

# Unchanged Truth in a Changing World

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[ 0 : 00 ] of his own holy inspired word. Let's just briefly pray. Lord, we ask that you would be the one to give us insight and that you'd be the one who would speak to us by your spirit through the word.

Give us hearing ears. Give us understanding hearts. Change our wills in the light of what we read and hear. Lord, we would pray that you yourself would be among us and that this would be a time when we would meet with you and you would meet with us in life-changing ways.

We ask it in Christ's name. Amen. Acts in chapter 2.

You can see there what I intend to preach on this morning. Unchanged truth in a changing world. See in Acts 2 and verse 14. Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them. Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give ear to my word.

[ 1 : 19 ] So here's Peter standing up with the eleven. Okay? So there's the eleven of them, and then Peter, and they're all together.

So what Peter says is what the eleven say. And what the eleven would say is what Peter says. So this is not just Peter's sermon. This is what we would call the apostolic gospel.

In a sense, the gospel is being defined for us in these wonderful preaching moments that we have recorded for us in the early book, in the early chapters of Acts.

And what I want to do today is just take a scan through some of the preaching of Peter and the eleven, of course, and just see what are the key foundational matters that he was saying to these people.

You can see, for example, in verse 11, the people are saying, we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God. What was it that they were hearing the apostles saying?

[ 2 : 31 ] They were talking about God and the mighty works of God. So they were talking about what God did. Wonderful things about God.

And when Peter stands up with the eleven, lifts up his voice, because remember there's no speaker systems then, he lifts up his voice and he wants to be heard and he wants the people in Jerusalem there and the people of Judea who are there visiting on the day of Pentecost and the rest.

He wants them to hear what he says to them. Give ear to my words. What is it that they needed to hear then and you and I need to hear today?

And what is it that needs to be heard till the end of time? What is it that we would want our next minister here to be addressing us with?

What are the key truths that we would want all the elders and the deacons to hold to? What is it that we would want all believing families to tell their children?

[ 3 : 35 ] What is it that we would want to be sharing to people in the community? What is it that actually is at the core of what we would call the apostolic gospel?

Well notice the kind of things that Peter raises in chapter 2, in chapter 3 and then in chapter 10 of Acts. We're not going to be looking at these in particular, but here's the first one.

The Word of God. The fulfillment of Scripture. Do you notice that? In verse 16, this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel. They're asking, what's going on in Jerusalem?

What's all this matter to do with people speaking? Because that's what they remembered. It's not so much the sound that came from heaven.

Not even the flames of fire or looked like fire and the tongues that rested on them. What stayed with the people is the voice, the sound of these people speaking and they never stopped speaking since.

[ 4 : 38 ] When the Holy Spirit came on the church on the day of Pentecost, what is it that happened? They began to speak and they've never stopped speaking since. That's what's gone on

throughout the world.

So they're asking, the people are asking, what is this? And Peter says, Scripture is being fulfilled. And he quotes Joel in this one.

In the last days, it shall be God declares, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. So it's for men and women. Your young men shall see visions. Your old men shall dream dreams. Male servants, female servants, in those days, I will pour out my spirit and they shall prophesy. In other words, the church will speak.

But my point here is that this is a fulfillment of Scripture. This is a fulfillment of Scripture. When he talks about Jesus being raised from the dead, he says, quoting from Psalm 16, David concerning Jesus says, I saw the Lord always before me.

[ 5 : 50 ] He's at my right hand that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, my tongue rejoiced, my flesh will dwell in hope. Why? Because you'll not abandon my soul to Hades.

You won't let your Holy One see corruption. He's quoting Psalm 16. And he's saying, that's what was spoken in the Old Testament. And these actually are the thoughts of David's greater son, Jesus.

And they're now being fulfilled. Psalm 110. Why did Jesus ascend up to heaven and sit at the right hand of God? Well, verse 34.

David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself said, the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand. Joel was spoken, now it's being fulfilled.

Psalm 16, now fulfilled. Psalm 110, now fulfilled. Deuteronomy 18, now fulfilled. Psalm 118, now fulfilled.

[ 6 : 53 ] Psalm 2, that we opened with, now fulfilled. See, Peter and that early group of believers.

They were so taken up by this wonderful fact. God kept his word. God's promises are all fulfilled. Isn't it great the way God works?

He actually promises you something long before it comes to be. It may take 10 years, 100 years, 1,000 years, 2,000 years, more.

But God regularly, in that day, told what was going to happen long before it came to be. So that when it actually was fulfilled, you were able to say, God promised, and God kept his promises. He fulfilled what he promised in the Old Testament, and it's true in our day. We see it being fulfilled. The word of God.

[ 8 : 02 ] When you think of Peter and the apostles and Paul, when they went out to preach the gospel and plant churches, what Bible did they have?

They didn't have the New Testament. They didn't have Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and all the way through to Revelation. They have the Old Testament, and they beautifully used that Old Testament not just to say, this is what God promised, but this is what God has now fulfilled.

You can trust God. The word of God is at the center. And I think it's important for us to remember that. Peter and the others definitely preached more and taught more than the Old Testament.

They added to the Old Testament, but they also spoke about the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. There are some things that the Old Testament speaks of that haven't yet come to pass. This whole period of the church where the gospel is extending throughout the nations, that's not yet been completely fulfilled. And this great time in the future when the Lord Jesus will come and restore the heavens and the earth, that's still to come.

[ 9 : 28 ] It's in process in a way, but it's going to be consummated. It still hasn't happened. The great arrival of Jesus Christ here to gather with his people, that still hasn't happened, but it will.

The great judgment when we will stand before the throne of God, and when we think of how awesome it is, we'll have to give an account to him for all that we have done in the body.

Has that yet happened? No, it hasn't. And the thing is, we will all meet with God eyeball to eyeball because God promised it will happen.

Why do we believe all this? Because God says it. The Word of God says it. And I love the way Peter here is just so full of the Word of God.

That's what you need when you go and speak to people. You need the Word of God. And don't be ashamed of it. Don't be ashamed to speak about the Old Testament. Don't be ashamed to introduce people to the books of the Bible.

[ 10 : 33 ] Don't be ashamed to give them books about these books. The Word of God, the fulfillment of Scripture. The second thing, the time.

The time. See in Acts 2, 17 there, Peter says, this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel, and in the last days it shall be.

God declares I will pour out my spirit. Now if you were clever and you went to the prophecy of Joel, you'll find that that's not what Joel actually records.

In Joel, what you read is, and afterwards God declares I will pour out my spirit. And Peter changes afterwards to in the last days.

And he does that for a good reason. And I think it's probably found in Isaiah and chapter 2. Do you remember Isaiah chapter 2, that wonderful prophecy that is at this very moment being fulfilled as people gather to worship him.

[ 11 : 39 ] It shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, shall be lifted up above the hills, and all nations shall flow to it, and many people shall come and say, Come, let's go to the mountain of the Lord.

Here's a day coming, says Isaiah. There's going to be a mountain of the house of the Lord, and that mountain is really the church of Jesus Christ.

In the last days, that's what's going to be. It's not going to be a literal mountain. It's going to be a place where you'll be able to gather, and the nations will flow together in the last days.

That's what's going to happen. The nations will gather on God's mountain, and Joel says, in the last days, God's going to pour out His Spirit.

We are living in a very special time. We spoke to the children earlier on about one day in seven. That's the way God works.

[ 12 : 50 ] That's the way God works. One day in seven, He says, I want you to set that apart and to remember me. And when God says to us, this season in which you and I have been living for the last 2,000 years are the last days.

They are the last days. These are the days in which great fulfillment is taking place. These are the days before the final coming of the Lord.

That's the next great event, the coming of the Lord Jesus Himself. Acts 1 and verse 11. Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven.

He's gone. He will come back. And in between His going and His coming back, you've got the last days.

This is the last season in the universe's history in its current stage. All the mission of the church takes place in the last days.

[ 14 : 10 ] And there's a sense of two things here, privilege and urgency. This is a real privilege. We're living in the days when things have been fulfilled, when things have become clear.

We know who the Savior is. We know what He had to do. We'll mention that in a moment. We have the days when the Spirit has been poured out in the church. We can go out with power and the Lord is opening hearts before us.

Mission takes place. It's a sense of real privilege. It's a sense of urgency too. this will not last forever. It will close with the arrival of Jesus.

But this is a time of God's mercy. We are living in the last days and it's a time of amazing mercy. The church, families, fathers, mothers, elders, ministers, we can't ever forget these are the last days. The time in which we live is important.

[ 15 : 24 ] Isaiah would say you're privileged to live in the last days. Jeremiah would say you're privileged to live in the last days. Peter would have said it's amazing.

We're living in the last days when God is fulfilling His promises, gathering His people in through the mission of the church. The third thing, the facts.

Clearly we're not looking at everything here. The facts, the cross, the tomb, the throne, the spirit.

The cross. Remember when Peter and the others were told by Jesus I'm going up to Jerusalem, I'm going to be tried, I'm going to suffer, I'm going to be put to death.

What did Peter say? Far be that from you. That's just not going to happen to you. That's not going to be your story. That's not going to be your biography. That will never happen to you.

And Peter would have done anything to stop Jesus going on that journey. then when it came, when the Calvary took place and Golgotha happened and Jesus died, the disciples were so discouraged, so disillusioned.

[16:50] Some of them on the road to Emmaus, not of the twelve, but these two who are on the road to Emmaus, they were saying, we thought he was the one who would redeem Israel, but clearly he's not.

And Peter, even Peter at that time was just struggling to try to hold it all together. None of them could really fully understand what was happening.

The cross, the death, devastated them. It wasn't the answer for them. It was a huge problem for them.

But Peter, he talks about the cross. He talks about the crucifixion of Jesus. He talks about Jesus being there killed by the hands of lawless men.

He has no problem talking about the cross now. But at the time, it was a problem, not part of the answer. And then the empty tomb, when Jesus was raised from the dead, at first that added to the problem.

[17:57] It wasn't part of the answer. It was a further problem. Where is Jesus? Where is the body of Jesus? Nobody came to the tomb looking for a risen Jesus.

They came to the tomb looking for a dead Jesus, worried about how they might roll away the stone to get in. To see the dead Jesus, to anoint the dead Jesus with spices.

The resurrection was a problem. But what a change. When they actually met the Lord Jesus, when Mary Magdalene met him, click, began to make sense.

death. When Peter met him, when he met with the disciples in the upper room, although they had questions and doubts, their fear turned to joy.

And they began to understand the magnificence of what had happened. Death has been reversed in the passion of Jesus.

[19:06] Jesus. He died. We saw him. He was publicly put to death, publicly crucified, and now he's alive, bodily alive.

Totally amazing. With great power, we're told in Acts 4.33, the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. What did they talk about?

They talked about the cross of Jesus. they talked about the resurrection of Jesus. Notice, they talked about these things as facts. Facts.

They didn't talk about the people and say, let me try to convince you that you're a sinner.

Sometimes our preaching does that, because we're so aware of the law and the commandment of our Lord, and we think that preaching the gospel is essentially explaining to people how much they are sinners.

and then explaining to them about Christ. But notice how Peter and the eleven did it. They talked about God.

[20:15] They said, the wonders of God. What is it that God did? Well, he didn't just allow the cross to happen, delivered up by the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed.

Jesus. It's a fact, it happened. Then God raised him up from the dead.

Verse 24, God raised him up, losing the pangs of death. Verse 32, this Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses.

The resurrection. And the third thing, they talked about the glorification of Jesus. So he died, let's talk about it.

He rose from the dead, let's talk about it. But he's not here on earth. There's no point going to look for Jesus in Galilee, in Nazareth, in Capernaum, not even in Jerusalem.

[21:19] There's no point going anywhere to find him because he's not here. He's actually been glorified. He's been exalted. He's been lifted up to the right hand of God.

It's a fact. And they spoke about these facts, being therefore exalted at the right hand of God. It's a fact.

Where is Jesus? He has been exalted. And the fourth thing, the arrival of the Spirit.

Jesus, when he ascended to heaven, he did this amazing thing. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain, God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus that you crucified. Here's the facts, he says then.

[ 22 : 26 ] The death, the resurrection, the ascension to the throne of God, and the outpouring of the Spirit, these are historical facts.

Jesus died, Jesus has been raised, Jesus has been lifted up to heaven, and he's enthroned over the universe at God's right hand, and the first thing he does for the churches pour out this Holy Spirit.

These are facts, and you know, the church must deal with facts. When you raise your kids, you must talk about facts.

It's not just about behaviour, it's about what God has actually done, the facts. The fourth thing here that I've called the plan of God, God in control.

God in control. See in chapter 2 and verse 22, Men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst.

[ 23 : 42 ] Who was at work in Jesus when he was doing these miracles, doing these wonders, doing these signs. God did these things through him. He is sovereignly, powerfully at work through Jesus on earth.

What about the cross? Was that an accident? No. Acts 2 23. This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan.

It wasn't an accident. before knowledge of God, he knew exactly what was going to be happening. This Jesus, you crucified. You killed.

Lawless people put him to death. That was their sin. But you know what? It was God's sovereign plan that that should happen. Acts 4 and 28.

Talking there about Pilate and the Gentiles inherited to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. The cross was no accident.

[ 24 : 51 ] God is in control. So the sovereign God at work in the ministry of Jesus on earth, the sovereign God at work through the cross, the cross, crucifixion, and then the sovereign God at work in raising Jesus up to heaven.

Sometimes we talk about Jesus' resurrection as if it were Jesus himself who rose, that it was him who rose. Almost regularly it's passives.

He was raised. He was lifted up. He was carried up. He is not just risen, but he has been raised. It's God's plan. God's in control. And you know, there's something tremendously comforting in knowing that God was at work in Jesus then.

God was at work in the cross, though it seemed to be so silly, so terrible, so wicked a thing, and sovereign in raising him up from death and lifting him up to heaven.

[ 26 : 14 ] God, if he's in control of all of these things, and if Peter can say, how stupid I was, I actually tried to stop Jesus suffering, going to the cross.

I actually tried to stop him. I'm sure till the end of his days, Peter have said, what did I try to do? It makes such sense to me now, this was God's plan.

God is in control. See, when we're going out with the gospel to the ends of the earth, I think it's beautiful.

We're under the same God, under the same plan. God is powerfully at work, powerfully at work.

When you see some of the statements that we find in the gospels, how the Lord added to the church people who were being saved, the 3,000 and then there was the 2,000 and they just added to the church by the Lord himself.

[ 27 : 29 ] God is the one who's at work. I'm not sure that I can understand the smaller details of the picture.

In fact, I know I can't. I am often baffled by God's providence, struck down, unable to understand the detail.

But see the big picture. I have never been more certain in my life that God is in control and he's told us what the big picture is.

You might look at issues in Ukraine and Afghanistan and Yemen and you might look at all the terrible revolution and ethics and gender and sexuality and you think, how are we going to live through this?

You see all these changes in marriage laws and you think, can we possibly reach out with the gospel into this kind of generation? God's in control.

[ 28 : 38 ] See on the day Jesus was crucified, you'd have been just the same, you'd have said, it's all going wrong, but it's not going wrong.

Like Mary Magdalene, she was crying in absolute tears at the tomb because she wanted to find a body of a Jesus whom she loved.

And the resurrection had already taken place but she was still in tears because she didn't understand. It all seemed so wrong, but it hadn't gone wrong at all.

God is in absolute control. He died by God's plan. He's been raised and exalted by God's plan. God, as we saw in Psalm 2, put his own son over the throne of the universe. I have installed my king on Zion.

[ 29 : 44 ] And that's it. God's in absolute control. When Jesus pours out the promise of the Spirit which he received from the Father, the Father said pour out the Spirit.

That's my plan. And the gospel mission begins. All in God's plan. I have no idea how things will work out in Ukraine.

No idea in that part of Europe. It came as a big blow that this would happen today. God's God is in total control.

And there may be things going on in your individual lives. There may be things that are touching you and turning your life upside down and causing you to shake and shiver and weep.

Even in that situation, just remember, God knows. God's at work. He is indeed working all things together.

[ 30 : 49 ] Ask for grace to bear with that. The fifth thing is the person of Jesus. I love the way Peter talks about God and he talks about Jesus.

He talks about what God will do in and through Jesus. If you read the preaching of Peter and the eleven, Jesus is called son of David, Jesus of Nazareth, the servant, the holy and the righteous one, the prince of life, a prophet like Moses, the judge, the son of man, the savior.

savior. But the most common one is he's made Lord and Christ. I think in the apostolic gospel, they talked a lot about Jesus.

They talked a lot about Jesus. But they spoke of him as Lord and as Christ.

You see it in Acts 2.36. Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him, Jesus, both Lord and Christ.

[ 32 : 18 ] This Jesus whom you crucified, he's now been made Lord and he's been made Christ. Was he Lord before the cross and the resurrection and the ascension?

There's a sense in which he was. Was he Christ before the cross, the resurrection and the ascension? Yes.

So what does it mean here when we are told God has made him Lord and Christ? The Jesus that you crucified, he's now been made Lord and Christ.

Well you see he was never Lord at the right hand of God before. Sit at my right hand. The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand.

The body of Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth had never been in heaven but now he's at the right hand of God and God says you are Lord.

[ 33 : 24 ] You have head ship. You have authority and your authority as son of God and power is over everything.

There is no name higher than your name. You are above every name. You are Lord and I want everyone to bow before you.

Christ there are things that you have been anointed to do that you couldn't do until you were ascended to heaven lifted up to the right hand of God.

There are things that Jesus couldn't have done till after the cross till after the resurrection until he was ascended to the right hand of God. Now as the Christ as the anointed one he can do the most wonderful things to save and rescue his people.

He can do things as our king. He is the anointed king, the anointed prophet, the anointed priest.

[ 34 : 41 ] He's king in a new location. He's priest having given given his own body and blood.

He's prophet, able to speak through a spirit-filled church. He's now Lord and Christ. That had never been the case before.

We're living in a new time. The facts are the cross, the tomb, the throne, the spirit, God's in control, and he has made this person who was once on a cross, crucified by wicked people, but in God's plan, dying for our sins, he's made him Lord and Christ.

See, it's a fact. You can't go to the speeches of Peter to find the doctrine of the atonement very clearly. That's not what you find there.

But you find this amazing focus on God, he's got it in control. This amazing focus on Jesus as the Christ through whom forgiveness can be found.

[ 35 : 57 ] The person of Jesus, there's no other savior. As he puts it in Acts chapter 4, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified, whom God raised from the death, by him this man is standing before you.

Well, this Jesus, there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name, notice, under heaven, given among men, by which we must be saved.

he is now in heaven, that's the name that saves. And then sixthly, the end, the day of the Lord, just two things there briefly.

Remember the disciples, when Jesus is ascending for his, remember that's his final ascension, he ascended to heaven many times before, but this is slowed down in Acts chapter 1 so they can see him go.

And they're looking at him going up, and then he's taken away, and then all of a sudden there are two angels standing beside them, and they say, men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?

[ 37 : 22 ] This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come. In the same way as you saw him go into, he'll come bodily, he'll come publicly, he'll come to this world.

It's going to happen. When will it happen? Don't have a calendar, but it will happen. Focus, focus on the person, focus on the mission.

He will come back. That's your focus. He will come back. And when he comes back, the mission of the church is over.

He will come back. We have to engage in mission by his spirit until he comes back. That's our focus, mission.

Not a calendar, he, Jesus. Same as what you have in Acts 2. it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

[ 38 : 30 ] On what day? Before the day of the Lord comes, that great and magnificent day, and shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

the day of the Lord is coming. It's coming. Heaven must receive him till that day. But he's going to come.

The great day of the Lord will come. And that is the day of salvation for his people and judgment for those who reject him.

But he is going to come. Jesus will one day be back in this world. And then everything changes.

And the early church had that focus on the end the day of the Lord. And then finally the response of course. When they heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles brothers what shall we do?

[ 39 : 36 ] And you think this is great. And actually they've listened to Peter talk about the word of God the last days the facts of the cross the tomb the throne the spirit God's in control and the name of Jesus that saved us Lord in Christ and the day of the Lord's coming and what happens they believe it and they say what shall we do?

In other words if this is all that God has done in and through Jesus how are we going to respond to God?

We can't bury our head in the sand and say we don't have to do anything no you do if God has done this then we must respond unbelief is a response I don't believe it indifference I don't care it's unimportant I've got other priorities there's lots of that response and for each of them there will be judgment I don't think I was ever an unbeliever but I was indifferent and there was a stage when I did not think any of this important that was my response to all of these things and then God did a change opened my ears by his spirit and then

I thought I have to respond you know what it's like when God does something and you know you've got to respond you know that things cannot go on as they are you must repent turn change your thinking you must believe put your trust in this God in this Christ and you will be saved you'll be forgiven you'll receive the gift of the spirit for life and for mission but you must respond there there is so much left unsaid so be it

Lord we pray that your Holy Spirit would make us alive to these things to your glory Amen let's close now by singing from Psalm 118 from verse 21 to the end to a p p s m p m p p p m p p p