verse 13 describes that they respond negatively — strike one against them

Not Spiritual Israelites: the Body's Heavenly Vocation

- The dispensation of grace doesn't begin until the Apostle Paul is raised up, after the extension of mercy and forbearance has run its course; it is a completely different program from God's program with Israel
- As Paul explains in Romans through Philemon, the purpose of the body of Christ is not to fulfill God's purpose with Israel on the earth — we're not spiritual Israelites; it has a vocation that has to do with the heavenly places

Acts 1:1–5: an Advancement, Not a Change

- Everything going on in the Gospel account continues on — an advancement, but not a change; He spoke of "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). The program hasn't changed
- We're going to see that what the apostles do in the opening chapters of Acts fulfills commandments the Lord gave them, one of the first being to replace Judas with Matthias — a prophesied event in Psalms 69 and 109; if the mystery dispensation of grace were in effect and Israel's program in abeyance, those things would not have to be fulfilled
- The promise of the Father is the second installment in the prescription for cleansing of the nation Israel, prophesied as in Ezekiel 36; when it takes place on the day of Pentecost it's not a surprise, not a mystery — Israel's program is advanced

L7

Acts 1: Israel's Program Continuing On *Acts 1:4–22: Restore Again the Kingdom to Israel; Replacing Judas' Apostleship*

Right Division Refresher

- The cross is not a stumbling block to God's program with Israel but a necessary step; the opening chapters of Acts are still dealing with God's program with the nation Israel. The dispensation of Gentile grace is a divine interruption
- Israel's program won't resume and be fulfilled until "the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans 11:25); Romans through Philemon is expressly to us and about us, while Hebrews through Revelation deals with the Hebrew people again, written by their apostles

Acts 1:4–5: the Next Installment

- Three baptisms would comprise the prescription for cleansing: John's water baptism unto repentance for the remission of sins; the Messiah baptizing the believing remnant with the Holy Ghost after His redemptive work; and the baptism with fire, purging out the rebellious element
- The Lord tells the twelve the second installment in the prescription for cleansing will take place "not many days hence"; the day of Pentecost isn't going to be a mystery never spoken about in ages and generations past

Acts 1:6–7: Restore Again the Kingdom; the Times and Seasons

- "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" testifies to the understanding in the twelve's mind; the Lord's response doesn't tell them they've misunderstood. Restoring again the kingdom to Israel is the program — they know that
- Of the five mandates of the Davidic Covenant — Redeemer, Deliverer, Avenger, King, and Blesser — once the redemption is accomplished, the next two start the process of restoring the kingdom to Israel; the restoration process begins in the day of the Lord's wrath
- Their concern is the time schedule issue — the times and the seasons issue is the time schedule matter; a time schedule had been given to Daniel: by the time the Messiah was cut off, 483 years of that 490-year schedule would have gone by; the last installment, the day of the Lord's wrath, was to last seven years
- The extension of mercy and forbearance is not on Daniel's time schedule — a mini duration of time before that day of wrath; what the Father hasn't given

them to know fully is its full duration

Acts 1:8: Power from on High

- The second installment in the prescription for cleansing provides the believing remnant power from on high, to function in the Lord's absence as instruments of the Holy Ghost offering the repentance to Israel, and in preparation for the day of wrath
- The signs of Mark 16 have nothing to do with us and this dispensation of grace; Acts 1 does not set forth the "marching orders" for the body of Christ today — our commissions are contained in our epistles, Romans through Philemon

Acts 1:9–12: the Ascension and the Angels

- There is a temporary separation — He is coming back; Zechariah 14 describes the Lord returning at the end of the tribulation period with His feet standing on the Mount of Olives, exactly where He left from in Acts 1
- No pre-trib rapture is taught in the gospel accounts or the opening chapter of Acts; all Peter, James and John ever knew was a post-tribulation coming. The rapture is part of the mystery revelation committed to the Apostle Paul

Acts 1:15–22: Replacing Judas' Apostleship

- Peter quotes Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8 — "his bishoprick let another take"; Judas' apostleship had to be replaced, a prophesied issue, in connection with Israel's program before the extension of mercy and forbearance could be offered
- The Lord talked about the twelve apostles sitting upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel — there has to be twelve apostles; it was the eleven's job to replace Judas, and they do it now, knowledgeably, intelligently, in perfect accordance with God's plan and purpose
- Only those who have been with Jesus Christ from the beginning, participants in the first installment in the prescription for cleansing, can be instruments of the Holy Ghost offering repentance to Israel; Saul of Tarsus, an enemy of the Lord at this time, never would have fulfilled those qualifications
- The Apostle Paul was never designed to fulfill Judas' apostleship and never claimed to; he is a unique and distinct apostle with an entirely different role

L8

Pentecost Fully Come; Three Honest Opportunities *Acts 1:24–7:60: Judas Replaced, Israel's Last Days, Stephen and the Son of Man Standing; Acts 9*

Finishing Judas' Replacement (Acts 1:24–26)

- The prayer to "shew whether of these two thou hast chosen" shows Peter understood the Lord had already chosen; casting lots is part of Israel's program, a tool God used for manifesting His will — not something for us in this dispensation of grace
- Something confirms even more that Matthias is properly in Judas' spot: if that was out of line and wrong, the Holy Ghost would not have borne witness to it in that manner

When the Day of Pentecost Was Fully Come (Acts 2:1–4)

- When the day of Pentecost was fully come, it's the second installment in the prescription for cleansing of the nation Israel — the Messiah baptizing that believing remnant with the Holy Ghost, the twelve especially; with the Holy Ghost they receive power from on high to function during the repentance

being granted to Israel

- Pentecost is a feast day on Israel's calendar: when Christ was crucified, Passover was fully come; when He was resurrected, firstfruits; the next feast was Pentecost, which on a yearly basis foreshadowed the second installment in the prescription for cleansing
- In this dispensation of grace God is not treating us as Israel and hasn't put us under the law; we don't follow Israel's calendar

Joel and Israel's Last Days (Acts 2:14–40)

- Peter does not say God is ushering in a brand new dispensation of Gentile grace; he tells them Israel's program has entered its last days, commencing with the extension of mercy and forbearance and culminating with the day of the Lord's wrath
- Peter says "this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel": Joel prophesied Israel's last days on Israel's time schedule, and if Joel spoke about it, it is not a mystery never spoken about in ages and generations past
- "Ye men of Israel" (Acts 2:22) — no Gentiles in view; Peter declares the offer of the repentance to Israel, and those who respond become part of the remnant church of Israel. The untoward generation is the apostate generation of vipers

Acts 3–5: Three Honest Opportunities

- Chapters 3 to 7 contain the three honest opportunities God provides the nation, confronting their rulers, to change their mind; in Acts 3 the issue is to get sins blotted out so as to be part of the times of refreshing
- The restitution of all things is Israel's program, spoken about by all His prophets since the world began — no mystery dispensation of Gentile grace is in view in Acts 3; the only way the Gentiles get blessed is through Israel fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant
- Rejecting Peter, the rulers reject and blaspheme the Holy Ghost — a negative response, strike one (Acts 4); in Acts 5 God performs a sign that thwarts their own intentions — a second honest opportunity to repent. Acts 5:31: "for to give repentance to Israel"

The Third and Final Opportunity: Stephen (Acts 6:8–7:60)

- The third and final opportunity, the one God gives the most attention to, runs from Acts 6:8 through chapter 7; Stephen's message is a historical stinging indictment of the rulers for failing to build the house of Israel, capped by crucifying the Messiah
- Their response — they "gnashed on him with *their* teeth" (Acts 7:54) — is strike three; three honest opportunities have been negatively responded to, and the extension of mercy and forbearance is over
- The standing of the Son of Man at the Father's right hand is the initiatory action for the day of His wrath; the Lord didn't stand up to receive Stephen — He stood up to begin His day of wrath

The Unexpected and Unprophesied (Acts 9)

- What God is going to do with Saul in Acts 9 we don't know anything about until we get there; the day of wrath does not immediately begin — something unexpected and unprophesied takes place: the Lord Jesus Christ unexpectedly came back from heaven and raised up Saul of Tarsus as a brand new apostle
- When God raised him up He brought in a new dispensation of Gentile grace — an unprophesied program, a mystery purpose first revealed to the Apostle

Paul — and set Israel's program temporarily aside; Hebrews through Revelation will pick up God's program where He cut it off

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

Time Past, But Now, and To Come

Keith says rightly dividing means recognizing that God's word is divided into three issues: time past, now, and what's yet to come. The time past situation extended through the gospel accounts and even the opening chapters of Acts — all God's program with Israel; Romans through Philemon is the portion dealing with now; Hebrews through Revelation is what's to come when God resumes His program with Israel. All of God's Word is for us to understand and appreciate, but not everything in it is written expressly to and about us today — with the exception of Romans through Philemon.

Prophesied Program vs. the Mystery

The things going on the day of Pentecost were the subject matters of the prophets; the extension of mercy and forbearance is a prophesied issue, so it is not part of the mystery dispensation of grace. If Joel spoke about it, it is not something God kept secret since the world began; the dispensation of Gentile grace was un-prophesied, unspoken about, unanticipated and unexpected in ages and generations past. Isaiah 28, Psalm 110 and Zechariah's sweep from the cross to the kingdom say nothing about the dispensation of Gentile grace, because it was a mystery.

Pentecost: Israel's Program, Not the Birthday of the Church

What took place on the day of Pentecost was part of Israel's prescription for cleansing, a prophesied event and day, and a feast day on Israel's calendar. Keith says it is not the birthday of the church, the body of Christ; we don't follow Israel's calendar, and no one ought to be a Pentecostalist today.

The Cross: a Necessary Step, Not Israel Set Aside

It isn't right to say God set Israel aside at the cross; the cross is a necessary step in the fulfillment of God's program with Israel. God did not bring the day of His wrath at the cross, nor begin the dispensation of grace then; He brought the dispensation of grace in when the extension of mercy and forbearance was over and the wrath was set to begin. The Lord Jesus Christ unexpectedly came back from heaven and raised up Saul of Tarsus as a brand new apostle, holding back the day of wrath not for Israel's sake but because of a dispensation of grace to us Gentiles.

The Twelve and the Apostle Paul

The Lord did not reveal the coming change to Peter, James and John in His earthly ministry or during the forty days following the cross and resurrection; the twelve are continuing to deal with God's program with Israel, with no knowledge about a dispensational change that was coming. If you're a Gentile, Paul is your apostle; his ministry and apostleship are different, and he has a different gospel than Peter, James

and John had. Paul was never designed to fulfill Judas' apostleship, and he never claimed to be Judas' replacement. You can preach the gospel of the kingdom and never mention the cross; you can't preach the gospel of God's grace today without the cross.

Israel's Program vs. the Body of Christ

The purpose of the church, the body of Christ, is not to fulfill or assume Israel's program or to bring the kingdom in on this earth; its vocation has to do with the heavenly places. We are not spiritual Israelites; bringing in the kingdom and fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant is still Israel's role, and Israel will fulfill it when God resumes His program with them. There is more than one church in the Bible: there's a church in Israel, a prophesied church, and Psalm 22 is prophesying about it. Our commissions are contained in our epistles, Romans through Philemon; the commissions the Lord gave the apostles before He went back to the Father are in accordance with Israel's program — Acts 1 does not set forth the marching orders for the church, the body of Christ today — and the signs of Mark 16 have everything to do with the remnant in the day of the Lord's wrath.

The Unpardonable Sin: Israel's Program, Not Christians Today

What the Lord says in Matthew 12 has only to do with Israel's program; a Christian today can't commit any unpardonable sin, since Paul says God forgives you all trespasses.

Key Scripture References

Psalm 22	Israel's Messiah as Redeemer on the cross; His brethren become a church in Israel
Psalm 69:25; Psalm 109:8	Quoted by Peter: the replacement of Judas a prophesied event
Psalm 110:1	He sits until His enemies are made His footstool; the sitting and standing frame the extension of mercy and forbearance
Psalm 118	The rejected stone become the head of the corner; the remnant that believes during the extension of mercy and forbearance
Isaiah 28:16	The stone laid in Zion following the cross: a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation
Ezekiel 36:25–28	Water baptism, called for by Israel's prescription for cleansing (v. 25); what the believing remnant gets by the baptism of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (v. 27); the kingdom (v. 28)
Daniel 9	The 490-year time schedule; the extension of mercy and forbearance is not on it
Joel 2	Israel's last days, quoted by Peter on Pentecost — not a mystery
Zechariah 14	His feet stand on the Mount of Olives at the end of the tribulation, where He left from in Acts 1

Matthew 3:11	Three baptisms in one verse: Israel's prescription for cleansing
Matthew 12:31–32	Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost: the Holy Spirit's ministry in the opening chapters of Acts
Matthew 12:39–40	"the sign of the prophet Jonas": the resurrection, a sign Israel would be held accountable for
Matthew 21:33–44	The husbandmen; the kingdom given to a nation bringing forth the fruits — the remnant of Israel
Luke 13:6–9	The fig tree: the Lord's three-year ministry, then an extension of mercy and forbearance
Luke 19:11–27	The nobleman goes into the far country to receive the kingdom (Acts 1)
Luke 23:33–34	The Son's prayer: why the sin against the Son of Man would be forgiven
John 15:22–27	No cloak for their sin; the twelve as instruments of the Holy Ghost
Acts 1:6–8	Restoring again the kingdom to Israel is the program; power from on high
Acts 2:1–4	The second installment in the prescription for cleansing: the Messiah baptizing the believing remnant with the Holy Ghost
Acts 3:19–21	Sins blotted out before the times of refreshing; the restitution of all things — Israel's program
Acts 4:11–13	The stone set at nought of the builders; the rulers respond negatively — strike one
Acts 5:29–33	Peter utilizes the very expression: repentance to Israel — that's what God is doing
Acts 7	Strike three; Stephen sees the Son of Man standing — the extension of mercy and forbearance is over
Acts 9	The Lord came back from heaven and raised up Saul of Tarsus; events no longer in accordance with the prophets
Romans 11:25	Israel's program resumes after "the fulness of the Gentiles be come in"
Romans 16:25–27	The dispensation of grace a mystery God kept secret
Ephesians 2:11–17	Time past and but now; verse 17, when the dispensational change came in
Ephesians 3:1–7	The dispensation of the grace of God a mystery revelation given to Paul
II Timothy 2:15	Paul, who tells you to rightly divide the word of truth, explains in his epistles how to do it
Hebrews 2:3–4	"confirmed unto us": unto the Hebrew people, not Gentiles today