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The Suspension of God's Plan for the Jews, and the Church Age



By Steven J. Hogan

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The book of Acts is God's history of the early church. But it is in Acts 1, 2, 3, where God tells us some things He wants us to know about the future of the Jews and the future of the church. God tells us that Christ ascended into heaven and that He'd come back, but in between there'd be this interval, the *"last days"*, the church age. God tells us that it's during these last days that the gospel is to be preached, and then this age will come to an end. God also tells us that there will be the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, but more than that, the restoration of all things. Let me explain further:

Acts 1:4-11. Jesus was teaching the apostles about the kingdom of God, and this was both the spiritual kingdom of God where He'd rule in the hearts of Christians, and the physical kingdom of God where He'd rule over the world. These Jewish apostles then asked Jesus the question that was uppermost in their minds. *"Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"* Jesus answered them, but He

didn’t say that the kingdom wouldn’t be restored to Israel, but that they didn’t need to know when it would be restored – He just wanted them to focus on their new job, proclaiming the gospel to all the nations.

Not long after this, the apostles watched Jesus ascend into heaven. They had to have been confused seeing Him leave – they had to have been wondering what was going to happen. But the angel assures them, *“This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”* To hear that Jesus was coming back had to have been very encouraging, for they knew it meant that He would then be *“restoring the kingdom to Israel.”*

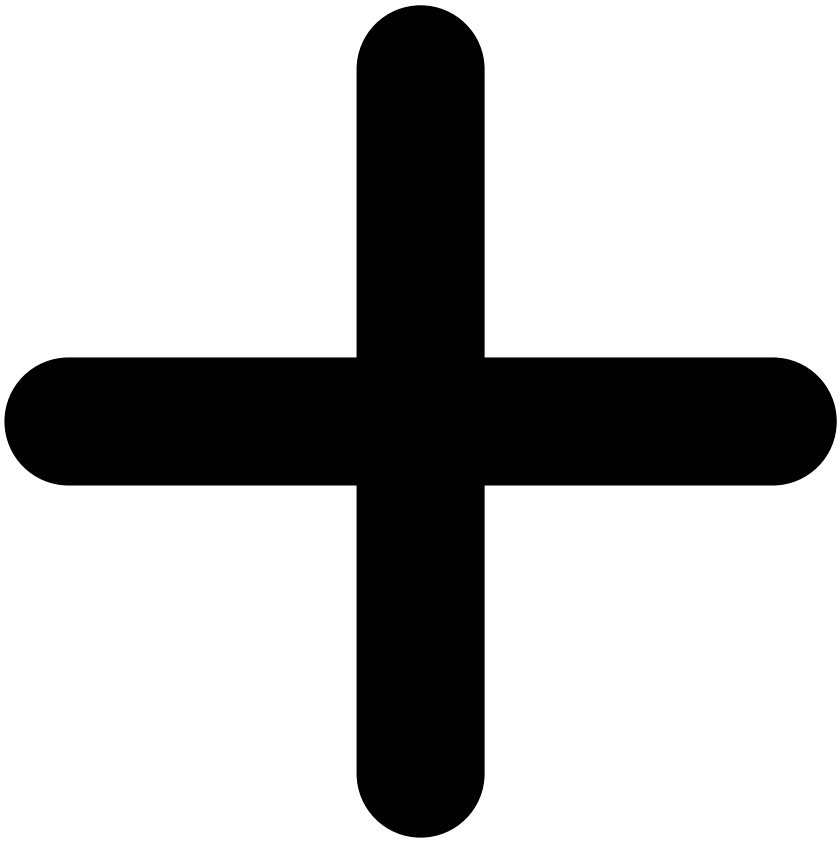
Acts 2:17-21. With passion and clarity, Peter is preaching to the Jews. He calls the church age *“the last days”*, a phrase referring to the last part of this present evil age, an age that started a long time ago with the sin of Adam and Eve. But it was about 2000 years ago that the church age started with the outpouring of the Spirit, and an age that will end with the sudden appearance of signs on the earth and wonders in the heavens. The Jews knew from the prophets that these signs and wonders would occur before the Day of the Lord, God’s devastating judgment of the earth (Isaiah 13:6-11, Joel 2:30-31). But it’s during this church age that the gospel is to be preached, and that people need to call on the Lord to be saved from their sins – before it’s too late, before the Day of the Lord.

Acts 3:17-21. A primary purpose during the church age is stated again, that sinners are to *“repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”* But what happens after the last days, after this church age is over? It will not just be *“restoring the kingdom to Israel”* (Acts 1:6), but the *“the restoration of all things.”* This restoration will be under the direction of Christ Himself, and will take place after the celestial signs and after the Day of the Lord. *“The Lord will be King over all the earth.”* Zechariah 14:9

Acts 1, 2, 3 makes it clear that God never diminished or negated His promises to the Jews, that the church never replaced the Jews. But what happened back in the first century is that God suspended His plans for the Jews. One reason He did this was so His plans for the church would be fulfilled during the last days. *“A partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, and so all Israel will be saved.”* Romans 11:25-26

In summary, Acts 1, 2, 3 tells us that the church age starts with the pouring out of the Spirit, and ends with the appearance of the signs and the wonders. Then Christ will come back and rapture the believers, and then the Day of the Lord, the wrath of God, will begin. After God’s justice is carried out, Christ will rule over the earth for 1000 years, there will be the restoration of all things, and the fulfillment of God’s promises to the Jews. As Christians, we will reign with Christ during His millennial kingdom.

Whereas the book of Acts talked about the beginning of the church age, now we live at the end of the church age, and we know that Christ’s return is very soon. The apostles had their time to serve the Lord and now it is our time to serve the Lord. With love and zeal for God, might we fight the good fight and finish the course He has given us. And maybe you and I will see Christ *“come in just the same way”* as the apostles saw Him taken into heaven, and then, *“We who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we always be with Him.”* 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Amen!





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