

A resource of Christian Witness to Israel (N. America)
to challenge, assist and equip in local Jewish evangelism.

THE AC COURSE



Awakening
the
Conscience
of the
Christian
Church

CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS

3B BACK TO BASICS

Peter and Pentecost

COMPLETE COURSE OUTLINE

The Biblical Burden for Jewish Mission The Hope throughout History for Jewish Redemption Contemporary Connections for Jewish Salvation

THE BIBLICAL BURDEN

<i>The MOTIVE</i>	<i>Psalm 67</i>	<i>The Praying patriarchs</i>
	<i>Romans 9-11</i>	<i>The Praying apostle</i>
<i>The METHODOLOGY</i>	<i>Isaiah 63</i>	<i>The Longing of the prophet</i>
	<i>Luke 4</i>	<i>The Liberation of The Prophet</i>
<i>The MISSIONOLOGY</i>	<i>2Cor 3&4</i>	<i>The Ministry that is glorious</i>
	<i>Acts 20-22</i>	<i>The Ministry that is blessed</i>
<i>The MANDATE</i>	<i>Psalm 150</i>	<i>The Holy hallelujahs</i>
	<i>Rev 4&5</i>	<i>The Cosmic chorus</i>

THE HOPE OF HISTORY

<i>PROTECTIVE PROVIDENCE</i>	- <i>Past, Present, Future</i>
<i>PIRATES OF PROVIDENCE</i>	- <i>Expulsion and Expansion</i>
<i>REPLACEMENT AND DEFACEMENT</i>	- <i>Forgotten and Forsaken</i>
<i>REFORMATION AND RE-EMBRACEMENT</i>	- <i>The Puritan Hope</i>
<i>The LIE OF THE LAND</i>	- <i>Too much love will kill you</i>
<i>REWRITING THE RAPTURE</i>	- <i>Confusion and correction</i>

CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS

<i>The CHALLENGES TO CONNECTING</i>	<i>The separated and the assimilated</i>
	<i>The atheist and the evangelical</i>
<i>The FRAGRANCE OF FRIENDSHIP</i>	<i>The aroma of Christ</i>
<i>The WISDOM OF WORDS</i>	<i>(Un)common language</i>
<i>RABBINIC REINTERPRETATIONS</i>	<i>Jewish objections</i>
	<i>Peter and Pentecost</i>

GENERAL GUIDELINES:

1. As you begin each study, pray for the Lord's grace and wisdom.
2. Discipline yourself to set aside one hour for each paper.
3. Keep a personal 'physical' notebook.
4. Begin with the questions and in your own notebook, answer each question in one sentence, prior to engaging in the study.
5. Read through the paper in one sitting, with note-taking.
6. Answer the questions again; this time, a paragraph each.

Feel free to send your answers to me, ask further questions, or simply make appropriate comments.

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CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS

3B: Rabbinic Reinterpretations

Peter & Pentecost

QUESTIONS:

1. Can you think of similarities and differences between rabbinical Judaism and that proclaimed by the early apostles?
2. Our connecting with Jewish people must be done with sensitivity, but in what ways can we 'arrest' their attention?
3. How can we overcome the 21st century tendency to soundbite comments and conversations, and communicate with individuals on substantial matters?
4. How can we make Jesus an unavoidable reality to our Jewish contacts and declare that there is salvation in no-one else.

3b Peter and Pentecost

INTRODUCTION

As we draw to a conclusion our 'contemporary' wisdom section, I was us to take a lesson from one of the earliest instances of Jewish evangelism: namely Peter at Pentecost. Here we have a Jewish fisherman, now turned fisher of men, preaching the gospel to a gathered group of Jewish people at a Jewish festival. There are lessons for us there indeed.

Last study we sought to make clear that Rabbinic Judaism has so radically reinterpreted Biblical Judaism as to render it unrecognizable. This comes as a shock to many in the church who think they understand what Jewish people believe. It also would likely come as a shock to Peter, that Jewish fisherman. So I thought it appropriate and helpful to leave the rabbinic reinterpretations behind and restore 1st century Jewish evangelism to its rightful place. It is not that it is not important to know something of the rewrite of the religion of Israel, but it is more important to reflect upon the original, noting the changes made and restoring an evangelism initiated by the Jewish evangelists themselves.

Many of you will have heard of Jews for Jesus; a sister missionary organization with whom we have close working relations. They began in the 1970's particularly through the dynamic ministry of a Jewish believer called Moishe Rosen, their founder. But they weren't the first Jews for Jesus.

The first 'JfJ' were in Acts 2 and became particularly noteworthy following an incident at a Jewish festival called Pentecost or Shavuot. At that festival around AD30, a Jewish fisherman called Shimon Petros, or Simon Peter, preached about his rabbi, Yeshua, who had just been crucified by the Romans, but he had seen him alive, and proclaimed him Lord

and Messiah.

Acts 2 in a sense, is about a Jewish festival getting hi-jacked, and a Jewish sect being born: Jesus-believing 'messianic' Jews. Of course that sect of Judaism was really the believing remnant of a chosen people, the 'real Israel' to whom was given spiritual sight, active faith, and specifically here in Acts 2, a unique outpouring of the Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God would thus equip and empower them to go into all the world and preach this gospel of their crucified, risen, ascended, Lord and Messiah.

Perhaps that's not your normal introduction to Acts 2 but we need to see this in its original context and Jewish background, before we apply its truths and its instructions to present day Jewish evangelism.

Also please note that in Acts 2 we are referred back to the prophet Joel. So I want you to keep a finger in there as well. We have a lot to get through in this session and I can't deal at length with the whole of the Pentecost event, but rather I want to draw our attention to three aspects of it, with parallels in Joel, and applications for bringing the gospel to our Jewish neighbors.

Those 3 things are: LISTEN – LEARN – LOOK.

1. LISTEN

There are times when God causes us to 'listen up'. He often does so by significant circumstances. With His ancient people He often did so by life-threatening events. Furthermore, He often taught his people by their remembering those life-threatening events and His accompanying life-giving deliverances.

Pentecost was the Jewish festival of 'Weeks'. A week of weeks

being 49 days, was followed by the 50th which was then Pente-cost (check Leviticus 23:16 for details). It was originally a harvest festival called Shavuot. In the Inter-Testamental time Shavuot was celebrated by also remembering God's promise to Noah never again to destroy the world by flood.

So it was a harvest thanksgiving with due remembrance of past deliverances. It was also a celebration of 'first fruits'. All these things are significant when we think of the growth of numbers of the early Jewish believers.

In Acts 2:1 we read that 'they were all together'. Who were all together? The observant faithful Jewish people were gathering to observe the festival. These were law abiding, expectant, thankful Jews. We might even consider some measure of their hearts being prepared. This was a faithful expectant gathering. This was a people who would have known the prophecies... particularly when Peter would refer to the prophet Joel.

As we read the narrative we find there's a bit of misunderstanding and even some thoughts about drunkenness. But Peter addresses that (Acts 2:14, 16, 22) by calling everyone to - Listen! Men of Israel, hear these words!

Let's flick back (even just in our minds) to the book of Joel. Remember these were faithful Jewish people who would have known the whole story of Joel. But perhaps we need a refresher? Joel exercised his ministry around the time of Elisha, c. 800BC. Like many of the prophets, he saw things that were near, things that were coming, and things far off.

It may be that Joel preached his message at harvest time as he refers to a failed harvest. But note also his summoning words - (Joel 1:2) Hear this! Listen guys! *'Has such a thing ever happened?'* (Joel 1:4) The locust horde has decimated and

devastated the crops. Joel 1:10.

Now what does a failed harvest mean, biblically? Well, quite simply, it means God is not pleased. It is a wakeup call. Listen! It's a mess! (Joel 1:12) *'gladness dries up from the children of men.'* It is a depressing mess!

Isn't it interesting then that Peter on the day of Pentecost; on the day to celebrate with thankfulness the first fruits of God's favor, and His faithfulness toward His people; Peter is effectively saying – It's a mess! Listen up!

We might paraphrase: *'50 days after Passover; 50 days after my rabbi friend Yeshua was put on a tree, we are here my friends. (Acts 2:22) Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God... with signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know... you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men (men outside of the law – that is, the Gentile Romans.) Listen, it's a mess, but let me tell you of mercy.'*

Isn't that what Peter is doing here? He is 'arresting them', with his words. Listen up! This is a good model for how to reach Jewish people.

APPLICATION: Jewish Evangelism involves arresting words.

Jews for Jesus today have a mission motto: *'We exist to make the messiahship of Jesus an unavoidable issue to our Jewish people worldwide.'*

Jewish mission, ours and Jews for Jesus, and all others worth their salt, exist to unavoidably confront Jewish people with Jesus. Isn't this your mission? Isn't this all mission? It involves 'arresting words'.

In a conversation I had with a Jewish man some time ago, I asked him if he had ever read Isaiah 53. When he read it he

came back to me saying, 'How did they do that?' He also went on to say – 'I've now read the New Testament twice, and it's all your fault!'

I first met him at a conference, where I had a booth, and I was talking with a colleague about heaven. The Jewish man had a booth close by and was advertising Israel tours. But he was listening in to our conversation! When we finished he said to me – '*I have never heard anything like that, tell me more...*' There was obviously something 'arresting' in the things of which we spoke.

Men of Israel; you in Jerusalem... Jesus, you know him. You've seen him. You've seen him crucified. Listen! He's alive! Listen up: into this mess, I want to tell you of mercy.

Isn't that what we all must do in our evangelism of Jew and Gentile. In your mess... in your failed harvest... there you find God's wakeup call. I've something to tell you. I want to arrest you, to stop you, to cause you to listen up. I have things I MUST share. I must bring this unavoidable reality - Jesus!

2. LEARN

Note that Peter preached a sermon. Take a moment to consider that and learn from it. In our twitter age, sound bite, meme, and social media posting, delivering a 'sermon' seems so much out of date. But it must never be! The God-ordained means of evangelism on the Day of Pentecost must not be lightly dismissed as the method of a by-gone age.

The public education of our children and even the news media manipulation of the adult population has so sought to limit considered thought; to downgrade substance, to move in the world of manipulated feelings, so that we are wooed one way or another by an image, a tag line, or a shared video.

Thus when it comes to gospel proclamation, the world (our 21st century world) has set our agenda. Yes, of course we should be culturally appropriate and utilize the means at our disposal, but many of our problems (theological, social, moral, political) stems from our lack of sermons! Even our sermons often lack serious substantial comment! The 'best life now' mentality; 'make me feel good' at church mindset has so infiltrated regular church life that it is hardly recognizable from days of old, never mind 1st century practice.

Listen up! Learn! Can we have a revival of this kind of Pentecostal practices! Oh, we love the tongues bit. How about we think a little more deeply, so much so that we get cut to the heart?

So there were things that this Jerusalem Pentecost audience needed to learn. But first let me take us back to Joel and the things that would already have been in the back of their minds. Joel refers to a failed harvest, and Peter arrests their attention with this, but then Joel references not only harvest failure that comes with certain signs, but also harvest fullness, also with signs.

Joel 2:12,13 *'Return to Me... Rend your hearts'* (cut or circumcise your hearts). Joel 2:17 *'weep...'* v25 *'I will restore the years that the swarming locust has eaten.'* v27 *'you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel...'* Then poignantly in v28 *'I will pour out my spirit...'*

Peter, after getting their attention on the Day of Pentecost, then delivers a teaching sermon, an exposition and application of Joel's prophecy. And while some prophecies are hard to understand and difficult to know if and when they are fulfilled, Peter is now saying: THIS IS IT!

Jeremiah had prophesied (Jeremiah 31) about a New Covenant with the house of Israel in which the law would be put in their hearts. This is it! Not only would there be the priesthood of all believers, but the prophet-hood of all believers; your sons and daughters. God will be in your midst. His name shall be Immanuel – God with us.

Listen, Jerusalem... now learn Jerusalem. Jesus was delivered up according to the plan and foreknowledge of God. You killed him but he lives as prophesied in Ps. 110 and Ps. 16.

He was attested, he was seen, he is the Messiah, dead, buried, raised – and we have seen it (Acts 2:32), and you are now seeing the fruit of it (Acts 2:33). So – LEARN – Acts 2:36 – *'let the house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified.'*

Now we need to see something of the radical nature of what Peter is preaching here and what he expects them to LEARN. They are basically being told to leave the priests and come to Christ. He is hi-jacking a Jewish festival and making it a messianic one. But really he is simply teaching and summoning an observant remnant Israel to follow the religion of their forefathers, now in its fulfillment.

Pentecost wasn't the birthday of the church. I've already spoken of this in an earlier study. The qahal and ekklesia went back 4,000 years. But now this unique outpouring of the Spirit meant that Remnant Israel would spread out into all the darkened nations of the world. It's for you, your children, and for all those who are afar off; those far off Gentiles in the lands yet unknown, to be called the United States!

This is a lot to learn. But in the first instance they are to learn about sin and salvation. Remember those two things we brought up as essential in our conversations, even with

Jewish atheists! Well, here it is to an observant remnant he speaks of the same things.

You killed him – Law – Sin.

God raised him – Gospel – Salvation.

Without going into the details of Peter's sermon we must simply note that it was plain, practical, personal and persuasive. (There's a model for every preacher!) We might even add one more. It was potent! It was powerful to save.

They were to learn in no uncertain terms that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah; that he suffered and died for sin and that he was raised, for our justification. These first Jews for Jesus had the privilege of seeing him and were now telling of him.

Listen up – House of Israel. Learn this – House of Israel.

APPLICATION: Jewish Evangelism involves patient teaching.

We Gentiles need to try to understand how difficult it is for Jewish people to come to Jesus. We may use 'arresting words', but we need to teach further. With 2,000 years of rabbinic re-interpretations and 2,000 years of largely bad church history, we need to be in it for the long haul. We need to engage in patient teaching.

We might even argue that this Pentecost crowd was somewhat heart-ready or expectant. There was indeed a lot of messianic fervor around at that time. But not today. Today, generally speaking, Jewish people are allowed to believe anything, except Jesus. The Orthodox will spit at the sound of his name. When we're talking with secular Jewish people, they will still have warped views about Jesus and the New Testament. We need patient teaching. We need much prayer as we seek to use sensitive and yet 'arresting' words. We need

patient friendship development as we teach the things of God's redemptive plan from Genesis to Revelation.

Some of my colleagues have witnessed to Jewish friends for 10 or 20 years before they saw a saving breakthrough. We are to provoke to jealousy. In our lips and in our lives, we are to make Jewish people jealous. But one thing for sure, we are to make Jesus unavoidable.

We must bring up the matter of sin and salvation even if Jewish people today think entirely differently, as we have considered in an earlier study. So even more patient teaching may be necessary. Yet also can I challenge preachers? What exactly is the Jesus we are presenting in our churches? What are we teaching about sin? ...if at all? What are we teaching about salvation? Is he being proclaimed as some kind of psychological pick me up pill? Is he being marketed as a financial, or marital enrichment program – 'Jesus is good for you!'

Instead, we need to hear:

You killed Him – Law. God raised him – Gospel.

How we need more teaching sermons than life-enrichment sermons! Get over ourselves and let me tell you of God, the Holy God and of sin, righteousness and judgment to come! Oh for this kind of Pentecostal revival sermon! This is exactly where Peter brings them: Listen, learn, now Look!

3. LOOK

As Peter continues and even climaxes his sermon, he refers to the end of Joel chapter 2, about the wonders in the heavens and earth. He reminds them of the Day of the Lord that is coming. But if your finger is still in Joel, look at the beginning of Joel chapter 2. Blow the shofar – that wake up trumpet blast – and fear, for the day of the Lord is coming.

This is a summons to look up! It is a call to repentance. When Peter references this, he is not only calling them to listen and learn, but also to look: in repentance and faith. Look at the saving mercies of God. Look, and call upon the name of the Lord. The well-versed Jewish person would know his Joel! Joel 2 is a little fuller than Acts 2 – *'everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved... and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls'* (2:32).

What happened when Peter preached Christ and summoned them to look. We read in Acts 2:37 that they were cut to the heart. There was clear, unavoidable, conscious guilt. Having been convicted, they were then counseled, and following that, then comforted. Note the order! We get it the wrong way around. We all want those comforting messages; those fix me up messages. Please do 'Church-lite' on convicting messages. But here it: conviction, counsel, comfort. This is the right biblical order of evangelism, for Jew and Gentile.

This Jesus was delivered by the plan of God. You killed him. God raised him. We have seen it. We beheld his glory. (Permit me a little license) Maybe Peter shouted over to his colleague. *'Hey Thomas, do you doubt anymore?' 'No, He made me touched the holes in his hands: He's God!'* Yes, House of Israel, He's Lord and Christ. Repent and be baptized in his name for forgiveness of sins.

Notice our scripture says that wasn't the end of the sermon! With many others words, he was continually summoning them: Save yourselves from this crooked generation! Be 'remnant Israel'! We will be the sect within the synagogue. We will be the first Jews for Jesus! Thus we read (Acts 2:41) *'and 3,000 were added'*. Some reckon that by the time of Acts 8, and Stephens' death there were about 20,000 Jews for Jesus.

Do you know how many Jewish believers there are in Israel

today? Some say, around 20,000. 1st century / 21st century.

APPLICATION: Jewish Evangelism involves a summons to look to Jesus.

We're not so good at summoning people in our politically correct age? We're not too good either at declaring sin as sin. We're not very good at speaking clearly about repentance, the way our forefathers used to. Let me remind you of the Shorter Catechism Q. 87: *'Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience.'*

Grief and hatred of sin?! Oh dear friends, Christ bled and died! Dare we do church-lite?! Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation. Grief, hatred, turning from it, turning to the mercy of a crucified and loving Lord, with full purpose of, and endeavor after new obedience. Save yourselves from this corrupt generation. Christ alone saves, but in the mystery of progressive sanctification, all are summoned to *'work out your salvation with fear and trembling'*. This is not a let go, and let God. There is a cutting and plucking, a putting to death by the Spirit, the deeds of the flesh.

One of our missionaries had a Jewish friend to whom he had been witnessing for 10 years. The friend called him one morning. *'I had a dream last night. All my family were falling into the pit of hell and I was trying to grab them and save them I woke up clawing the walls. What does this mean?'*

My colleague replied saying: *'It means this is God's wake up call. You can't save your family, but you need to save yourself, and live a life that shows forth that salvation.'* Within a few hours that tough Jewish man was on his knees trusting in the

Lord Jesus.

Jewish evangelism (and all evangelism) involves arresting words, patient teaching, but ultimately bringing them, yes even summoning them, to this unavoidable reality: Jesus is the only Savior. We call you to listen, learn and look to Him.

Conclusion:

A couple of years ago I was wakened on a Saturday morning by our whole house shuddering. I had known some storms before in NW Arkansas. We live in tornado alley. But this was different. I soon realized this was an earthquake. I had never in my life experienced an earthquake before. I learned later that we were about 100 miles from the epi-center. I also learned in that instant, that this world, this solid ground, is not so solid. Indeed, 100's of miles were MOVING!

Can I just say to all of you: The great and terrible Day of the Lord is coming... when the sky shall recede like a scroll being rolled up. Once more He will shake the heavens and the earth!

Therefore...

Listen **Learn** ... and

Look to Jesus, and be saved, ends of the earth.

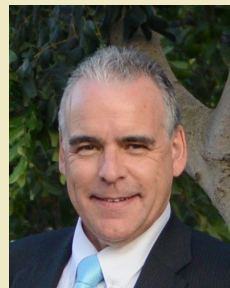
Let us learn to evangelize in the manner of the Jewish fisherman, with arresting words, patient teaching and a summons to repent and believe.

O that we might experience another Pentecost... in Jerusalem and Judea, and in all the earth.

WHO ARE WE? WHAT DO WE DO?

DIRECTOR: STEPHEN ATKINSON

As **Director of Ministry** and 35 years of preaching experience, Stephen has been engaging with churches on behalf of CWI since 2004. With a Biblical mandate, historical reasoning, and present day missionary urgency, Stephen makes the case that every Church must have Jewish mission on its agenda!



MISSIONARY: MITCH TEPPER

As a **Jewish believer** Mitch has the apostle's burden for his own 'kindred after the flesh'. A graduate of Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, his Scriptural knowledge and personal passion drive him in his street evangelism, one on one relationships, and household bible studies, with the singular purpose of 'Telling Jewish people about Jesus'.



International Mission to Jewish People

Internationally we have been sharing Jesus with Jewish people for almost 180 years. Today we have missionaries in the USA, UK, Israel, France, Holland, Hungary, Australia, all faithfully witnessing to Jewish communities across the world.



CHRISTIAN WITNESS TO ISRAEL (N America)

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