

The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0

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“Acts 4 and 5”

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With

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Acts 4-5 – SUMMARY

Acts 4-5 picks up threads discussed in previous podcasts: the “name theology” of biblical theology re-imagined in Jesus, the use of the OT by NT writers to make subtle theological assertions, and the “having all things in common” theme. We’ll discuss these items and draw attention to two new theological trajectories that are often missed: the first mention of Barnabas and its connection back to the reclamation of the nations launched in Acts 2 and how what the early believers in Jerusalem undermines the modern concept of “church” as a time and place.

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 42, Acts 4-5. I'm your residential layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing?

MSH: Very good. Good to hear your voice again.

TS: Absolutely. Well we're going to get two chapters in this week.

MSH: We're going to try it, and I'm very optimistic we're going to be able to do that.

TS: Well I'm looking forward to it.

MSH: Alright. Well, in order to get through two of those, I'm not going to read the chapters ahead of time like we've typically been doing. But I'm going to start reading through the text and I'll park on a few things as we proceed. So, I will jump into the content when we hit it, at least the things I'm interested in talking about today. So Acts chapter 4 begins this way,

And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them,² greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.³ And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.⁴ But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

⁵ On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem,⁶ with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family.⁷ And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?"⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders,⁹ if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, [**MSH: which is what happened in Chapter 3**] by what means this man has been healed,¹⁰ 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 dead—by him this man is standing before you well.

MSH: I want to stop there because we have twice in that section this, first the question, 'by what name did you do this,' and then Peter's answer is, 'by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.' We've talked about this name theology before, and for those, again, who are accustomed to, at least familiar with, some of my content, the blog, and, of course, in the book that used to be called, a draft, that used to be called *The Myth That Is True*, but now, of course, it'll be out as *Unseen Realm*. I talk a lot about the name theology of the Old Testament. And so, we've gotten into this little bit but I wanted to take a little bit of time in and do a little more with this, specifically going back to the Old Testament. And for those, for whom some of this might be new, the name theology of the Old Testament is simply stated this way.

There are certain passages where instead of referring to God, either with the divine name Yahweh or with *Ha Elohim*, God, or something like that, God will be referred to as *Ha Shem*, the name. And even today, again, in the very conservative Jewish circles, you will still have people insist. I remember I had one professor in grad school who wanted us to not use the divine name in class, even when we were reading to the Hebrew Bible. He said he would accept *Adonai*, which means Lord, or *Ha Shem*, the name. So it's what scholars call a circumlocution, in other words, a way around speaking directly the actual name of God and just using the substitute the name. And it's important the Old Testament because some of the passages where God is referred to as the name have God personified as a man. Isaiah 30:27 is sort of a classic example of this.

Behold, the name of the LORD comes from afar,
burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke;
his lips are full of fury,
and his tongue is like a devouring fire;

MSH: So you have anthropomorphic language for the name. The name of the Lord is like a person, an entity. Now all that is back-dropped to Exodus 23 where you have this angel, when God comes to Moses and says, hey, I'm going to send my angel with you. And you need to listen to him and people need to listen to him, because he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him. So it's this notion that the name is the very essence of God. And back in Exodus 23 with the wilderness wanderings, you had this angel, again, this is human figure, who was Yahweh God embodied. So there's this whole, that's a very rough overview of the name theology. But when a Jew heard God referenced as the name, these are the kind of passages he would think of and, again, part of that was the embodiment of God, God embodied. And so now when you get to the New Testament and the question, again, it's very understandable, when the Jewish authorities say by what power or by what name do you do this, they want to know by what deity, by what divine being, what spiritual authority are you doing these things under. And when Peter answers him with the way he does, by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and then in verse 12, we're two verses from that, he says, Peter says 'there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.'

When Peter says things like this, he's not saying, look, I'll tell you by what authority we do this. Listen to these four consonants or listen to this word. I'll even spell it for you. And he's not talking about, again, a set of constants. He's not talking about a thing you would write down on a scroll or scrawl in the dirt. He's talking about a person. And so, again, you get this feeling that referring to Jesus this way is going to, sort of, mentally trigger some things in the minds of the Jewish audience that, really, are going to matter. They're either going to get offended by it or they're going to start to understand, again, okay, this Jesus whom we crucified, that these guys are preaching, that God raised from the dead, if this is true, could this possibly be in human form. In the Old Testament, God was embodied. He was in the visible human form. And sometimes it's corporeal. There is a tactile thing going on in a passage that concerns the name. But it's certainly visible.

So they're listening to this and thinking is it possible that God could've come as this man, because there is precedent for this in our thinking, in our theology, in our Bible. And so it sort of creates, again, either attention or, again, Peter's not trying to create common ground. He's not trying to be real friendly. He's being very blunt, but it starts to use vocabulary that had

theological significance, again, to listen specifically to a Jewish audience. And the Gospels have this in it is well. I've mentioned this before when we talked about the name theology, when Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane, the high priestly prayer of Jesus, 'I have manifested your name unto them.' Well, Jesus hadn't come to say, hey, I wanted to make sure that you're all spelling the name of God correctly or you all know what that is. Of course they knew what was. It's in the Hebrew Bible thousands of times. What he's saying is, I have manifested you to them, the whole idea that I am you.

I am the embodiment of the incarnation of you. So I think it's worth, again, dismissing this because you see other times the book of Acts, and I'm not going to go through the whole thing each time we get it, but this whole discussion about the identity of Jesus, how does the New Testament portray him. Does the New Testament really present Jesus as God? This name thinking, this name theology, is a strand in the tapestry of presenting Jesus as God incarnate. Again, it's one of the angles. It's one of the trajectories that have Old Testament precedent to it. But, again, a Jewish here, think about it. These were the days of the early church. We're not preaching to Gentiles yet. We're not that point the book of Acts. This is the followers of Jesus interacting with the Jewish authorities and the Jewish people there in Jerusalem. And so anyone who, again, has a sense of their Bible and has as a reasonable grasp of the content, the kinds of things that are being said here are going to have an impact positively or negatively. But they're going to draw attention and that's part of the logic. Now verse 11, this is where we stopped, when Peter says, it's by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, that we're doing this. In verse 11 he said,

¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

MSH: Now this cornerstone quote, I think, is worth mentioning because what Peter does it here is he quotes Psalm, in our Bibles, its Psalm 118:22. He actually quotes the Septuagint, or, he doesn't quote it precisely. He modifies a few words in terms of their grammatical form. And in the Septuagint, it's Psalm 117:22. But he's arguing, again, that scripture sort of foresaw or foretold what the events that had come to pass, that the Messiah would be rejected. You notice when he brings up the name in his answer to the Jewish authorities, he links it with the crucifixion and resurrection. We talked last time in the last episode about, again, the name *Christos* and how for the New Testament writers this was a title that was over and over and over and over again, a high percentile, over 90% or whatever it was, just a high percentage of usage. I didn't use it as an adjective, didn't use it as a first or last name. They would use it as a title and always linked to it to the crucifixion and resurrection, especially, with the sense that you should've seen this coming.

The Old Testament does foresee this. And we talked about the messianic profile, how you can't just go to a verse and see a suffering Messiah in one particular verse. It's a profile that has to be built from all sorts of scattered elements. And so here they go right back to it, again, bringing up the name and linking it to the crucifixion and resurrection. So, again, they're using vocabulary and a set of ideas that are going to matter. Well here when Paul, not Paul, when Peter quotes Psalm 117 in the original, or at least in the Septuagint reading, it says not quite but

just almost exactly, a little bit different, 'the stone that the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.' It's a little bit different because when Peter uses it, he makes the characters that he's talking to the builders and he turns the language into something that's more direct, that you guys actually lived out this verse.

You are the ones who rejected the cornerstone. The cornerstone, by the way, this idea is not something to be understood in the modern sense where you have a cornerstone that's usually set in place at the beginning of a building. That's something, not a Keystone but a cornerstone, where you put a date on it, maybe some inscription, maybe of little time capsule in it, that kind of thing. A cornerstone, in terms of what they're thinking here, was something that was a stone that functioned as kind of a main stone used at sort of an important junction in the joining of two walls of the building. It was a weight bearing stone, so if you didn't get it the right one, the builders would sort of discard it. You had to have the right sort of stone to be able to support the weight that you were going to put on it. And so Jesus is sort of cast in this role as something that's just sort of thrown to the side but the point is that he is actually the sort of central thing, the whole plan of God, metaphorically speaking, really. He's supporting all of it when, in their eyes, he's just this thing that you cast aside. I want to quote something from a commentary. It's kind of a unique commentary. It's edited by Beale and it's a commentary on the use of the Old Testament in the New. So this is a long quote but I think it's worth mentioning. And this, the portion of the book of Acts was written by I. Howard Marshall. So he says,

“This text has three levels of meaning. **[MSH: again, this whole quotation about the stone, the cornerstone]** First, literally it describes how builders on a building site might reject a particular stone or building block that is unsuitable for their purpose; someone else may come along and see that the stone has unrecognized potential, and instead of being, as it were, dishonored by being cast aside, the stone is now given pride of place. There's debate whether the description is that of a “cornerstone” -- that is, a foundation stone at an angle in the building or its put where two walls meet to bear weight, like a coping stone is what it would be referred to in other ancient literature. Second, in the Psalm the statement is used metaphorically. The king, **[MSH: if you actually go back and look at the Psalm, I always encourage people go back to the Old Testament context when something is quoted, if you go back and look at the Psalm, Marshall writes]** the king is pictured as going to the temple to give thanks to God for a military victory. It seems that there were people, possibly among his own nation, who doubted his ability to win the battle; however, he had won a splendid victory thanks to the help of the Lord. **[MSH: That's the original context for this particular Psalm in this particular verse, third, Marshall says]** the Psalm is quoted by Jesus at the conclusion of his parable about the Vineyard, **[MSH: So again, this Psalm is drawn on in other places where it is used to make the same point about the Messiah]** the descendants of the king of Israel in the Psalm. There, in Jesus parable, it refers to his own rejection by the rulers of the people (and, by extension, by the people themselves) and to his vindication by God who raised him from the dead. The same line of thought is found in 1 Peter 2:6-8, where there's a combination of Old Testament texts about stones; for believers, Jesus understood to be the chosen precious stone, laid by God himself,

in whom they can safely put their trust, but unbelievers are like the builders who rejected the stone for their purpose, only to find that somebody else has stepped in and given the stone the honored position; consequently, the stone has become a stumbling block in Peter, that is, the means of their ruin because they have rejected it as the means of salvation.

MSH: So it does double duty later on when Peter, who's the guy using the verse right here in Acts 4. When Peter writes his own epistle, he draws on this same verse again, and uses the imagery, again, to make the point about this thing that you cast off, that the Jews cast off, is actually the means of salvation. And that's unfortunate, going to pay the price for that. Now Marshall adds an interesting note here, and this, I think, is something that, again, your average Bible student would not run across. He adds,

“The crucial verb in the quotation and the verb is *apodokimázō*, which means to reject, that's the verb you find in the Septuagint. That verb is replaced by a different one in the quotation and the one used in the quotation is *exoutheneō*, to treat with contempt. Now the latter for is used in some Greek translations of Isaiah 53:3, [**MSH: which says, let me just pull it up here a second. Isaiah 53 says, he was despised, this is verse 3, and rejected by men. There you have would have in the Septuagint where it says rejected, you would have this is particular verb that shows up in Peter's quotation of Psalm 117:22 in the Septuagint. But Isaiah 53:3, let me finish it.]**”

He was despised and rejected by men;
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

MSH: Now, the reason why this is kind of interesting is since Peter in his quotation changes the verb from what's actually in the Septuagint of Psalm 117:22, and he changes it to a verb that some Greek translations, some manuscripts of the Septuagint, actually have in Isaiah 53:3, it's possible that Luke, either Peter or Luke, Luke's the writer, Peter's the speaker. It's possible that one of them or both was making an allusion to Isaiah 53:3 in this quotation. In other words, if people knew the text well enough, they might see a suffering servant idea from Isaiah 53 also in that Psalm. So this is something that New Testament writers do that's very subtle, and if you're just using English translations you'd never pick it up. If you're looking, again, at the Greek and Hebrew, the Septuagint, whatnot, you can see what the original writers were doing. They were never, if this is the case here, they're trying to take things from two different locations, two different passages.

He'll take one element from one passage and use part of it in the thing he's quoting to sort of create a group of ideas, again, trying to draw things from both passages and putting them into one package so that the listeners and the readers of the text would sort of connect the dots. And this is just something that New Testament writers do a lot. And so, the next time you hear somebody gripe and complain, some really undereducated atheist out there in the internet, they just don't quote it right, the New Testament writers don't know how to quote their sources and it's not precise and there's something missing here; 99% of the time, it's deliberate. It's

deliberate because, again, they're trying to plant thoughts in the mind of their hearer or their reader. They're not concerned; they're not writing a dissertation. They're not going to defend it. They're not going to get a degree for it and get this piece of paper to hang on their wall. They're trying to plant ideas in the mind of the people listening to them and reading what they produce. And they do this intentionally and it happens a lot. And you can see the logic of it when you can pick up on, again, the sources that they're using, the passages that they're drawing from. So let's continue here. We'll go back to the book of Acts here. And we ended, again, with verse 12. Let's just read through here real quickly in verse 13.

¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, **[MSH: Again, the Jewish authorities are listening to what they're saying]** and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. **[MSH: especially if they were doing that thing with Isaiah 53, that would have been clever.]** And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. ¹⁴ But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. ¹⁵ But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, ¹⁶ saying, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷ But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name." ¹⁸ So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, ²⁰ for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." ²¹ And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. ²² For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old. **[MSH: And in verses 23 and so on, there's something in here that's also kind of interesting. Again, in verse 23 we read]** ²³ When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ²⁵ who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, **[MSH: Now catch the quotation here]**

““Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?

²⁶The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed’—

MSH: Now what's odd about that quotation in the context that we've just seen, what's odd

about it? It comes from, again, Psalm 2, but who's giving them trouble? Who's giving the apostles trouble? The Jewish leadership, but the Psalm says, why did the Gentiles rage and why the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and his anointed. Isn't it odd that would be a verse you quote to sort of say, well, the Holy Spirit, this is what he was talking about, and then apply it to Jewish leadership? What was really going on here is the first reference, the Gentiles, that does refer to non-Jews. But the key here is the second line, the peoples plot in vain, and then at the second line of the next verse, the rulers were gathered together. In Hebrew, the word for peoples is *am*, people or peoples you can translate it singular or plural collectively are plural. And that is almost always used of residents of Israel. And so this, the Psalm actually does work.

Again, this is one of those instances where a critic would come along and say, what are they doing here? They can't even tell a Jew from a Gentile. Well, actually they can because who's the Gentiles? Who are the Gentiles that were against the Lord and his anointed? Well, that was the Romans. That was Pilate, the whole circumstance of the crucifixion, like, no kidding. But the Jews get picked up in opposition by the line 'the peoples plot in vain' and collectively, the kings of the earth are against us and the rulers, the Jewish rulers. Again, there's a parallelism in the verse. So the quotation concerns both Jew and Gentile, Jew and Gentile, enemies gathered against the Messiah. And so it actually fits really well if you, again, understand back in the Old Testament, back in Hebrew, that *am*, the peoples, is almost always, it's overwhelmingly a high percentage of time where it refers to Israel, to Israel and Israelites. So it's not a misquotation. Again, it's a very subtle thing and right after he quotes it, I'm not going to read the whole rest of the chapter 4 here, but right after that quotation, Luke alludes to Herod and Pontius Pilate along with the Gentiles, and the peoples of Israel, verse 27, 'these were all gathered against Jesus.' And so they know just why they're quoting what they're quoting. It might be a little bit lost on us but, again, it's not a misplaced quotation. Chapter 4 then ends with another one of these passages. They had all things in common, we'll read a little bit of this.

³² Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. ³³ And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. **[MSH: And here's the line I want to focus on, at least for a minute]** ³⁴ There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold

MSH: Again, this is very clearly lending financial assistance to the people in need who are believers. I mean, there's just no way to get around this. And it was significant, but, again, just like we talked about with Acts 2. Again, Acts 2 does not justify socialism and communism because it's not opposed to private ownership. There's nothing going on like that. They do sell what they own here and distribute it, again, to those in need. When we get into chapter 5, that's the Ananias and Sapphira episode, again, I won't read through all that either. But there's a line

in it, remember what happens with Ananias and Sapphira's story, where Ananias and Sapphira sell something and then they kept back for themselves some of the proceeds and only brought a part of it, and later laid it at the apostles feet. Again, this whole thing about laying it at the apostles feet that was brought up in chapter 4, the context is, the supposition is, the impression that you were creating was that you had, you're bringing it all but they didn't reveal that. And that's when Peter says, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie the Holy Spirit' early on in chapter 5.

But catch what he said. 'While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? After it was sold, was it not at your disposal?' So right there in Acts chapter 5, again, you have proof that nobody has a problem with private property here. Even after it sold, the money is yours. This is voluntary giving. Again, you cannot use these passages to justify a political system that forbids private ownership of goods and the like. That's just a misuse of the passage. But, again, look at what's going on there. There was not a needy person among them. Again, it would be great if we could say that about our churches. It would be suspiciously biblical if we were doing stuff like this. At the end of the chapter 4, one thing to go back to here, and this is going to foreshadow some things that are going to happen in Acts. We read that, again, it sort of narrows into one person, verse 36 in chapter 4,

³⁶ Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, ³⁷ sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

MSH: Now I say this foreshadow's something because you're going to see certain people pop up in the book of Acts. And they're going to be associated with certain places. In this case, it's Barnabas and he's from Cyprus. Why would Luke bother to tell you where any of these people are from? We're going to see this with other Jewish characters. We're going to see a mention of Samaria. We're going to see mention of Cyprus again. We're going to see mention of Crete. We're going to get the Ethiopian eunuch. We're going to get some of these geographic indicators, and when you run into one of these in the book of Acts, you should ask yourself, is that mentioned in Acts chapter 2? Remember when we talked about chapter 2, and I have the video on the website about how the nations that are named in Acts chapter 2 there at Pentecost, they move from east to west and it's about a recapturing, a reclamation, of the nations that were disinherited at the Babel event, the Deuteronomy 32 worldview. Well, guess what? Cyprus is not mentioned in Acts chapter 2. And so this is a way that Luke is using, again, under inspiration, to say, hey, Cyprus wasn't missed, okay? That's a land area that you can find, again, the specific piece of land back in the table of nations.

And so while I'm here describing what's going on the early church taking care of all their needs, there was this guy Barnabas. He was a Levite. He was a Jew, who happened to be from Cyprus, one of these places that could have been listed in Acts 2 but wasn't. We just want to make it clear that, yes, there were Jews there, too, and they're getting converted and they're discipling people and Cyprus is one of these nations, too, that's getting reclaimed, new ownership. Again, the Gospel, Jews came from that nation, as well. People were converted. They moved back, and in here Barnabas, who heard the Gospel and believed. He was from Cyprus. So it's a way for the writer to telegraph that the same thing that happened in Acts 2, where Jews

had come and they heard about the Messiah. They saw a miraculous act there in Acts 2, and then they went back and they started to evangelize.

Tell, again, their countrymen, other Jews, they started to spread the Gospel and the news of what happened with this Jesus of Nazareth, and all this. Again, the process of using Jewish converts to, again, create these, I refer to them as cell groups, back in these places, because in each one of them, believers are going to start showing up. People are going to start believing, first the Jew, and it's going to spread to the non-Jewish occupants of those nations, and gradually, all of the nations that have been disinherited God has people in all of them. And some of them are listed in Acts 2. Others were not. Cyprus's an example, so Luke is sort of picking that one up and saying, hey, we didn't forget about this place. And you're going to have other place names in Acts that get mentioned. Again, there's a point to their being mentioned, again, is what I'm trying to say. So be on the lookout for that if you're reading ahead in the book of Acts. You're going to see that. There are going to be a few real interesting ones that are very specifically noted. We know that the Gospels and Acts is selective.

The material in here is selective. It's not exhaustive, so the question that should always be in your mind is, why is that guy getting mentioned? Why is that place getting mentioned? And in a number of these cases, it has to do with, again, this Deuteronomy 32 worldview thinking, linking these places back to the events of Pentecost because of Jews getting converted and then spreading the gospel. Now the last thing I want to hit on is in Acts 5. We dipped into Acts 5 with Ananias and Sapphira. We know that story pretty well, I think, so I'm going to skip down from that and I'm going to highlight a couple verses in Acts 5:12. This is right after Ananias, of course you know, has died and his wife Sapphira, again, also lies and she's struck dead. Again, we know that story. But right after it happens, we read this.

¹² Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. **[MSH: Now just hold that thought. They're all together in Solomon's Portico, and then in verse 20, we read this. Let's go back to verse 17]**

¹⁷ But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy ¹⁸ they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. ¹⁹ But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ²⁰ "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." **[MSH: It's a reference to the resurrection]** ²¹ And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.

MSH: Now here's the question. When, it's really not a question. I'm going to make a statement here. The early believers, what do they actually do? Now we know that they take care of each other. There are people who own things, the property. They sell it. They meet needs. No one had any need, that kind of thing. They look out for each other financially. They pray together. They go from house to house. They have fellowship, that kind of thing. Have you noticed in Acts so far that they don't have church? If you look at the places where they go, Solomon's portico here, and the reference to the temple, and earlier, we've had the apostles going to the temple, they're not going to the temple to have church. Why are they going to the temple? Because that's where the lost people are, okay?

That's where their countrymen are. That's where they're going to meet Jews who need the Messiah, who need to be saved. They don't actually have church. And I've brought this up before, but what if church wasn't a time or a place? Again, it would suspiciously look like the book of Acts. Yeah, they gathered together in their houses. They get together regularly. They did the things we associate with church. They did that stuff. They listened to the apostles. The apostles taught them, but when they actually meet at a building, they don't meet there to have a service. They meet there to evangelize. It's just really ironic and, again, reading through it, again, I was struck by it. We typically, the way we look at church and the way that the church is sort of described, granted, it's 2000 years ago.

It's new. I get all that, but I can't help thinking we are just 180° from what's gone on here. We think of evangelism as inviting an unsaved person to church. I'm not saying anything is wrong with that, but if we were living back in this period, you gather together to learn Scripture and you go to places where you know you will run into people who need what you have. That was just what they did. So there is no place that's church. There is no time for church. Even when Paul goes to Gentile territories, think about it, they don't have a temple there. They have their own sort of temples and he goes to these places and he witnesses. But you never read in the book of Acts, for instance, that anybody's building a building, that anybody has a set time to do anything. When he starts churches, what that means is he wins people. He evangelizes people. He converts people, and then he'll appoint out of that group, he'll appoint people that have some maturity to oversee the flock, then he'll move on to the next place. But again, it just lacks the sort of organization, again, that we associate with it. I'm not saying that's necessarily bad, but I'm also not saying it's necessarily good either.

Because for us, too many Christians that church has become a time and a place during the week, and in a very short time and a place that you don't frequent that often. And you begin to associate that event, that time and place with the word church. And you're not going to find that in the New Testament. When you read the word church in New Testament, it's about people. It's about believers. Again, it's not a time and place and, again, I'm not recognizing or recommending, hey, let's just go back to the Stone Age here and do this the sort of thing. But in a way, I think it's nice, it would be a good idea if people would remember what this word really is in New Testament theology. It's never a place and it's never a set time. Believers do meet to commemorate certain things, to celebrate the resurrection, all that sort of thing. They don't have the luxury of doing things the way we do. And to be honest with you, I think that has worked to our detriment. I really believe it has worked to our detriment. We've redefined a concept that's about people and our definition now is a building and a set time during the week, and I don't think it's a good thing. It doesn't have to be worked against us but I just can't help thinking that it has. So, again, I was struck reading throughout Chapter 5 about this, again, just what they were doing, what it was like. And to sort of wrap up here, I don't want to read the whole passage, but that was kind of the last thing I wanted to really get at. In verse 28, again, there's a mention of the name and, again, in verse 41 about teaching and preaching in the name, the name of Jesus. And so, we end up with the chapter, again, with this notion, this association of Jesus with this concept, again, this person, again, this authority that has accrued to them. So at the end of the chapter, we read this,

⁴⁰ and when they had called in the apostles [**MSH: They re-arrest them, they were going to kill them in Gamalia, the teacher was one of the**

ones who taught Paul, sort of talks them in off the ledge, and says look, take care of what you do to these men. If it's of God, you're never going to be able to defeat this. So they call them back in again in verse 40 and they beat them, and charge them never to speak in the name of Jesus and let them go. And they left the presence of the council.]⁴¹ Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.

MSH: Again, in the company of Jews, there is no mistake what you're talking about. You're using Old Testament language for God. Now you're using it for Jesus and the context could not be clearer. So, again, I don't want you to think these are just esoteric points of biblical theology. They might feel like it at times but I'm telling you these things and I want to alert your senses to them because, again, when you hear stuff about, oh, New Testament so fuzzy about Jesus about who he was. We just can't know. We're just not sure. Here we have this data or that data. We saw this thing on TV and there were all these questions. The people who make TV shows, what they really need to do is to start reading the text and thinking about what's being said the New Testament against the backdrop of the old. And the ambiguity, there's just not a whole lot of ambiguity on this point, at least about how their thinking about Jesus. He is the name. He is the name that they just suffered for. He is the name, and when you said that in a room full Jews, everybody knows what you're talking about.

TS: Okay, I'm got a couple of questions for you in Acts 5, part of it that you skipped over. Can you just talk a little bit about it, about your thoughts, about him holding back some of his money for himself and then he died. Can you elaborate a little bit more about that?

MSH: I think he's judged for deception, not for the fact that it was his own. Because Peter says that even after you sold it, the money is still at your disposal. You can do with it what you want. Why is it you've contrived this deed in your heart, as if God wasn't going to know. I do think there is this sense, again, because it's three times in 4 or 5 about this laying it at the apostle's feet. And so there's this pattern established that when people who, there's going to be people in the group who know, oh, Ananias and Sapphira, they're fairly well-off, have property, whatever. When they bring money and lay it at the apostle's feet, the assumption is going to be that they've sold something and they've given it all. When they've not, and I look at what Peter says, look, you could have just told us. It's ok.

It's still at your disposal. It's your property. It's your money. But for you to create the impression or to not clarify what you're doing, and again, it's an act of deception. That was a serious matter, lying to the Holy Spirit and things like that. I do think God used the incident as an object lesson. Again, if you go back to the Old Testament, there are instances like this where people are judged and it becomes a matter of life and death for deception, for what I guess in Old Testament parlance would be kind of a high-handed sin, something done pre-meditatively, it's a sin against God. And so I do think that that's part of the logic here of why God would do this, again to have their minds hearken back to, look, what's happening here, what's happening here is not a lesser version of what happened in the Old Testament. It's the same God.

TS: But didn't Jesus die for that sin? Why is the punishment carried out after?

MSH: I think it's a judgment. I don't think it has anything to do with whether the atonement was effective or not, or something like that. John talks about the fact that there is a sin unto death, that sort of thing, that God can decide this is the best way to handle the matter. If you're going to do these high-handed sins, these sins with premeditation, God can choose to deal with it another way. But even as John says later, there is this concept of a sin unto death. In other words, the sin unto death is not like a checklist of the ones that the people get killed for. It's not like that. It's that you're going to hit a certain point where God decides you're not going to have a further opportunity to repent and be useful again and your Christian life is not going to be what it should be because you're time on earth is up now.

And God can do that, again to teach whatever lesson or maybe no one will really know. In this case, it's very public and based on what Peter says, the message is telegraphed that God is the one who is actually directly judging the people who are involved at this point. So I don't think that the atonement guarantees that God does not judge, God does not chasten. And even to the point of death, his people, he didn't do that in the Old Testament. Believers and unbelievers, but believers, too, they suffer when they sin. It doesn't mean that their salvation is reversed. I'm going to kick you out of my family now. It just means your time here is over. It's not going to get any better. It's not going to get any worse, either. Your time is over and sin has to be judged or else it looks like there's no consequence to your actions.

TS: Right, it's just, you know, most Christians are under the impression that Jesus died for our sins and here you got a case of a micro-judgment, where a man was punished and a woman to death.

MSH: I think it's harsh, too, but there's nothing in the account that says that...

TS: I don't even know what these micro-judgments are so I don't do them. I don't want to take my last breath.

MSH: Well I think that's the point. Look at what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5, where he talks about delivering, in that case the person living in incest with his, with the woman who wasn't, well, it's an odd situation. They were related and he's shacking up with this woman who's not his wife. And he says deliver that, if the person doesn't repent, deliver that person unto Satan. Well, again, what it means is that it's that's the holy ground concept where just as in the Old Testament Israel was holy ground. Everything around them was under the dominion of hostile divine beings called *shedem*, demons in Deuteronomy 32:17. There's holy ground and there's unholy ground. Well in the New Testament, holy ground is believers because that's where the presence of God now dwells. It doesn't just dwell in one spot or temple. We are the temple. And so, to be handed over to Satan is essentially to be put out of the community.

If this is the way you want to live then you need to be around those people and where that's embraced, that's acceptable. But it's not going to be acceptable here, because this is the place where the Spirit of God is, with us. And so, you're going to be put out there. Now that's not a sin unto death, but actually, you could look at that and say, well good grief. That guy there's sort of being treated like a unbeliever and he was. Paul doesn't go that far because, in the second letter to the Corinthians, he talks about this guy coming back, and when he renders his verdict,

it's the expressed wish that this guy would repent and come to his senses and that's what happens. But that I think actually goes further than this account, even though you have death, because there's nothing in this account about Ananias and Sapphira, that they didn't really believe, or even if they believe, God's not going to accept them anymore. Their salvation was lost. You don't get any of that language. But you do get a physical judgment that's pretty harsh. And, again, I think it does hearken back to the Old Testament. Again, this is a community of Jews and when something like this happens, when Peter says, you have lied to God, you've lied to the Holy Spirit, and then they just drop over dead, again, that's going to ring some bells. We're dealing with the same God now that they were dealing with back then. This person Jesus, again, what we're all about here is a thing to be taken just as seriously as it was taken back in the Old Testament. So I think that's the messaging. It's a rough way to create continuity back to the Old Testament, but it does accomplish that, among other things it accomplishes, too.

TS: I've got another one. Acts 5:16, the people were gathered bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits. Can you elaborate on the unclean spirits, supernatural things?

MSH: Yeah, the unclean spirits is a, you'll see it in the Gospels, And in some cases, the unclean spirits is used in parallel with other language that sort of identifies it where you've got demonic entities. Again, it's a little odd because the way the New Testament uses some of this terminology, especially a word like demon, is not the way the Old Testament does. There's something of a terminological disconnect here that, we could spend some time on that. Maybe in a Q&A, but in the context of the Gospels when you have unclean spirits mentioned, there are a couple of occasions where in the wider context, you're going to get a reference to Satan or demons or something like that. So it was a known term for an evil spirit, so it's not like unclean doesn't mean there's something it's not unclean like, the spirit must have eaten pork so now it's ceremonially unclean or something like that. It's not unclean and in a ritual sense. It's a reference to the evil nature of that being. But that's probably a good subject for Q&A, some of that language. It's not unique to the New Testament either. You'll see unclean spirits and evil spirits and whatnot in other Jewish literature, too. So it's not a phrase that was coined here in Luke or anywhere else, or here in Acts or anywhere else, any of the Gospels

TS: OK, I'll definitely mark that down. Anything else you want to add?

MSH: next time I want to get up to Peter's, not Peter's, Stephen's sermon because I want to do Stephen's sermon. It begins really, that the story of Stephen begins in chapter 6 and goes all through a Chapter 7. So I think next time we'll probably hit 6 and 7 because the bulk of it is his sermon. So there were some things in the sermon that I want to hit on. So we'll try to do 2 chapters again next week.