

I. Peter, John, and the Resurrection Story

These are really key studies to understanding all the different levels of the first and the second coming of Christ. They are all built around the story of the resurrection. We have been looking at Peter and John, what they represent to us, not only as two of the twelve apostles, but from a doctrinal standpoint, how one represents the nation of Israel and the other one represents the body of Christ or the church. We have looked at them from several different angles.

Last week, it really helped us to see the continuity between what you get into in the book of Acts and how these two men dealing with a resurrection is really an incredible picture of that. We know that Acts 1 through Acts 7 is primarily all to the nation of Israel. They have rejected Christ and crucified Him, but they get one more chance to get that kingdom. You will find that in Acts 1, the question that they ask the Lord is, "Will not restore the kingdom to Israel at this time?"

They do not ask anything about the church. They do not even know about the church. They are still looking at the kingdom of heaven as it relates to the coming King to the nation of Israel. Based on the question that they ask Him, He does not answer them directly. He basically says, "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons." That is a key phrase: "times and seasons." So He does not really give them a direct answer.

The reason why He does not is because what is going to happen in the next seven chapters is going to be Peter and then finally Stephen addressing the nation of Israel with what they did in crucifying Jesus. I showed you this last week in Acts 2. So we see that Peter here in our story last week, looking and going into and seeing the evidence of the resurrection and being a witness to it, he uses that later. He is a picture and a type of the nation of Israel that before the church age starts, which is Acts 8 through Acts 20, the nation of Israel has to come to terms with what they did with the Messiah. Of course, we know that they made their third rejection during that time.

Then we looked at John again. John, after Peter goes in, the Bible simply says that he believes. This is a picture that after the Jews first are faced with the resurrection, then John represents the church in Acts 8 through Acts 20. The church does then come in after the Jews make their final rejection. Anybody that can read can see that analogy when you lay out the divisions in the book of Acts. It is so clear that you would have to have a college education in theology to miss it. This is what we have been talking about: the aspect of doctrinal consistency.

II. Mary Magdalene, the Napkin, and the Angels

Thursday night, Tabby asked the question out of John 20 about Mary Magdalene. I took the time to show you how to answer her question, how John 20 is broken down into six stories. Each story ends and begins with a paragraph mark where the next story starts. They are all doctrinal pictures of something connected with the first coming and also of the second coming of Christ. This is how your Bible is put together.

So we talked about that last week, and then we looked at the mystery of the napkin separated from the grave clothes. I showed you that most likely the reason for that is found in 1 Corinthians 11, a picture of God separating Himself from Christ on the cross. Somebody asked me after that, it was either Thursday night or this morning, I cannot remember, but they asked me about the two angels, one sitting at the head and one sitting at the foot, and what that would represent.

That kind of caught me off guard, but I thought about it for a minute or two. Once you see what the napkin on His face and the grave clothes represent, and we know that the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is now being completed, my first guess would be the fact that an angel sitting at the head and at the foot would show us now that the complete sacrifice has been finished and has been made, and there is no more sacrifice to be made. That would be my guess, just looking at it, to throw that out to you.

Then we looked at Mary Magdalene, and we saw how she is a type of the nation of Israel, and how Matthew 12:43 and some other places talk about that connection, and that she is a great picture of that. I showed you how in that story, she comes to the tomb, she sees the Lord but she does not recognize Him, and then she is doing whatever she is doing, and then the Lord speaks to her, and the second time she turns around to talk to Him, she understands and recognizes who He is.

Of course, I ran you back to Genesis and Joseph and his brethren and showed you how the same consistency is back there. The first time when she did not recognize Jesus is a picture of the first coming of Christ when the Jews rejected Him. The second time she sees Him and recognizes Him is a picture of the second coming of Christ. You find that same analogy back in Genesis with Joseph and his brethren. The first time they went to Egypt, He did not reveal Himself to them, which is the first coming. The second time He reveals Himself, and of course, that is a picture of the second coming of Christ. These are four good keys that you will need to get into your Bible.

You are going to find in time, at least from my perspective and what I try to do, that when I teach you something out of the Bible, I try to leave no stones unturned. I want to leave with you a legacy long after I am gone of Jesus, His coming, that you see and understand how important it is to look at everything in your Bible and make an evaluation of it.

III. The First Day of the Week and New Testament Christianity

Today we are going to move on and put a few more things together out of this chapter that I think you need to put into your Bible if you are going to become any kind of working Bible student. I want to read today John 20, starting in verse 19 at the paragraph mark, and we will come down through verse 23.

John 20:19-23

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you.

And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.

Let us pray. Father, help us today. Help us to get into Your Word, to look at the depth of it, to see in this story today, Father, another whole set of things that You are trying to teach us. We know that the Day of the Lord is the theme of the Bible, and we know that almost everything in that Bible one way or the other will point toward that day. That is so true in John 20 because the resurrection sealed the deal, and now we know that everything is going to follow into a pattern that You have established in the Word of God. So help us to see it today. We love You. I thank You for these good folks that are here today. May they get a blessing from it, and may we all learn some things today from Your Word. In Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen.

This is after He goes to the Father. You will remember that last week one of the last things that we talked about is He said to Mary, "Do not touch Me." He had not yet ascended to the Father to present Himself as the sinless sacrifice, so He could not be defiled by being touched by any kind of human hands that were sinful. So now He has gone up there and came back, and now He appears to them in the midst as they are having a private meeting because they are afraid of the Jews. Now everybody is touching Him, and everybody is glad that He is back and that He has risen, and this all takes place on the first day of the week.

I want to stop here, and I always want you to understand why things are the way they are. We live in a Christianity today, we live in a world today, where most people do not really know anything about why they are where they are, or why they believe what they believe, or why they are doing what they are doing. But now we see the first day of the week becomes the established pattern of the New Testament church. We know that in the Old Testament, the Jew, their Sabbath was Saturday. In the New Testament, once we move out of the Old Testament mindset, now the first day of the week becomes the day that we all meet.

This sets up the New Testament principle for the first day of the week within New Testament Christianity, that it is now Sunday for us over Saturday for the Jews. The reason why the pattern is established, obviously, is that in Mark 16:9, the resurrection was the first day of the week. We find in John 20 where we are that He appears the first day of the week. We know that in Acts 20:7, when the church does get established, they follow that pattern; they meet on the first day of

the week. We find in 1 Corinthians 16:2 that when they do meet, the collection, the offering, is taken up the first day of the week.

The reason for that, I am sure there are many theological, doctrinal inroads to that, but I think the overall glaring thing is why it is number one or the first day of the week, because number one in your Bible is connected to numerology and stands for unity. The church is to be a unified body. So again, the doctrinal consistency: God wanted the church to meet on the first day of the week to symbolize the unity that Paul talks about in the book of Ephesians and in other places.

I am pretty old school when it comes to the doctrinal things of the Bible. I am not much into the newfangled, dangled design of Christianity. I think the way it has been down through from the book of Acts still works just fine. I know that there are a lot of churches that you can actually give your tithe online. I get that. In fact, I will get calls from people who come to this church, and they will say, "Do you have a way that you can give offerings online?" And I always tell them no.

Now that is something that Christianity has done today to streamline the fact that they have a good income still coming in. For me, and this is old school, the offering was always taken on the first day of the week. The giving, whatever you give to the Lord, is more than just, in fact, the Bible says that you do not give it begrudgingly. The Bible says that you give it out of a joyful heart, understanding what God has given for you. When they pass the offering plate in any church service and you put your offering in, that is a special time between you and God. I do not think the Holy Spirit of God cares much if MasterCard or Visa gets in between that. I think it is something that is between you and the Lord, that you putting it in and giving it to Him on the first day of the week is a doctrinal consistency that is the way that things have worked all down through Christianity.

Having said that, and I will probably get criticized for what I just said, but having said that, allow me to open myself up for even more criticism. We now find that Christianity has tried to make Christianity easier for everybody. I know why they do that. I understand. I mean, I get it. I see what is going on in the world in Christianity today, and I see the lackadaisical attitude of so many of God's people that they do not want to be bothered with anything that is cumbersome in their life from their perspective. So churches today have tried to make it easier to be a Christian.

The extreme of that, stay with me, the extreme of that will be that most churches now accept social drinking. They do not want to get in your face and talk about things that will make you uncomfortable. So they try to bring everything together, and the extreme of that is to allow certain aspects of the world now to come into Christianity. I know a church in town, I will not tell you where it is at, some of you may know about this, but they have on their pastoral staff at least one, maybe two, homosexuals. They believe everything that we believe up to the Bible, but they teach salvation, and there again, they want to reach people. So the theology behind it, which is no theology at all, will allow you to be a pastor on this church staff as long as you are not practicing homosexuality. You can daydream about it, you can think about it, but as long as you are not practicing it.

I am just going to tell you right now, homosexuality, as in lesbianism, is a deep, deep problem that you are not going to handle just by saying, "I am not practicing it." It goes beyond that. But why do we do things like that in the church today? We want to make things easier. They feel that if you make the Christian life somewhat akin to the world, that you will reach more people that way. Never in the New Testament, in any way, shape, or form, did Jesus ever make anything easy for anybody to become a believer. He held a line that we are not willing to hold today. He held a doctrinal line that we want to cross.

I said all that to say this: you find churches today that want to make it easy for you. So instead of you having to get up on Sunday morning and getting up and going to church, you will have Sunday morning church on Saturday night. That gives all the folks that do not really want to get up in the morning on Sunday the bona fide reason that you can say, "I still went to church, but I went on Saturday night because I just did not want to get up on Sunday morning."

I am old school. They met the first day of the week. It is just that simple. Anybody does not have the right to take the liberty to change a consistent doctrinal teaching that has been established for what, 2,000 years? Now it is a thing where you have to see how these things come into being. We live in a Christianity that is like the book of Judges, and I have told you this many, many times, "There is no king in Israel, and every man doing what is right in his own eyes."

Now there are Baptist churches. I pick on Baptist churches this morning. I will probably get to the rest of them before the day is over. But the bottom line is they have Wednesday night church services. They have Sunday night church services. Because of that idea of the tradition of men that Baptists are famous for, we think that there is something really spiritual about Wednesday night. If you do not have a Wednesday night church service, then there is something wrong with you, something wrong with your church. I have had people that would not come to this church because we do not have a Sunday night service. It is a thing where they actually think that that is in the Bible. Of course, none of that is in the Bible. The only thing that is in the Bible is they met the first day of the week. Whatever this church or any church decides to do outside of that is okay.

Somebody asked me one time, "Why do you have your Bible study on Thursday night?" I said, "So the people that go to your church on Wednesday can come to mine on Thursday and see what they are not getting on Wednesday from you." This has been much confusion over the years in Baptist churches, the idea over the idea of Sunday. We have a group out there that is one of the American cult groups, which are called the Seventh Day Adventists. Seventh Day Adventists, the Advent meaning the Advent, second coming of Christ. They believe that Christ is coming on the seventh day, 7,000 years, I get that. So they worship on Saturday. They do not have a Sunday church; they are New Testament churches, but they go under the Old Testament, and they actually think that the Christian Sabbath is on Saturday. So they do not have a church service on Sunday, they have it on Saturday.

Of course, I have known many, many Baptist preachers when they wanted to start a church. They rented a Seventh Day Adventist church because nobody was there on Sunday, and they used it on Saturday, and then they can use it on Sunday. Whatever you want to do, that is fine. But it is a

thing where they started all the way back in 1840, and of course, William Miller was the founder of the Seventh Day group. He had prophesied several times that the Lord was coming back on this particular day. All the members of the church sold all their possessions. They all met on this hill wherever they were at and waited, waited, waited for the Lord to come back based on his figures of Daniel and the time period. Of course, here we are, we are still here.

But we see that in Baptist churches, there has been an effect of that, and I want you to understand this. Most of you are too young to remember this. This is a test for how old you are. Back in my day, this would be 1950 to 1960s, you had what we called the Blue Law. Anybody remember the Blue Law? Let me see your hand if you do. We have some people that are past their prime. Most of you young kids, you do not know anything about this. It is a thing where I have never accepted the status quo of anything in my life. If somebody tells me that this is the way it always has been, I am going to find out if that is true or not.

I do that in almost everything in life, but I can guarantee you I am going to do that in Christianity where my salvation and my relationship with God is totally dependent on getting the truth. I never take anything that anybody says at face value unless I know that person and I know where they are coming from. But as far as understanding why we are here this morning, what have been our issues down through the last 50, 60, 70 years? I am not talking about the Waldensians, the Albigenses. I am talking about maybe your mom or dad or your grandma or grandpa. You have lost even what they faced. It is a thing where I think it is a tragedy, but that is just where it is at.

Now the Blue Law was established, I do not know, someplace back in the 1700s in England. It was a law that was enforced by the state and also got accepted into New Testament Christianity. It is a tragedy that Sunday today became the Christian Sabbath. The Jews had their Sabbath on Saturday, but when the first day of the week came around, that Sunday was our day of rest. It was the Christian Sabbath. So they looked at it as there was to be no work. That is why today, even today, some people balk at the idea of working on Sunday. Most businesses for a long time, the malls, the stores, 40 years ago, they were not open on Sunday. You think when you leave here you can go to the hardware store, you can go to the grocery store, you can go buy shoes, you can go here. Basically, the only thing that was open back then were some restaurants. The malls were not, they did not even have malls back then. The downtown department stores were closed. Sears and Roebuck was closed. Penney's was closed. Sunday was the day that you did not work.

It was not officially that if you are open on Sunday you got arrested for it because you broke the Blue Law, but that was the established mindset in my day. It was supposed to be a day of rest. It was observed by all churches, but I am a Baptist. It was observed in Baptist churches from, in my time, all the way up to, I can remember it even in the 70s and maybe up to the 80s.

This had its roots obviously in England, but you know as well as I do, if you know anything about your history of America, that the Pilgrims came over, and with them coming over came a lot of religious groups. One of those religious groups was, there were several of them, but one of them was called the Puritans. They were not called the Puritans for nothing, because they had clean clothes every day. The Puritan title came because of their purity mindset. They are the first

real case of super magna legalists in Christianity. They were unbelievable, and they were the ones who brought this idea along with several other groups.

You remember back, or maybe you do not, but you remember back in the 1600s, it was around 1693, we had in history what has been called the Salem Witch Trials. The Salem Witch Trials took place in Salem, Massachusetts. What was the Salem Witch Trial? You do not even know. You do not even care. For a generation who was brought up on Freddy Krueger, you would think that this would be down your alley. The Salem Witch Trials was this: The Puritan church was out through New England. They were very legalistic, and legalism breeds flesh, and they understood what witchcraft was from the Bible. So when they had an argument with some, and back then they had laws on the books for witchcraft that you could be executed. So when they had a beef with somebody theologically, if they had a fight with their neighbor, if you had a conflict over your farm, somebody, your cows or whatever, they would just go to the head magistrate and report you as being a witch. That is all it took. Because they were so inclusive with each other, then you got brought before the magistrate, and if you did not confess to being a witch, by the time they were done torturing you, whether you were or you were not, and you probably were not, you said you were.

The Salem Witch Trials was built out of a group that claimed to be Puritans, pure. In fact, I do not know if it is in there, I do not know if I brought it today, but I just bought, in the process of getting all, I got one in. I got a three-book volume on the Puritans in America. Good stuff. I do not know if I put the first one out tonight, if not it will be there next week, but I got to get the rest of them in. But it is a thing where these are people groups that forged and shaped where we are at today. Now we are not going to burn anybody at the stake. I guarantee you there are more witches and demon-possessed people in the Baptist churches today than there ever was in Salem, Massachusetts, other than the Puritans. But this is where it starts. They held a Christian Sabbath. They did not have a celebration like the Jews did, but they recognized the first day of the week as their day of rest.

That had its roots in the Reformation, that it comes over to the United States and some of these groups. For me, again, I always have to form in anything that I am trying to learn or study, I have to form some kind of historical perspective. I saw that in history as I came through church history, and then I just connected the dots to see how it impacted Baptist churches, even in my day back in the 60s and the 70s, nothing like the burning of the witches. But I mean, it is incredible.

I find that one of the major things that is wrong with Christianity today, and I know, I get accused all the time of being negative, and I understand that, and I apologize for that, but in my own defense, I do not find a lot of positive today. So I will preach on a majority of things, and that is what is wrong with things. I think that Christianity is in the mess that it is in today simply because it has lost its perspective. We have talked a lot about perspective lately, and I try to get you to see how important that is. I think that perspective gets lost, whether it be Christianity or an individual.

You are going to find, and I talked about it last week, you find a lot of God's people who lose their perspective. When they do, they enter into the twilight zone of Christianity. Perspective is vitally important for understanding your history. You know how I can prove that to you? When you go through Acts 1 and Acts 7, do this this afternoon. Israel has just crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know why? They have lost their perspective. When Peter preaches to them in Acts 1 through Acts 6, and then Stephen picks it up, look at his messages. You know what he does? Every time he takes them back to where they started. Every message he takes them back to Abraham, Isaac, David. You know why? Because they have lost their perspective.

There are many reasons why a church or a person can lose their perspective. We do not have time to get into all that today. But one of the reasons why they lose their perspective is because they have lost sight of where they have come from. I am telling you right now, there are a number of things that a man or a church or Christianity would have to do to get your perspective back. But it starts with going back and finding where you lost it. If I lose my car keys, I cannot go anywhere in my car. Now I can speculate all day long, but I cannot do anything because I have lost my car keys. My car keys would be a picture of my perspective. You know how I get back in my car and move? I go back to where I lost my car keys. Getting perspective back, you have to go back where it started.

With Israel, they have lost their perspective. So every time Peter preaches, you know what he does? He takes them right back to the beginning. Remember where you came from. Remember where you started. If you lose sight of where you started, and it is easy to do, then you will never know for sure where you are at today. Because it is all connected. If you do not know where you are, if you have lost perspective of where you started, and you do not know where you are at today, please do not tell me you know where you are going. The three are connected.

My study, from my own perspective of where I came from, because I did not want to lose it, because Christianity has lost it. I remember taking and studying all of that stuff that I already gave you, and then looking how it impacted Baptist churches up to my day. Then I watched how it changed from that point on. I called it, and I have a big file on it, I called it the Anatomy of the Baptist Churches in America. I told you some of this before in part.

When you go back to the middle 1800s up to the 1940s, you will find that Baptist churches only come in three flavors. The biggest flavor was the Southern Baptist Convention. They were a humongous group of Baptists. The next one was the GRB, General Association of Baptists. Then the last one was American Baptists. By the time you get to 1900, all three are totally in apostasy. They have drunk the Kool-Aid, like we talked about Thursday night, all the in things impacting and coming in. They have lost their perspective, totally and completely.

Now there are no evangelical churches yet. I want to make that clear. There are no mega churches in the sense of what you see today in what we would call the neo-evangelical world. They are not there yet. There may be a few spattering of churches out there that are outside the Baptist mindset. They were called Bible churches back then. At the same time, I want you to know this. You had these three monstrosities which had completely lost everything to do with the

Bible. There were millions and millions of Bible-believing Christians out there in this country that believed exactly what you and I believe, but they are greatly overshadowed.

Then about 1924, there was a young man that came up in the Southern Baptist Convention. He pastored, he is from Dixon, Alabama. He pastored a couple of churches. He became the fair-haired boy of the Southern Baptist Convention. Then he began to preach against all of the ungodliness that was going on within the Southern Baptist Convention. But at the time the 1920s rolled around, the Southern Baptist Convention did not believe the Bible was the Word of God in any shape or form. They believed that Adam and Eve was a fairy tale. They believed that Noah's flood was not true. They had rejected everything in the Bible and had transitioned into the most apostate religion, and yet they are turning out preachers hundreds every year. This is what destroyed the Southern Baptist Convention. A little bit later on, they split, and now you have the real liberal side and you have the more fundamental side, but it was a terrible mess.

That fair-haired boy's name was, you might already know and guess, J. Frank Norris. In 1924, he broke with the Southern Baptist Convention. From that break, he started what we call today over time, the fundamentalist movement. Sometimes it is called the independent movement. It is called the fundamentalist because leaving the Southern Baptist corruption, Norris was getting it back to the fundamentals of the Bible. It is called independence sometimes because the Southern Baptist was all connected like a big spider web. It controlled every church. There were no separate churches. Every church was under the shadow and the dominance. They wrote your Sunday school lesson. They told the pastor what he was going to preach. You had no say in it. So sometimes after that happens, we are called independents because now we stand. This church is an independent Baptist church. Nobody tells us what to do except the Word of God. That is the difference. That is where it started.

He begins to grow this thing, and it begins to come to the point where other preachers leave and follow his lead, and he developed into that great movement. Out of that movement, he started two great churches, one in Detroit, Michigan, called Temple Baptist. The other one was down in Fort Worth in Dallas, Texas. He had a compadre who was a second in command whose name was Beech of Vic. Beech of Vic and him pretty much ran it.

About 1948, 1950, they have a falling out. That is probably not a good term. They had a knockdown, drag out, Pier 6 brawl. It was an unbelievable split. What happened was when the thing split, Beech of Vic took the Detroit church, and J. Frank Norris took the one down in Dallas, Fort Worth. This now started what we know as the BBF, Baptist Bible Fellowship. Their headquarters is down in Springfield, Missouri. This now began to open up all the Baptist fundamental independent fellowships out there. This is where the Bible colleges started to pop up. BBC started to pop up. Tennessee Temple started to pop up. Northwest by Southwest by East West started to pop up. They are everywhere. They are all run by fundamental independent Baptists that all came back to J. Frank Norris.

Norris dies about 1951, 1952, someplace in there. He is off the scene now. Now Beech of Vic takes over the head of the church for fundamentalism independence up there in Detroit, Michigan, Temple Baptist. Believe it or not, back in 1985, 1984, they tried to hire me to go to

Temple Baptist up in Detroit. Of course, I did not go. There are a couple of reasons why I did not go. But today as I stand here to tell you, it was the biggest Baptist church. It was the Vatican of the Baptist Independent Fellowship. Completely gone today. Gone. Nowhere to be found. The building is probably turned over to a used car lot. Every aspect of that great fundamental independent church is in the dust in Detroit. It is gone. You have to ask yourself what happened with that? How did this impact everything that comes where we are at today?

When I looked at that, I wondered why all the Baptist churches that came out of J. Frank Norris' world when he started it, every one of them was called a Baptist Temple. Maybe that does not bother people. It really did not bother me. But I wanted to know why. Because to me that is kind of a foreign term for a New Testament church. Your body may be the temple of God, but this church is not a temple. It is a church. When I watched all these guys come out of J. Frank Norris' world who had come out of the Southern Baptist, they all bring some kind of stuff with them.

So during that particular time, I would say from the 1950s to maybe the 1980s, you had the Akron Baptist Temple, Dallas Billington. You had the Canton Baptist Temple, Dr. Harold Henniger, one of Norris' boys. You had the Amaslin Baptist Temple, Bruce Cummings, one of Norris' boys. You had the Cleveland Baptist Temple, Ray Thompson. You had the Kansas City Baptist Temple, Wendell Zimmerman, one of Norris' boys. You had the Landmark Baptist Temple in Cincinnati, Dr. Rawlings, one of Norris' boys. You had the Detroit Baptist Temple, one of Norris' boys. You had the Mansfield Baptist Temple, Tommy Leathergood, one of Norris' boys. You had the Jacksonville, Florida Baptist Temple. These were the mega churches.

We look around at the evangelical churches now and we say, "Wow, they are mega." No, no, no. Those are the rethead mega churches. Back in this day, Akron Baptist Temple was running 10,000 people in church. That is a mega church. Jack Hiles in Hammond, Indiana, 15,000. Those were mega churches. Today, they are all gone. You go back to the Canton Baptist Temple where I came from. Dr. Harold Henniger was the pastor there, one of Norris' boys. He is dead now. That church in its heyday ran close to 4,000 or 5,000 people. Today, when you go in there, you are lucky if they have 800 people there. That is what happened.

This is a process that happens in churches, and it happens with Christians when you lose your perspective. When you lose where you started, you are going to be screwed up where you are at. You know what happened to these churches when they lost their perspective? The same thing that happens to God's people when they lose theirs. They started making bad choices. Those bad choices led them to being derelict churches today.

The reason for this Baptist Temple mindset came out of the Blue Law. When I was going to the Baptist Temple in the 70s, Sunday was the day of Christian rest. I remember Harold Henniger getting up and preaching about stores being open on Sunday. Restaurants should not be open. He was very adamant about that, as all these guys were. They really were. All this came out of the influence coming down through history of the Puritans bringing it over from there in the other groups. We do not have time to get into it all this morning. In it fusing itself into the Southern Baptist, and with J. Frank Norris coming out, I am sorry, some of the traditions, no matter how good these guys were, some of the traditions were already ingrained too deeply for them to...

I know churches in Kansas City that would give anything to be able to take Baptist off their title on the church. They would make it a something other church with the newer Baptist off of it. They were big churches at one time. You know why they will not do it? You know why they cannot do it? Because there are too many old people in that church that remember what a Baptist is. If a young pastor would try to do that, it would be an uproar. He will do it in time, but he will wait until all of them head to the graveyard someplace where the opposition is not there.

There are things that get ingrained in churches. Not all of them are Bible-based. Not all of them are doctrinal issues that are terrible, but some of them have nothing to do with the Word of God. This idea of the Christian... So what they wanted to do is Baptist Temple. They wanted to make a connection between us being Baptist, but also the Jewish temple. Along with that came in the Sunday being the Christian day of rest. Now their doctrine teaching salvation and 99% of it was right on the money. But that thing crept in.

As time went on and the next couple of generations of preachers came on the scene, it changed. By the 1980s and the 1990s, the next generation of preachers who started churches, they dropped the temple and now they called themselves Bible Baptist Church. First Bible Baptist Church. They dropped the word temple and put the word church back in. Sometimes with the Bible, sometimes without. No problem. They got rid of the temple because this next generation had moved past that and were not influenced like those early guys were. These are things you need to know. This is where we started.

I will be honest with you. I see today among God's people a great disdain for history. I think that most of God's people are lazy in the aspect they want the Bible, but they want the easiest route to the Bible. That is why they flock to these churches where it makes Christianity easy. I am telling you right now, you do that and you will lose your perspective. When you lose your perspective, it does not matter what God does. You could be in a church where thousands of people are being saved. You could be in a church where God is working up the wiles and doing everything. All you can see is the black hole you are in because you have lost your perspective. The only way to get your perspective back or where you start is to go back and to find where you lost it. That is what Paul did with the Jews in Acts 1 through Acts 7. They did not find it either.

But now we see the churches replace the word temple. We have Bible Baptist Church, First Bible Baptist, New Hope Baptist, Antioch Baptist, Old Path Baptist. They all dropped the temple and put in church. Then because in about 1900 America dumped the Bible, Christianity, we see that erosion beginning to come. The Bible college mentality begins to take over. We talked about this yesterday in Acts 19 where I showed you the first Bible college in the Bible, and we went through that for a while.

Baptist churches now go off the scene. This is why those big mega Baptist Temples that were mega churches back in the day, they no longer exist if they are even around anymore. Many of them have made the full circle transition where they took Baptist off their name. Now they are some kind of neo-evangelical gosh-bosh mess just to be able to stay alive because they actually got the idea. They told them that they needed to make Christianity easier, and they lost their perspective.

That is one of the key areas where God's people will lose their perspective: getting the wrong advice from the wrong people, getting the wrong counsel from the wrong people, because that is exactly what happened to these churches. They watched all these big mega pastors on television that were running 10, 20,000 people and great crowds and all these people, and they said, "Wow, man, what do I have to do to be like that?" Somebody told them, "You have to quit being a Baptist and quit preaching, let the Baptist preach, quit being so hard on doctrine, and you have to make Christianity easier for everybody," and they did. Christianity, along with God's people, lost their perspective.

Now they are going to churches all across this country, all across this city. They have no idea who they are. They have no idea why they are even there. If you ask them why they are meeting on the first day of the week, they could not tell you. They are doing what everybody has told them to do. That may work for a lot of God's people; that never worked for me. I want to know why I am doing what I am doing. I have a lot of problems, and I may wind up in the trash heap at the Judgment Seat of Christ, but it will never be because I lose my perspective. I know where I come from. I know why I am faced with what I am faced with. It is easy for God's people to sit out there and criticize about it because you have no clue. You have no clue where it came from. You just do not like what you hear, but you drank the Kool-Aid, and you are now in that mindset that you have lost your perspective.

It is a thing where as Baptist churches went off the scene, neo-evangelicalism or a new evangelism comes in around, I do not know, what, 1980, 1990? This then was the death of New Testament Christianity as far as God was concerned, just like it was the end of the nation of Israel as far as God was concerned. When you go after 606 BC, and we talked about this Thursday night, when you go past 606 BC, they are still doing that. They are building the temple. They are making sacrifices. They are doing everything, but God is not in any of it. He is now into the times of the Gentiles. He is now going to take 400 years and get ready for His Son to come to the first coming of Christ.

Where we are at today, churches, Bible colleges, mega churches, God is not in any of it. He is doing today what He did back then. His mind, attention is past the time of the Gentiles, and He is focusing on again, this time, the second coming of Christ. Yet you will find pockets and little pockets of Bible believers out there that are doing the job. You will find your little churches all across this country, good men who are holding the line and doing the job, but they are not mega churches. Not popular today. Finding out what is the real reason why things are right or wrong within Christianity or in your own life. Not popular today. It is all because of the cloud of Christianity that we are all enveloped in. This is the latest Laodicean church, the lukewarm, Revelation 3:15.

As I looked at all that, and I asked as many of them were still alive, I asked Dr. Henniger, "Why is this called a Canton Baptist Temple?" He did not have a good answer. I loved the guy. He was a good guy. He did not have a good answer. I do not think he knew the answer. I asked several other guys. You beat some Vic. He died, but I know his grandsons, the Bartletts, Larry Bartlett and his brother Billy Bartlett. I preached with them. Billy Barton probably was the greatest mind that I ever met, biblically based on church history. I heard him do an exposé on Erasmus of

Rotterdam one time at a Bible Believers Defenders conference that just, you could not get any better than that. I asked Billy one time, I said, "Billy, why was it called, you beat some Vic's grandson. Why was it called Baptist Temple?" He did not have a clue either.

It always amazed me that these guys allowed that to happen, allowed that Christian Sabbath thing to impact. When Colossians 2 made it very clear that the body is of Christ and we have no Old Testament Sabbath. But tradition of men. It is there, it always has been. When you see the erosion beginning to start, then you find what I find today among God's people who are good people. They are not bad people. They just do not care anything at all about their roots, the history. They are willing and satisfied to come to church and accept the status quo. If I have any goals in building a church, obviously I want you to know the Bible, but if I have any main real goal, it would be, "God, help me to produce God's people who will not accept the status quo, the way things are." You want to know why they are. Because some of it will be good and some of it will not be good. You do not want to get caught in the middle of that. God forbid. We as God's people can navigate through our apps on our iPhone better than we can navigate through the apps of the Word of God. That is why we are here on the first day of the week.

IV. Receiving the Holy Ghost and the Times of Refreshing

Now the second verse to examine, verse 22, look at 21 too.

John 20:21-22

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

This also is a source of much confusion today when I try to teach the book of Acts. This is commonly taught that this is where the apostles received the Holy Ghost. Of course, nothing could be farther from the truth. Again, if you turn over to Acts 2:1-4, it says there:

Acts 2:1-4

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

That is where they get it. Now if that is true, then there is something more here in John 20:21-22 that we need to see because they did not get it there. So what is He saying? When you look at John 20:21, it says Jesus says, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." You are going to

see that that will be a reference to Acts 1 through Acts 7. That is what the Jews are doing at that particular point in time, at least the apostles. They are fulfilling that, and He is sending them out to the nation of Israel. You see the first seven chapters, that is what they are doing. Of course, you saw this is the second time that He does that. The first time He did that was in Matthew 10, if you want to get it all together.

Then He is saying, "Even so send I you." When you look at that, the second thing you want to see here is in John 20:22, and it says: "And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Now I could see how somebody who did not know much about the Bible could actually take from that, "Well, that is where they received the Holy Ghost." I get that. But anybody who has any kind of inkling about how the book of Acts would go together would receive, after you looked at Acts 1 or Acts 2 where they actually did get the Holy Ghost, that there has to be something else in John 20.

You want to remember this, and this is key. This may be over some of your heads, but if it is, bring it up Thursday night, and I will clear it up for you. Remember Acts 1 through Acts 7. Any time in those seven chapters, especially at the end, the Jews could have got the kingdom of heaven, and there never would have been a church age as we know it. This is their third and final time. This is why when they ask, "Will you restore the kingdom?" He does not answer them because they have got six sermons they have to hear. Every sermon is going to take them back to where they started to get their perspective back, and then what they are going to do with it from that point on. Of course, they reject it again, and then the church age comes in.

Most guys that teach the book of Acts put Acts 1 through 7 right in the church. They think that that is the start of the church. Nothing could be farther from the truth if you know the book of Acts. So they get the Holy Spirit of God in Acts 2, and then through the first seven chapters, "So send I you," they are taking it out. You see Peter doing that, Stephen doing that. Then in John 20:22, you have a picture of what the Bible calls when He says, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit." You have a picture here of what is talked about in Acts 3:19 and called the times of refreshing. He says in Acts 3:19, talking to Israel:

Acts 3:19

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

Somebody says, "When is that, Bob?" Context, read the rest of it: "from the presence of the Lord," second coming of Christ. "And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." So what we see here now is another reference to the second coming of Christ. They could have got the Holy Spirit of God as a nation. You will remember that the 12 apostles are a picture of the nation of Israel and the 12 tribes. What He is saying here when He says, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," He is telling them that from Acts 1 to Acts 7, they can have the times of refreshing as a nation. The 12 apostles individually get the Holy Ghost in Acts 2. They give the message, "So send I you," but the message is all about Acts 3:19, "times of refreshing."

This will be when the nation of Israel, the 12 tribes represented by the 12 apostles, get the Holy Ghost as a nation. This will be the millennium. Turn back to Ezekiel 37, and I will show it to you so clearly you just could not miss it unless you just really want to. The book of Ezekiel, when you get to Ezekiel 36 and some of those places, you begin to see in prophecy God bringing the nation of Israel back to the land. You begin to see the events that transpire that bring you up to Ezekiel 40, which is the start of the millennium, and in Ezekiel 40 through Ezekiel 48 will be a detailed exposé of every aspect of the millennial reign of Christ. Look at Ezekiel 37. This is what He is making a reference to when He says, "Receive ye," and He breathes on them. That is a key word. He breathes on them. When it comes in Acts 2, it is like wind. Now watch.

Ezekiel 37:1-3

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones,

And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.

And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.

This is the nation of Israel right now. They are dead. They are a nation of dry bones. They are dead. Hold your finger there. Jump over to Ezekiel 37:11.

Ezekiel 37:11

Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.

Ezekiel 37:4-6

Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.

Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live:

And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Now we have a song that we used to sing. Nobody sings anymore. "Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones."

Ezekiel 37:7-10

So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.

And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them.

Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

Five times you have a reference to breath. That is Ezekiel 37:5, 6, 8, 9, 10. You are told that it is wind, and you are told that it gives Israel life. This is the biblical doctrinal reference to what He is saying in John 20:22. This is another one of those stories that I told you about. The twelve will get the Holy Ghost in Acts 2. That has been established. But Israel does not. They can get it from Acts 1 to Acts 7, but they reject it and do not get it. It gets temporarily postponed, and the times of refreshing, Acts 3:19, now come in at the second coming of Christ when the dry bones come back together and they get life through breath.

Now Job 33:4 is another little verse you want to throw into the mix here, and it says this:

Job 33:4

The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.

There it is. So now you see how you put that passage in a direct consistent doctrinal concept that does not violate anything when guys get into that thing and they just lose their perspective.

V. Remitting and Retaining Sins

Lastly, He tells them in John 20:23:

John 20:23

Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.

This is also, if you know your Bible, what He told them when He sent them out the first time in Matthew 18:18, only there it was "bind a man or loose a man of his sins." What is He saying here? Let us get this story down. The 12 apostles, as they do the Lord's work, this will be Acts 1 through Acts 7, "So send I you." They themselves do not have the power to remit and retain people's sins as individuals, human beings. But once they are empowered with the Holy Ghost, they now have, through the Holy Ghost in their life, the mission of God that He has sent them on and the Word of God in their hand, that they can loose people from their sins by them hearing the message of God and then getting saved.

This is why salvation in your Bible is referred to, and we refer to it many times, that once you get saved, you get set free. This is what Lazarus was a picture of when he was dead and bound up in grave clothes, and when he got saved, they unwrapped him, and He said, "Unwrap him and let him go." He got his sins remitted. So as you find it historically, it is talking to the nation of Israel who now was going to take the message of the kingdom one more time, Acts 1 to Acts 7, to the

nation of Israel, and they have the power through the Holy Ghost now to remit sins or to bind a man to his sins. We will come back to that in a moment.

Inspirationally, so do you and I. We have the power through the Holy Spirit of God and the Word of God that you hold in your hand, the Holy Spirit of God that you have inside you, to take the Bible and show any man, any woman, God's salvation, and they can be set free from their sin. You do not have the power to do it, but you have the Word of God and the Holy Spirit of God that has the power to do it through you, through the blood of Christ. It is a lot like in the Old Testament priesthood. The Old Testament priest had the power to apply the sacrifice to a man's sin, even though it was temporary. But in the New Testament, you and I as a New Testament priest who now are indwelt with the Holy Spirit of God, we have the ability to take the Word of God and to do the same.

We can show somebody what Christ did on the cross. We can show them the plan of salvation. When you witness to somebody and you say, for instance, Romans 6:23:

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

When you show them that, read them down to Romans Road, and they trust Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior, God, through His Word, through the Holy Spirit of God in you, as you as the vessel of God, has just loosed them from their sins through the Word of God. If you lay that out to them and they say, "You know what, not today, I am not interested in it," and they go on their way, hey, so be it. Now you have done the same thing in opposite. You gave them the Word of God, you told them the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life. They put the gift of God aside and took the wages of sin. Now by your witnessing to them, taking the Word of God which has judged them, you bound them to their sin. It is just that simple. It is not complicated at all, and there is no power that you and I have other than through the Holy Spirit of God using you.

When you witness for somebody, it is God using you. God could have got the gospel out any way He wanted to. The birds are the greatest singers in the world. He could have taught them and created them to sing Handel's Messiah. He could have one little bird flying around your yard saying, "How Great Thou Art," and other birds sitting up there talking about Jesus died on the cross. He could have done it any way He wanted to. He chose us to do it, and you, if you are saved this morning as a priest after the order of Melchizedek, you have the power through the Word of God and the Holy Spirit of God to be a vessel fit for the Master's use, to be able to take somebody through the Word of God and through that perfect book, let the Word of God loose them from their sins, or if they reject the Word of God, it binds them, as you are the vessel that God uses to do that.

VI. Skillfulness in the Word and Maintaining Perspective

As I told you Thursday night, John 20 is a great chapter, as many of the chapters are that follow this format. Not all of them do, but many of them do. It breaks itself down into six stories, all

built around God's system of the second coming of Christ, what God is trying to accomplish with the nation of Israel, and each one will protect the doctrinal integrity of the Word of God.

Last week I closed out and I told you that everything that I try to do for you, and I know we talk about perspective, we talk about your roots, we talk about past, present, and future, I get all that. All of that forms a balance in your life, but overall of that, now obviously that has to be there, and I worked that to you, but my overall goal for every one of you, and maybe some of you will never make it, maybe most of you will never make it, but my goal for you is for you to wind up at the end of the day simply skillful in the Word of God, being able to take that book and let God use you.

The main goal He will use you with, through everything He teaches you, everything you learn doctrinally, every little piece of the puzzle that you put together, everything you learn about perspective, keeping your perspective, everything you learn about past, present, and future, every little piece like I am giving you in John 20, when the whole thing comes together and you now have the ability to be skillful in the Word of God, it is all for one main purpose, and that is for you to be the vessel that God can use to go, "So send I you," to loose people from their sins or bind them from their sins. That is the way God chose to do it, and so it has always been an amazement to me why God's people are so indifferent to that.

When you truly understand that the God of the universe, the God who created the heaven, the God who did everything that He did, when you have any kind of perspective of His overall plan, Old Testament, New Testament, into the future, into eternity, and you see where you fit into it, how do you not see how special you are? How do we not understand? How do we get so easily sidetracked when you see that God's plan, that you are an active ingredient, an active part of that? How do you just ho-hum your way through Christianity? How do you let it, now I know there are a lot of things that go on, and there is nothing wrong with them, but how do you get out of balance with those things that everything else out there that you like to do takes first place over what God would like you to do?

The answer is perspective: never living in sight of where you come from, never letting anybody give you advice that is outside the principles of the Word of God. That is what happened to Christianity. That is why we are in the mess we are in. Guys did not know the Bible, or they forgot what they knew. Somebody came along that looked like they had a better idea, and here we are. I have one goal for you. Maybe I will make it, maybe I will not, but I will take some of you that I can get. One of you, I will be happy with it. But I just want to make you have the ability to be skillful in that book. Wherever you go in life, you may not always be with me. God may take you to a pastor, a church, or God knows, God may move you someplace, I do not know. But wherever you go, you are never losing your perspective, because wherever you go, it will always be the same black hole until you understand and get your balance back. That is the key. We will hold up there next week. Yes, we will get into some more.