

THE SCHEME OF REDEMPTION GOD'S PLAN IN PREPARATION

Program #1037

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God has a plan for your salvation. We've been studying that plan for the past several weeks, and we'll continue that study today on *The Truth in Love*.

Thank you for joining us today on *The Truth in Love*. I'm Eddie Parrish, and I'm glad for you to be here as part of our program today. We will be continuing our series of lessons on God's scheme of redemption, which is God's plan for the redemption of mankind. We've talked about God's plan in purpose, and how God, before the foundation of the world, began to create, and did create a plan for man's salvation. Then from purpose, we looked at God's plan in promise. We noticed how once the world had been created and man was placed in it and then as sin became a reality, God began to reveal certain portions of that plan to certain individuals by way of promises that He made to them about the coming of One who would take care of the sin problem. That, of course, would be Jesus (Galatians 3:16).

First, God's plan in purpose and promise, and then we looked at God's plan in prophecy. We looked at how some people have misconceptions about the nature of the kingdom that the prophets predicted and the nature of the king that they predicted. We looked at Daniel 2 and Isaiah 2 as specific prophecies about the coming kingdom and the nature and timing of it. So we've looked at purpose, promise and prophecy. Today we want to look at the kingdom in preparation. Now, all of what we've talked about so far was preparation. God's plan, the promises and the prophecies were all preparation.

But our lesson today is going to focus on specific preparations that

were a part of history in the years just preceding, and leading up to the establishment of the kingdom. Part of what we want to look at initially today are some important points from what we sometimes refer to as “inter-testament history.” The terminology “inter-testament history” is really a misnomer. It's not actually a period of time between testaments, because for the Jew, the Old Testament law of Moses was still in effect during this 400-year period. It is not inter-testament in that sense. We're simply talking about those 400 years of history from the time that Malachi finished his work until the time that John the Baptist came on the scene. That was 400 years of prophetic silence. There was no God-inspired prophet that existed during that 400-year period, and so we have no inspired documents from that time. But much was going on. I want us to focus on a couple of passages that help us to draw this period of time into clearer focus.

In Galatians 4:4, Paul said, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law." In Romans 5:6, Paul said, "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." What was it that happened in the history of the world that made it the fullness of time, or due time when Jesus came? Why did He come when He came? Why didn't He come 200 years sooner or 500 years later than He did? Why did Jesus come at the time in history that He came? Because that was according to God's plan. Because it was the fullness of time. It was on God's particular time table that Jesus accomplished what He accomplished. And a lot of that included events that took place during this period that we sometimes call “inter-testament history.”

As we think about that, I want you to think of three words. If you're taking notes, you can write these down or at least underscore them in your mind. Three words that begin with the letter S. These three words that begin with S will help us to highlight some of the major things that took place during this inter-testament period that are important in bringing us to the fullness of time.

The first of those words is the word “scattering.” Scattering is sometimes called the dispersion. By this, we refer to the scattering of the Jewish people throughout the nations of the world. This happened during the captivity period. When Judah was taken captive by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., the Babylonians came in and took the people out of Judah and dispersed or scattered them throughout the expanse of the Babylonian empire. There were people all over the known world, at

that time who were taken out of the region of Judah. With God's people scattered among the Gentile people for a long period of time, it became evident to not just the Jewish people, but to Gentiles as well, that a Messiah was coming, because now the Jews who were scattered among the Gentiles could tell them about that. They would give Gentiles access to the Law, and they could learn as well about the coming of this Messiah and king. So the scattering or dispersion of the Jews was a good thing in God's plan and scheme of things, because it enabled the message of the Messiah to get beyond just the small area of Judea. So remember the word "scattering."

Now, the second of those S words is the word "synagogue." A synagogue was a temporary meeting structure that the Jewish people used while they were in Babylonian captivity, because they could not return to Jerusalem to worship God, as He originally intended. You remember when they were taken out of their land and into Babylon, and when it came time for various feasts and other things that they would normally go to Jerusalem for, they couldn't do that because they were in captivity. So the Jews built these temporary structures throughout all of the expanse of the Babylonian empire. Then as the other empires such as the Persians, Greeks and then the Romans, came and went, they had these synagogues or worship places that were all over the place where the Jews could go and worship God and have the Law read and things of that sort that they couldn't do in Jerusalem because of their captivity.

Now, the synagogues were good, too, because here, teaching could be localized and centralized. Gentiles would often come to those synagogues and sit and listen to the Law being read and hear about the prophecies of this coming Messiah and king. The synagogues were good because, again, you had not only Jewish people being reminded of the coming of the Messiah but, Gentiles would attach themselves to these synagogues and listen. A lot of times, they could listen without the bias and prejudice that somehow the Israelites could not overcome throughout their history. We read in the book of Acts where Paul and even Jesus went into synagogues and did teaching. It's interesting that when Paul (Acts 13) preached there that Jesus was the one through whom people could have remission of sins, and through Him you could be redeemed of all things from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses, the Jewish element there didn't care for what Paul said, and they wanted to kill him. But the Gentiles who had attached themselves to these synagogues and were there, said "if you'll come back

on the next Sabbath, we'll come back again and hear this same message all over." So the synagogues were good. The scattering was good. You have God's people all over the heathen world, as well as synagogues in the heathen world where this teaching can be done on a regular weekly basis and Gentiles, as well as Jews are learning about the coming Messiah.

Then we also have the word "Septuagent," the third S word. Scattering, synagogue and Septuagent. The Septuagent was the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. It came about in the year 280 B.C. when, oddly enough, Jewish parents requested and pressured scholars to create a translation of the old dead-letter Hebrew Old Testament into the common Koine Greek language of the day. That was the language everybody spoke, and the Hebrew children that were being raised and taught in the Greek gymnasium schools were being taught to read, understand and speak Greek, and Jewish parents wanted the Law in the language that their children could understand. So scholars created the Septuagent translation.

Look at how all of this is coming together to create the fullness of time. You have God's people scattered among the Gentiles. You have synagogues where Jew and Gentile alike are coming together on a regular weekly basis to have teaching done about the coming of the Messiah. Preparation is being made. Now you have the Old Testament scriptures in the language of the people so that Gentiles and Jews alike could read and understand. You see, it's all coming together. That's why Paul could say that, "In the fullness of time, God sent forth His son."

There were other things that took place in that period that we really don't have a lot of time to talk about, but influences on culture that came about through certain uninspired individuals, but individuals that God no doubt used in His providence to help bring about the fullness of time. Men like Socrates, who taught people to think for themselves. Men like Plato, who taught people to think spiritually. Aristotle taught people to think logically. Those were influences that came through in the culture that would be beneficial and good for people when Jesus finally came, because as He taught and the apostles taught by the Holy Spirit, people would need to be able to think for themselves and to think spiritually and logically. So things were being done. People were being prepared and brought toward the fullness of time.

As the preparation continued and we come through that 400-year

period which is, incidentally, a period of time that we really need to study more than we do. As a matter of fact, there are a number of passages in the New Testament that we can't fully understand, unless we study the period of time that we normally refer to as the inter-testament period. For instance, in John 10:22, the Bible says, "It was the Feast of Dedication." You can go back and look through all of the old law, and you'll never find a reference to the Feast of Dedication. The reason is that it wasn't a common Jewish feast until this period of time we refer to as the inter-testament period. That's when that feast became a reality. And we won't know all of what John 10:22 means if we don't take the time to study this period between the testaments. Where did the Pharisees and Sadducees come from? They're all over the New Testament, but they're not anywhere in the Old Testament. If you study inter-testament history, you'll see how they came about. We probably need to study that a little more than we do.

Let's proceed with our preparation passages. After the period between the testaments is over, these 400 silent years, John the Immerser, also known as John the Baptist, comes on the scene. He comes on the scene for the purpose of preparing the people for the Messiah. As a matter of fact, it was prophesied that John would do that very thing. In Isaiah 40:3-5, it was predicted and prophesied concerning John, that he would be the forerunner of Christ, and that he would be the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight the paths of the Lord." That was John's purpose. In Malachi 4:5-6, the last prophecy that Malachi made, was "I will send you Elijah the prophet." We don't have to guess as to who that was, because that prophecy has been fulfilled. It was John the Baptist who would be this Elijah. Not Elijah literally raised from the dead, but if you'll let the New Testament be a good commentary on the Old, we learn from Luke 1:17 that the one who would come in fulfillment of this prophecy would come "in the spirit and power of Elijah." And that would be John. Jesus, in Matthew 17:10-13, said very clearly and plainly, without any stammering on His part, that John was the fulfillment of the Elijah prophecy of Malachi 4. When John came on the scene, he was fulfilling prophecy. Jesus was not the only one prophesied about in the Old Testament. So was John. And John came to prepare the way for the Lord.

As we look at John's work in particular and in detail, we see a number of the things that he did by way of preparation for the coming of the Lord. He taught his disciples about prayer. The disciples came to Jesus

and said, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." (Luke 11:1). John taught the people about prayer, and he also taught them about the nearness of the kingdom. In Matthew 3:2, he said, "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" One of the things he emphasized was how close the kingdom was. He baptized people in view of the coming kingdom, looking forward to it and to the coming of the King. He exalted Christ and pointed men to Christ. He said, "He must increase, but I must decrease," (John 3:30). He said, "I am not worthy to loosen the sandals of his feet," (Matthew 3:11). He pointed people to the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," (John 1:29). John did all of those things as a part of his work of preparation for the coming of Christ.

Jesus also taught people about the kingdom, and He helped to prepare people for the kingdom's establishment and for its entry into the world. In Matthew 16, Jesus, again trying to prepare his disciples for the kingdom, told them a number of things that were important about the coming of the kingdom and how that would come about. In Matthew 16 beginning in verse 13, He is coming through the outer regions of Caesarea Philippi, and He said to His disciples, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." And then Jesus said, "Who do you say that I am?" And Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in Heaven." And "on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will (have been) loosed in heaven." So Jesus, based upon the confession that Peter made, said "I will build My church." And He said to Peter, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven." Jesus, in Matthew 16:19 did not change topics from Matthew 16:18. He's still talking about the same thing. He said "I will build My church", and "I will give you the keys of that kingdom." Keys represent the means of entry into something. What He was saying to Peter is that he would have something to do with giving people the means of entry into the kingdom. He would do that through his teachings, especially on Pentecost, when he told people what they had to do in order to be saved and to be added to the body of Christ, or the church that Jesus built. And by him and the other apostles binding

certain things on people or releasing them from other obligations, they would be doing Heaven's will. That would be a part of their work in the kingdom. So he's trying again to prepare Peter and the other disciples for the coming of that kingdom.

Then you look again in Mark 9:1, and you see Jesus saying something else about the preparation of the kingdom when He said, "There are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power." Now, friends, I want you to think about that passage. I want you to think long and hard about the timing that's involved in what Jesus said. Jesus said to some of his contemporaries, "Some of you are not going to die until you see the kingdom." Now, the people had been waiting for the kingdom for a long time, and Jesus was not toying with them. He is saying that some of them are going to get to see it. "You're not going to die until you do." Now, friend of mine, ask yourself the question, did Jesus know what He was talking about? Was Jesus a true prophet or a false prophet? Well, to ask that is to answer it if you're honest. Jesus was no false prophet. So either the kingdom was established in the days in which some of the contemporaries of the Lord lived, or Jesus lied. We can't have it any other way. He either taught the truth or He didn't. Either the kingdom came in that day and time or Jesus was wrong.

Now, if we take Mark 9:1 and couple that with Acts 1:8, we'll be able to see when the kingdom came. Jesus said the kingdom would come "With power," (Mark 9:1) and that some of them would not die until they had seen the kingdom come with power. And in Acts 1:8, Jesus said to His apostles, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Now let's put it together: Jesus said the kingdom would come with power. In Acts 1:8, the power would come with the Holy Spirit. So if we can see from the Bible when the Holy Spirit (which brought the power) came, then we would know when the kingdom came, because the kingdom was going to come when the power came. If the kingdom comes with power, and the power comes with the Holy Spirit, then whenever the Holy Spirit came, that's when the kingdom came.

Friend of mine, that's the Bible. I'm not making that up. It's right there in the text. And lo and behold, you open up your Bibles to the second chapter of Acts where the apostles are gathered there in Jerusalem

with others, and in the room where the apostles were, came the sound as of a rushing mighty wind that filled the room where they were sitting, and the Holy Spirit was given to the apostles. They were baptized at that time in the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:4 says that they began to speak in other tongues, or languages, "As the Spirit gave them utterance." Now, friends, I want you to put all of that together. The Holy Spirit came to the apostles in Acts 2. Jesus said they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them, and the kingdom would come with that power, (Mark 9:1). The kingdom had to come in Acts 2 for Jesus to be right. And friends, Jesus is always right.

That may not be what you've been taught. You may have been told that the kingdom hasn't even come yet. We're living centuries after Jesus. But Jesus said there would be people that He was speaking to on that very day that would see the kingdom. You know what? They did. Because the kingdom came in Acts 2. The kingdom of God was not a political thing. It was not an earthly kingdom. In previous sessions, we've pointed out that the kingdom is spiritual. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world," (John 18:36). His kingdom was spiritual, and that spiritual kingdom was established and built in Acts 2 in the first century. That kingdom is the church.

In our next session, that's what we're going to look at. We're going to look at the kingdom in perfection. The kingdom finally comes. We'll survey and look at the specifics of Acts 2 and see how the kingdom finally came.

Where are you spiritually today? Are you where you're supposed to be? Are you in a right relationship with God? The Bible teaches us that a part, even the major part, of this plan for the redemption of mankind, was the coming of Christ. In fulfillment of those promises and prophecies, Jesus came to save the world from sin. "He tasted of death for every man," (Hebrews 2:9). He came to "give His life a ransom for many," (Mark 10:45). He "died for all," (II Corinthians 5:14). But if you want to enjoy the benefits of His death, then you've got to come to Him. You've got to put your faith and trust in Him. Jesus said, "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins," (John 8:24). Have you done that? Do you trust Jesus? If you do, then you're ready to do the rest of the commands of Christ.

Repent of your sins, change your mind about your past sinful life and decide that you're going to live for God. Let that change of mind result

in a change of your action and a change of the way you live. That's repentance. And Jesus said, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish," (Luke 13: 3). Paul said that God "commands all men everywhere to repent," (Acts 17:30). Have you done that? Have you trusted in Christ? Have you repented of your sins?

Are you willing to confess your faith in Christ? Paul said in Romans 10:9-10 that, "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Are you willing to make the good confession similar to the one Peter made in Matthew 16:16, that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God," the good confession of I Timothy 6:12? You need to do that.

But that's not all. You must also allow yourself to be baptized, to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins. That's what the people were told to do in Acts 2. When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, he said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). Will your faith lead you to be obedient to all of God's commands and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sin? Ananias said to Saul of Tarsus, why do you delay? "Why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord," (Acts 22:16).

If you've not done those things, then you are outside the body of Christ. And yet all spiritual blessings are in Christ, according to Ephesians 1:3. Galatians 3:27 says we are baptized into the body of Christ. If you've not obeyed the gospel plan of salvation culminating in baptism, you're not a part of the body of Christ. That's why it's so important for you to consider these things, and to consider the plan of God and how that plan fits into your life. Then you need to be obedient to God's plan. If we can help you to obey the gospel, then we hope that you'll contact us and let us know that you need our help in doing that. We'll see that you get the help that you need.

If you'd like a copy of today's lesson, whether on audio CD or cassette tape or DVD, and if you'll let us know by contacting us at P.O. Box 865, Hurst, Texas, 76053, then we'll gladly send you a copy of today's lesson, absolutely free. Or send us an e-mail at requests@thetruthinlove.com or access our website at www.thetruthinlove.com and let us know what your request is, and we'll be glad to fill it.

I want to thank you again for being a part of our program today. We'll continue our series of lessons next time, and I hope that you'll join us then.

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