

Mystery5

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[0 : 0 0] The middle of the message this morning is mystery and its content. And I would like you to please turn in your bulletin, and you will find there a white sheet that deals with Miles Coverdale.

So please take a look at that sheet. Miles Coverdale, in 1535, gave us the first complete printed English Bible.

In speaking of the study of it, he wrote. Now I would like all of us to read in unison what he wrote.

It shall greatly help you to understand Scripture if you mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goes before and what follows.

Then I would like you to please turn to Paul's book of 1 Timothy.

[1 : 3 9] And please turn in 1 Timothy to chapter 2. And in chapter 2, we will be looking at verses 1 through 8.

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men.

For kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

For there is one God and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.

[3 : 1 0] For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle. I am telling the truth. I am not lying. As a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Therefore, I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands without wrath and dissension.

Also, as indicated in your bulletin, we are contrasting the subject and the ministry of prayer as it is involved in both prophecy and in mystery.

And we have been trying to make a distinction between the two. And let me brief you a little bit for those who just may not be completely familiar with what we're talking about. At the nine o'clock hour each Sunday morning, we are dealing with whatever the subject matter might be from the standpoint of prophecy.

And that means as it relates to the previous administration or dispensation, which is kingdom oriented and is exclusively directed toward the nation of Israel.

[4 : 3 6] Thus, it has a distinct Jewishness to it that cannot be denied. And then the mystery part is that, which also could be referred to as a secret, which is a good synonym for the word mystery and sometimes communicates the idea a little better.

And we see that as a complete contrast to what the first administration under prophecy is, in that it is not addressed specifically to Jews or to a kingdom orientation.

It is addressed rather to everyone, Jew and Gentile, so that no distinction is made and those barriers are broken down. So what we have is an entirely different kind of order that is provided under one administration that was not under the other.

And if you do not recognize those distinctions, but you try to blend them and make everything fit, I can promise you nothing but frustration and contradiction.

They do not fit because they were never intended to fit. There is nothing wrong with the text. It's just that they are both representing two different areas and two different goals and two different everything.

[6 : 04] But if you don't recognize the distinction, which is what we refer to as rightly dividing the word of truth, then you are consigned to hopeless contradiction and frustration.

And I know, because I was there for several years, early on in my Christian life, I greatly respected the Bible, had no difficulty believing that it was God's word and that it was authoritative, but I sure couldn't see how things fit because they just didn't seem to fit.

Well, they weren't supposed to fit the way I was trying to make them fit. And no wonder it resulted in frustration. So what we're trying to do is reveal to you what we have learned in this process.

And once you get it under your belt and see the connection, and once that proverbial light comes on and it's, ah, now I get it, everything changes.

The book becomes a lot more understandable, a lot more precious, a lot more usable, a lot more practical, a lot more everything. And I say that as one who has been there as well.

[7 : 17] So, because I took virtually all of the time last week, I promised you adequate time this week for Q&A; and I intend to hold myself to that. So I've already made, I think, about all of the introduction that is needed.

And we will, well, maybe I'll clarify just a couple of other things. If you will look at this very, on the front of the bullet, well, let's read this again.

Let's go through this again. On the front of your bulletin, there's an explanatory note. And I am intentionally being somewhat repetitive to what I just said, but I am doing so, again, without apology because it is so important.

I want you to make sure that you get it. So reading from the front page of the bulletin, the question is sometimes asked about the practicality of right division. In other words, is it really necessary that we do that?

Does it actually make a difference whether we see the distinctions the Bible makes? After all, it is all the Word of God.

[8 : 22] Why don't we just take it as a whole and forget about this thing called right division? In this fifth session today that relates to prophecy, which, by the way, we undertook at the nine o'clock hour earlier this morning.

In this fifth session that relates to prophecy and its content number six, which is what we'll be taking now, it's the mystery, we will get a glimpse of the practical importance of right division and the subject of prayer.

Do we mean even this, that prayer is subject to right division? Absolutely. Only by this can we understand why so many prayers are amiss and unanswered.

The follow-up to this will be covered in today's morning worship service that follows at 1015, which is this. So, let me just add to that, if I may.

If you want to get the most complete picture, then you should have the advantage of the content from both the nine o'clock hour and the 1015 because they switch back and forth and sometimes they are interspersed one with another, which I think due to the subject matter is inevitable, and you get a fuller picture.

[9 : 48] But for those of you who say, for whatever reason, well, I can't be here at the nine o'clock hour, well, there are recordings made of it.

So, you're off the hook. And all you have to do is pick up the recording that was made at the nine o'clock hour, and you'll find them on the shelf outside by the bulletin board where there are free CD copies.

And if you look for the, look on the face of each CD, you will see not only the time that the teaching was given, whether it's 9 or 1015, but the date.

So, you'll be able, I trust, to keep them separate and be able to make some sense of that. But in order to get the clearest, most complete picture, you really need the advantage of both of them.

So, whether you get it live in person and are here, or whether you're not here and you get it recorded, the important thing is that you get it and the material is available to you.

[10 : 48] And I trust that it'll be worth your while to pursue that. So, I think you will benefit from it greatly. And now I want to just reemphasize what I've talked about in connection with the subject of prayer.

And as I mentioned at the 9 o'clock hour, I told you that the attitude and the thinking of most of the people out there in the pews is that pastors who do this kind of thing as a calling and for a living, if there's anything they really know everything all about, it's prayer.

And I'm here to tell you that, brethren, it ain't so. Prayer, I have found to be one of the more comforting comforting, yet confusing things in the Christian life.

And I do not say that with any degree of enjoyment, but I am just bearing my soul in telling you that I have been more confounded and more confused over the past 60 years about the subject of prayer than I have been anything else in the Christian life.

And in the beginning, I'm happy to tell you that most of that confusion has been dramatically allayed by simply coming to grips with the right division of the Word of God and being able to see that in the Bible, there are two distinct platforms that are set forth as regards the subject of prayer.

[12 : 39] The first has to do with that which is directed to the nation of Israel and it is under the Old Mosaic Covenant and it has a great deal of emphasis upon materialism and the physicality and the miraculous that is involved in prayer, such as we see in the Old Testament and also in the Gospels, particularly in the ministry of Christ.

And virtually all of the miracles that our Lord performed, he did on behalf of the Jew, Israel. Remember the lady who came to him who had a daughter who was sick and she was asking Jesus, she was a Syrophoenician lady.

She was not a Jew. She was a Gentile. And she came to Jesus as any desperate mother would who had a child that was terribly ill.

And she besought Jesus. In the first place, she obviously demonstrated an amount of confidence in Jesus and in his ability because she knew of others whom he had healed.

So she appealed to him on behalf of her daughter. And Jesus said, I hear your request.

[14 : 02] I'm sorry, but I can't do that because it is not fitting. It is not proper for me to take the food that is intended for the children and give it to the dogs.

What a terrible, hurtful thing to say to this poor woman. Can you imagine something like that coming from the lips of Jesus?

It is not appropriate, it is not fitting for me to take that which is intended for the children and give it to the dogs. See, calling this poor woman a dog and her daughter a dog Yes, yes.

Now we look at that askance and we say, well, I just cannot believe that Jesus would say, didn't he know anything at all about political correctness? Didn't he know that you can't go around hurting people's feelings like that?

To call this poor woman, well, you've got to understand something at least about the times and the culture. which was radically different from anything we know.

[15 : 19] And when you, when you get into the New Testament and you see the usage of the word dogs in the first place, it almost never means the four-legged variety with the waggity tail.

It almost never means that. Sometimes it does, but almost never. And a dog is a synonym for someone who is not Jewish.

What? Now that's not very good public relations either. You've got all these Jews going around calling everyone that isn't one of them dogs. That's not very nice either.

Well, why did they call them dogs? Primarily because a dog would eat almost anything. And so would Gentiles.

Gentiles would even eat ham sandwiches. And Gentiles would eat fish that didn't have scales like, you know, a Jew could not eat catfish because it doesn't have scales.

[16 : 23] It has to be skinned. But you can give a catfish to a Gentile dog and he'll eat it because these dogs will eat. So it's just a term. Granted, it was a pejorative term, but it was assigned to anyone who was not a Jew.

It was just automatically called a dog. Now, those who are not Jews also have a few pet names for those who are Jews, but we won't go into that.

So the insults kind of go back and forth. But Jesus did not mean this as an unkind insult. He was just explaining something to this. And why did he say that?

What was he talking about when he said, to give the children, give the food that is intended for the children. Who are the children? The Jews. And he said, I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

What does that mean? It means exactly what it says. When Jesus came from heaven because the Father sent him, he sent him to Israel.

[17 : 28] He came unto his own. And his own received him not. That's Israel. That's the Jew. That's John's Gospel, chapter 1. He came to Israel exclusively.

But he came to Israel for the whole world. And his intent was to get the nation Israel on board in the plan and program of God and then they, as the nation of Israel, would serve as a nation of priests.

The whole nation of Israel, not just Levi, the whole nation of Israel would serve as priests to the Gentiles.

The problem was, Israel wasn't interested. They did not take up the opportunity. In fact, they rejected the opportunity and that which they were designed to do be a light to the Gentiles.

They never fulfilled, but they shall. So God had another plan in store and it was entirely different. Nobody would have ever thought of it. It was God's way of doing something to realize his objective even by bypassing the nation of Israel, which is exactly what he did by raising up the Apostle Paul and starting a whole new administration that nobody before had ever even dreamed of or thought of.

[19 : 03] And the best commentary you'll get on that is in Ephesians 3, which really explains it. So we've got these two different programs and you know what? Prayer. Prayer is different in one of those administrations than it is in the other.

In the first administration, we find Jesus saying things like, whatsoever you ask in my name, I will do. And I remember how desperately I tried to claim that as a young Christian.

This would have been back in the late 50s. I guess that dates me a little bit. But I read that verse and I read those verses in John's Gospel that the Father will ask whatever you ask in my name, that will the Father do.

And were there two or three gathered together in my name, that will I do. I looked at that and I thought, wow, who's that for? Well, that's for everybody. After all, the Bible is for everybody.

That's for everybody. That's going to work for everybody. And I rationalize it on the basis that God hasn't changed. People haven't changed. Our needs are the same. Our problems are the same, et cetera.

[20 : 06] But you know what? When I tried to implement those, all it resulted in was disappointment and frustration because it didn't work for me.

Well, I knew the problem couldn't be God's. I knew the problem had to be me. So what is it with me? Well, I guess I have some sin in my life that I'm not aware of that I need to find out about and confess it or I don't have enough faith.

And I would beat myself up with that and I would wonder what it was that I was doing wrong. How was it I displeased God and why these things seemed to work for other people but they didn't work for me. And it wasn't until I came into these glorious truths that I'm trying to share with you that it all made a whole lot of sense.

So, I'm going to turn it over to you now and see what you would like to say by way of questions or comments and who would like to be first. Anyone?

Okay, clear in the back. Last week, last week you were talking about we were at the cross with Jesus.

[21 : 28] I'm sure that I didn't understand what you were saying. If I was there, was I there before I accepted Christ as my Savior or only after I accepted Christ as my Savior?

If I was there before I accepted Christ, was I there because God knew I would accept Christ in the future? Or was it because God predestined me to be a believer, thus necessitating my presence at the cross, that I would be accepting Christ in the future?

I'm a bit confused. It's probably because I'm trying to use my knowledge of chronological time instead of God's understanding of the time. If we all have free will, then perhaps everyone was there since they did not exist at that time.

Okay, thank you. Well, in the first place, I would say based on what we're talking about, is an old spiritual song that developed out of the South many, many years ago. And we've told you last week some of the lines of it.

And the writer of the song asked the question, were you there when they crucified my Lord? And I related to you that what that was actually talking about is, are you in Christ?

[22 : 35] Are you identified with Christ? Have you become a believer in Christ? Because if you were, if you are, then it is just as if, and there's the key, of course, just as if, you were there on that cross with Jesus, dying with Him, suffering the pain and everything that He was.

What we are talking about is positionality as opposed to practicality. Practicality, of course, we weren't there.

None of us were there. We weren't even thought of. But positionally, this is the way God views things. God does not see things as they occur. God sees everything as it is or as it was or as it will be.

He sees it all as if it is an eternal kind of present. We can't even begin to contemplate what that must be like to see the beginning from the end.

But He has a perspective that is full and complete. And when we talk about being in Christ and having the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world, what does that mean?

[23 : 52] Christ slain before the foundation of the world? Well, yes. From God's perspective, the way God views it, the way we view it. Jesus didn't come along until some 2,000 years ago and 33 years later after He arrived in Bethlehem, He was crucified on that cross and He rose from the dead, et cetera.

But as far as God is concerned, that was a done deal. It was all wrapped up. God sees the beginning from the end. And at the same time, this does not, this does not conflict with the human will because there is the marriage and the combination of divine sovereignty and the human will.

and when we find prophetic portions of Scripture indicating something, that does not mean that the individual who is indicated in that prophecy was destined or predestined to do that and had no choice in the matter.

And perhaps the best example of that would be would be Judas. The Old Testament prophesies about Jesus being betrayed by one of His friends and some would take the position that because it was prophesied that Judas would do that, he really didn't have a choice in the matter.

He was predestined to do that. He was pre-programmed to do that. And that is not true at all. That is not what has taken place. It is simply a recording of what God knew was going to transpire.

[25 : 35] But that does not mean that God made Judas do that. It's just that God knew that Judas was going to do that. Thus, it was prophesied in advance.

But that doesn't mean that God was responsible and that He programmed Judas to do that. And Judas didn't have any say-so about it at all. Yes, He did. He was culpable.

He was responsible. So there is a big distinction that needs to be made here and I'm trying to make it. So God speaks about these things as though they are already past.

And you find that many, many times, particularly in the New Testament, where God states something that, and speaks of it as if it had already occurred, and especially in Revelation, do you find that?

And we aren't even there yet. But as far as God is concerned, it's a package deal. It's done. It's over with. With Him, there's no surprises. We're the only ones who are surprised because we don't have the perspective that God has.

[26 : 37] Probably the best illustration that I can give of that, and it's probably as good as any, when you are in your vehicle and you're going down the street and you come to a railroad crossing and all of a sudden that big arm comes down over the railroad tracks and you have to stop there.

And nowadays, when they put on two or three of those humongous diesel engines, they can pull a couple of hundred cars.

It's amazing. And you sit there at the intersection and you can even read the printing and the things that have been written on the side of each of those cars as they come by.

And they just occupy your peripheral vision as straight ahead. One car at a time that's got all these numbers on it and says Wabash on this one and it says Rhode Island something on this one.

And you just sit there and you wait and you wait and you drum on the dashboard and the cars come by one at a time and it seems like it ticks for and your perspective is limited to what you see passing in front of you.

[27 : 51] That's all you can see. But when you go out to one of our great plain states where there are thousands of acres and the breadth is just so wide and so enormous and you can look off in the distance and way out there, way out there, you see that same train with all the cars and you can see the three diesels that are pulling them and you can count almost 200 cars that go behind and you see the whole schmear, all of it, from the beginning to the end because you've got a perspective there that you don't have at the railroad crossing.

Now, any illustration you give to try to define God's perspective is of necessity a poor illustration and that's a poor illustration but humanly speaking, you can see the difference, can you not?

All you see is just that little window but out there is that huge expanse, you see the beginning from the end. God sees the beginning from the end and He knows exactly what the outcome is going to be and He does not program anyone to do anything but He knows what they're going to do and this is why the Scriptures often speak of these things as if they're already occurred.

This is exactly how He could say that Christ is the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world but wasn't that somewhat tenuous because after all Jesus prayed, Father, if it be possible, if there's any way that we can get this done without my doing what I need to do, can we do it that way?

But at the same time, Jesus also added, nevertheless, not my will but yours be done. So, that's how He was the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world and that's how if you are in Christ, if you are in Christ, it is God looking at you as if you were on that cross paying the penalty for your own sin in Christ and you didn't pay anything because Jesus paid it all but positionally, that's what He credits you with and He also credits you with being raised from the dead.

[30 : 29] He credits you with being seated with Christ in the heavenlies. Well, we all know that we're anything but that. We're seated right here. As far as God is concerned, it's all over and done with.

We are seated with Christ in the heavenlies. Does that help? Okay, thank you. Are there other comments or questions? Someone else?

Up here. Okay. Okay. My question has to do with Israel and spiritual Israel because it seems like the distinction between Israel and the body is the foundational viewpoint for understanding right division.

so in Roman, there's two verses in Romans and this is coming out of discussions I've had with other people who don't agree with this position.

Romans 4 says that Abraham was the father of us all and Romans 9 says that they are not all Israel which are of Israel which leads the discussion to what we might term spiritual Israel and Paul is the one who deals with that and so I'm not talking about replacement theology more from the idea of is spiritual the viewpoint that spiritual Israel is really the body of Christ and how you would understand spiritualism in the context of right division.

[32 : 05] Okay, thank you. It's a very good question and it's one over which grace believers differ and I don't want to reduce this to mere semantics but I do think it's an important distinction that ought to be made.

We are to be referred to as and I think we are as believers in Christ we are spiritual seed of Abraham but I don't think it's correct to call us spiritual Israel.

We are not spiritual Jews either. There is no way that we can become a Jew unless of course you want to go through the Jewish catechism and formally apply for status as a Jew in a synagogue setting and be converted to Judaism that way but there is no other way that you could become a recognized Jew.

So what I am saying is that every believer in Christ is spiritual seed of Abraham and Abraham is our spiritual father but we are not Jews and we are not spiritual Jews we are spiritual seed of Abraham and some would say that that makes no difference that that still makes us spiritual Jews and I would simply respectfully disagree with that.

we are not Jews in any sense of the word we are Gentiles and a Jew is a Jew and there isn't anything that a Jew can do to forfeit his Jewishness even if a Jew becomes a Christian he's still a Jew he's just a Hebrew Christian if a Jew becomes a Mormon he's still a Jew he becomes a Jew who has embraced the Mormon faith but he you are born as a Jew and it's something that a Jew has labeled him he is that's what he is for the rest of his life and you know this misunderstanding is one of the things that dissuades some Jews from making a profession is the fact that they don't understand they think that to believe on Jesus Christ who is the Christian Savior would mean giving up my Jewishness no it doesn't not at all you cannot forfeit your Jewishness if you are a Jew even if you convert to some other religion whether it's

[34 : 45] Roman Catholic or Protestant or you become a Lutheran or whatever it is you're still a Jew and you will always be a Jew it's the same way as saying when you come to faith if you've got German parentage when you came to faith with German parentage and you believe whatever it is you believe you don't stop being German you're still German by extraction nothing's going to change that I don't know if that's helpful to you or not if it isn't say on I think it was specifically about the term spiritual Israel which doesn't appear in the Bible but is a concept that is used to counteract this idea of right division yeah and what your answer would be it seems like you would disagree that anybody but Israelites are spiritual Israel yeah when Paul says when Paul says they are not all Israel that are Israel and that does not mean that there are others who are

Israel and that's us I don't think that's what he's saying at all not at all what he means is and if you look at the context there in Romans it's Romans what is Romans Romans 9 verse 6 Romans 9 verse 6 okay let's take a quick look at it yeah for they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel and all all he means by that is that there are there are Jews who are faithful to their calling and to their heritage and there are Jews who are not and he is simply saying that there are Jews who are Jews in name only but they are not what God would characterize as bona fide Jews because a bona fide Jew is one who has the faith of Abraham and it's just like saying they are not all Christians who claim to be

Christians now we certainly understand what that means don't we well it's the same thing that applies to the Jew and there are Jews who make professions of being Jewish but they are not Jewish after the heart of Abraham at all Abraham is the father of the Jew and he's simply saying there are those who are the phonies and there are those who are not this is exactly what Jesus was talking about also when he addressed the Pharisees and the crowd of scribes and he said these people he's talking about his own Jewish people he's saying these people honor me with their lips but their heart is far from me that's another way of saying they are not Jews after the seed and the kind of Abraham they are on the outside okay anything else yes right back here so during this discussion we talked about how in the

Old Testament or under the prophetic program there was not much if anything really it was mostly focused on the coming kingdom the earthly kingdom things of the flesh and you know in the mystery it's a lot about heaven and or spiritual life and you know I was thinking you know there's actually a big debate between the Sadducees and the Pharisees about whether there was an afterlife a resurrection so to speak and I was trying to think is there anything in the Old Testament that would reference such a thing and the only thing that I could think of is something that Job said when he was talking a famous passage where he says that I know that my redeemer lives and he specifically says that after my skin is destroyed I believe that I will see in my flesh I shall see God but other than that I can't think of really anything and I can kind of see how it would be a debate and even today

I think that many Jews don't believe in an afterlife at all and maybe I'm wrong about that but that's kind of what I've seen so I don't know if you have any comments regarding that or why that might be something that's somewhat obscure in the Old Testament well you've got a good question there and it's something that a lot of people have wondered about for a long time we do not have any instance in the Old Testament where anyone to the best of my recollection speaks of dying leaving this earth and going to heaven we've got one case of someone who went to heaven but he didn't even die to get there and that was Elijah and he was taken up to heaven in that chariot that whirlwind of fire which is a really unusual case and a separate case what we do have is the reference that Nathan referred to about Job saying though worms destroy this body yet in my flesh I shall see

[40:11] God well that is a clear reference to an anticipation of the resurrection in so far as the Sadducees were concerned and you know the old cliché says that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection that is why they were so sad you see forgive me but both of these Sadducees and Pharisees are virtually non-existent in the Old Testament you read from Genesis to Malachi and you will not turn up a Pharisee or a Sadducee anywhere they just aren't there and the reason they aren't there is that they never come into being yet they surface during that 400 silent years between the Old Testament and the New Testament there were four centuries when there was no revelation given from God at all until Matthew picked up his pen and began writing and up until that time there were 400 years of silence and during those 400 years which is commonly referred to as the intertestamental period the

Sadducees and the Pharisees came into being the Pharisees were actually a loosely knit group of laymen they were not actually what you would call official functionaries in the temple or anything like that they were not priests etc and the Sadducees were I guess you would say that the Sadducees were the liberals of their day and the Pharisees were the conservatives if that helps at all these two were at loggerheads usually and the only thing that I can find in the New Testament that the Sadducees and the Pharisees ever even agreed about was their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah that was the one point of agreement that they had and both of those were coming from positions of elevation they constituted the elite of the country the Sadducees were the actual ruling party they were more political than they were religious the Pharisees were more religious than they were political and they kind of locked horns on a number of occasions and

Jesus or Paul at least at one point recognized that they had a difference between them and he looked out there when he was being called into question he looked out there and he saw Sadducees there and Pharisees there and he turned to his Roman guard who was guarding him and was ready to take him away and he says it is for the hope of the resurrection of the dead that I am called into question this day and he knew that he had something started right then and he did between the Sadducees and the Pharisees would pop up and say well you know what's so bad about that because they believed in the resurrection but the Sadducees didn't so immediately he had those pitted against him quite interesting quite interesting it isn't until you come into the New Testament where we find any indication at all that really strongly very strongly insists on the bodily resurrection of the dead and it begins of course with our

Lord Jesus and I do not know what all is implied in this but I do know that Jesus and his resurrection is referred to as the first fruits from the dead in the same sense that agriculturally when you go out to harvest grain there are always some stalks of grain that ripen earlier than the rest of the field and they are called the first fruits it may be because they had a little richer soil under them it may be because they had advantage of more sunlight than some of the others that might have been shaded from the sun by a tree or something like that but for whatever reason there were certain stalks of grain that ripened before others and they were called the first fruits and they were also a kind of a guarantee that there would be a general harvest that would follow because you've got success there in the beginning with this little group here and they are the first fruits and that's an indication that more is to come

Jesus Christ is referred to particularly in 1 Corinthians as the first fruits of them that slept which simply means he is the first one who ever came back from the dead via resurrection of the body now that excludes of course those whom he raised from the dead like Jairus his widow and the son of the widow of Nain and excludes Elijah and Shunammite son a woman's son and that excludes that excludes Lazarus who was not resurrected from the dead he was resuscitated from the dead but he was not resurrected with a glorified body Jesus was the first one and he is referred to as the first fruits of them that slept and what that guaranteed was that there's going to be a whole lot more because the first fruits is just the earliest and we don't have that in the Old

[46 : 05] Testament any reference like that we've got in in Luke 16 and this is a controversial passage has to do with the rich man and Lazarus and I don't know scholars are divided as to whether it is a parable and that the principles who are involved in it were not actual human beings they were just made up by Jesus to illustrate the point he was telling a story and others insist that no this was a real honest to goodness thing that there is in this place called Hades two compartments one is called Abraham's bosom bosom which is the name given to a place of refuge and safety and delight and preference and blessing and everything else that's the best place to be Abraham's bosom but across that great gulf that is fixed between

Abraham's bosom and the other side there is that which is called Hades which is a common name that is sometimes translated hell but it really ought to be Hades and it means the place where all of the departed dead have gone who are not rightly related to God those who were rightly related to God found comfort and solace in Abraham's bosom and those who were not who were on the outside went to this other place that the rich man cried out and said that he's tormented in these flames I just don't know what to do with that I don't know what kind of flames they would be I don't know whether it's literal whether it's figurative all I know is it's bad and nobody wanted to be there but that seems to be a compartment to which some of these people went and we don't know this for sure either it's subject to different interpretations but there are some who believe that once

Christ was raised from the dead with a resurrected body then he was able to go to Abraham's bosom and release all of those who were there because they now could enjoy a resurrection predicated upon his having already attained resurrection that paved the way for them and he led captivity captive and that they were the ones that he took from Abraham's bosom and they are now in heaven with him where they are joined by everyone who is a believer in Christ who is absent from the body and present with the Lord and they are there with those but I'm not prepared to take that to the bank that's just one possibility it seems to make sense to me and yet there are good scholars who would disagree with it question in the back here can you briefly comment on prayer and laying on of hands as opposed to the

Old Testament and then the Pauline letters and then the other parts of the New Testament by James and John and stuff okay well we talked about that somewhat at the nine o'clock hour particularly about the laying on of hands James chapter 5 James says is there any sick among you let him call for the elders of the church and let them lay hands upon him and and pray over him and the prayer of faith shall save the sick and so on and we pointed out at the nine o'clock hour that that belongs to the previous administration James you see all of these things like we read in Miles Coverdale's writing this morning you have to understand to whom the scripture is speaking and when you read the book of James what do you find when you open the very first chapter and the very first verse it's something like James to the twelve tribes scattered abroad well now who might they be they are

Jews and they are scattered because of persecution they are scattered because the Romans and others had scattered them into all parts of the Mediterranean world and they scattered and James and Hebrews you can't possibly get more Jewish than the epistle to the Hebrews and it is a magnificent book but it relates to everything Jewish and it points out the superiority of Christ as a sacrifice as a priest and as everything and it's an elevation of what took place or what was realized before and what Christ attained and is better in every way shape or form and the same way with the Petrine epistles and the Johannine epistles you will not find any church truth in them it isn't there it isn't supposed to be there church truth is found in guess where the epistles to the church now does that make sense or what if you want to know what a church is supposed to be like and what a church is supposed to do don't go to 2

[51 : 43] Samuel don't go to the book of Esther don't go to Leviticus go to the letters that are addressed to the churches where are you going to find those they're what the apostle to the Gentiles wrote Paul he's the Gentile apostle and the difference is remarkable as I related in the earlier service an evangelist came in to the church that I was a deacon at the time and he referenced this passage in James and suggested that this should be what's done and as the conversation went on this all by the way was a dinner party at Marie and Dave Weinbrenner's where this took place and eventually they talked about family etc and the fellow mentioned his wife and he regretted that his wife could not accompany him on his

Bible teaching mission holding these meetings and the reason she couldn't was because she was a severe arthritic and was unable to travel and this is the same fellow that had preached that the elders of the church should come in and lay hands on the sick and the prayer of faith would raise them up and Marie's husband Dave said well what about did you do that for for your wife and he said well yes we we called in the elders for the deacons of the church and they laid hands on my wife and they prayed over and said well what happened he said well we don't know but it didn't work didn't work but doesn't the verse say well yes it does now how are we going to get the Bible off the hook on this how are we going to get God off the hook because it doesn't make him look good

I mean right there it is in black and white you can read it for yourself and of course there's always the old fallback that is invariably used in a case like that well somebody didn't have enough faith and that's always a convenient out and if it had enough faith that would have worked but somebody didn't have enough faith and that's always the lame excuse that the truth of the matter is it didn't work because it's not supposed to work it was for different people at a different time under different circumstances and it doesn't work now for the same reason that a lot of the things in the Old Testament don't work either because they're not supposed to they worked fine for the time they were intended and the people for whom they were intended but that's not us we are a different ball of wax if you will we're different all together does that help at all I told you the subject of prayer is one that I personally have found terribly terribly confusing over the years and I have reduced my prayer life to that monumental passage in

Ephesians 4 19 and I have gotten more peace and more tranquility and more satisfaction out of this than I have anything else and it is just a wonderful wonderful verse where Paul is talking and writing to the people at Philippi and he says in verse 6 be anxious which means don't be uptight for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God okay well what's the outcome of that going to be now if you're reading it under another dispensation it'll be and whatsoever you agree on where two or three are gathered together and whatever you agree on whatever you pray and ask for in my name that will I do but that's not for this this is a different time a different place a different administration administration and when you try to make something from one administration come over to another administration and apply it there don't be surprised if it won't fly because it's not supposed to it doesn't mean that one of them is wrong it means that one of them is passé and something has taken the place of it and when he says let your request be made known to God and as a result verse 7 the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ

Jesus and you know something doesn't say anything about how much faith you need in that isn't that interesting this is my verse I'll tell you what when it comes to prayers I told the folks at nine o'clock 90% of my prayers is just for Thanksgiving I've long since learned to do without the gimme prayers do I have preferences of course I do do I have requests of course I do I remember perhaps the time when this meant more to me than any other time my first wife Barbara was just a few minutes from heaven and I asked the nurse is there any way that I could

[57 : 48] I've been holding her hand for hours just watching her breathe moistening her lips with one of those little sponges that they gave me because her mouth was so dry and her lips were dry and I'd keep moistening them and I I asked the nurse I said is there any way that and I could get my arms around her and she said well absolutely you can just get right up there in the bed and lie down beside her and put your arms around her breath and I don't mind telling you that was one of the greatest gifts I ever received my entire life and as she was breathing her last her breaths just became further and further apart and I remember I remember saying to myself probably just one more and I was right it was just one more and she was gone 3 30 on a Sunday morning March the 12th and all the while I was holding her I knew full well that God is capable of doing anything he wants to do not interested in even trying to limit him I could not bring myself to pray and ask

God to spare her life now some would probably say it was because of a lack of faith that I had that I wouldn't do that but I just I had no much as I dearly loved that woman I had no inclination to do that at all but I can tell you this my whole being was so overwhelmed with gratitude and thanksgiving and thanksgiving to God that he gave that incredible human being to me for almost 50 years I just couldn't get over it because I knew I knew how how undeserving I was and yet he gave her to me for almost 50 years and I just I was just overwhelmed with thanksgiving and gratitude to God and the thought of asking him to spare her life or perform some miracle that didn't even occur to me but there was with that prayer of committal and thanksgiving an overwhelming unexplainable kind of peace that I'm satisfied I'd never be able to generate on my own it was just peace I guess I guess you would say it was a peace that passed all understanding because it certainly passed mine and I guess maybe I was thinking well you know the Philippians the Philippians 4 6 thing really does work peace of God which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus well I got got some more really I think really important things to share with you about prayer will not take time to engage them now but I look forward to bringing them to you because as I've said I don't think there is anything that evokes more confusion and disappointment and misunderstanding than this subject of prayer and I just my prayer for you my prayer for you is that you may be able to come along and get to where maybe I am where it's taken me years to come and maybe you can do it in a lot shorter time than it was taken me to do it but the information is there it's available to us and would you pray with me please father so much about our connection to you through prayer that we just don't begin to understand we know that you are a prayer hearing prayer answering God and we know that you delight in our bringing our petitions to you and pouring out our hearts desires and our requests to you even as an earthly father does his child and we are so grateful that you filter everything through your fingers before you let it come to us because often we ask amiss we ask out of ignorance we ask out of selfishness we ask out of all kinds of wrong motives and our prayer for each of these dear folks is that we may all come to the place where we recognize that you are ever available to hear our cry and yet you apply your judicious wisdom to our requests and you are only concerned about that which is ultimately for our best good whether we believe it or not or know it or not you do and we are so thankful that you do so thank you father for overlooking so many of our faults and criticisms and complaints

thank you for loving us despite what we are and our undeservedness thank you for that great grace that remains available in ways that we just don't understand should there be anyone here this morning that does not have the peace and joy of sins forgiven in a relationship with you our prayer is that they may come to realize the reality that you stand ready to receive them you love them more than they could ever understand and you are willing to accept and forgive and cleanse and pardon and bring right into your own precious self anyone who would be willing to say lord jesus i acknowledge my sin i don't excuse it i admit it and i'm so grateful that you were willing to pay the penalty for my sin because you love me so much our father we just pray that anyone here that's not realize that will do so even this morning and come the joy and the peace of forgiveness cleansing pardon and acceptance in christ his name we pray amen