

A Totally New Order Begins, Part 4

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[0 : 0 0] As Nathan was recounting the experience he had with his family on the protestations about not having a Christmas tree, I could not help but think immediately of a similar kind of incident that happened. Well, it had nothing to do with a Christmas tree, but the pressure was on from the kids, and it centered around their desire for a dog, for a puppy. And this had gone on for, oh, off and on a couple of years. And Barbara and I kept insisting, and we held our ground, no dogs, because it complicates things. If we have to get away, you have to take care of it, you have to make provisions for it, and so on. And no dogs, no dogs. And we held steadfast for a couple of years.

Lynette must have been about eight or ten years of age. And one Saturday morning, as we were lying in bed, thinking about getting up, there was a knocking at the door. And we said, yes. And Lynette said, it's me. Can I come in? And we said, oh, yeah, sure, Connie, come in. She came in, and she said, I have something I want you to read. We looked at each other, and we said, well, okay. And she said, and I'll just leave the room while you read it. And we said, okay. So she gave it to us, and it was all bound up in a fancy kind of folder and handwritten. And it was titled, Why I Want a Dog.

And she began with her expressions and the need for a little puppy to love and to take care of and so on, and included a long list of all the things she would do if she only had a puppy. That she would feed it, and she would bathe it, and she would take it to the vet. And if there was any expense involved, she would pay for it out of her allowance. And on and on, she gave this long list about why she really needed and wanted a dog. By the time we got through reading the letter, Barb and I looked at each other with tears in our eyes.

And she knocked on the door again, and she said, well, did you read the letter? And we said, yes. I think, well, okay. We'll get a dog. And she said, I have one all picked out. And I said, really? And she said, yes. And she named the place where they had the dogs. She said, they had three or four in the litter left, and that they were putting back one of them for us in case we wanted it. And it wasn't long until we welcomed Duchess. She was a little pup, cocker spaniel mix into the family, and enjoyed a very happy association for probably, I don't know, well, many, many years until Duchess moved on to the place where dogs move on to. But it was a stirring time, and it was one of those memorable family things that we always recall. And there's just something about children getting their way into mom and dad's heart, and they have a way of putting on the pressure that is just irresistible.

And we had a really exceptional Sunday school class this morning at nine o'clock. Nathan was talking about celebration of Christmas and how it is and isn't in several places throughout the world. And it was quite remarkable and very enlightening. And if you want to have any questions about Christmas past, he's the guy to see. Talk to him. You'd likely have the answers.

[4 : 0 6] Speaking of Christmas, also in your bulletin this morning, as I have been including these excerpts from Two Minutes with the Bible by Mr. Stamm, who is now with the Lord, I was reading December 22nd, and I thought, boy, that is really good. That's going to be my insert for this week. And then when I saw the 23rd, Bethlehem and Calvary on the other side, I thought, well, that needs to be included too. And as I read on, I thought, oh, well, the 24th and the 25th are also excellent. So they are all included. And I trust you will take time to read these because as the book is entitled Two Minutes in the Bible, and that's about all the longer it takes to read these articles.

But they are very, very skillfully written and very penetrating and right to the point. They always leave something of real value. So much so that we have resupplied our availability of them, and Two Minutes with the Bible has been available as of this morning. They came, I think, just yesterday or the day before. And the quantity of them are on the table, the book table in the rear.

So if you want to have a two-minute blessing each day that Marie and I always enjoy, pick up one of those and get started off with the new year just right. And actually, you've got the finish of it almost right here. And that Two Minutes with the Bible is extremely, extremely rewarding.

We do it every morning and enjoy it so much. And as regards the new year upcoming, this is something that was just decided very recently, but some folks have expressed an interest in official membership at Grace Bible Church, and we are encouraged to hear that. We welcome inquiries about that. So we will be starting a membership information class second Sunday in January, and it's only for two weeks. It will be at the nine o'clock hour. The class is held in my office. And if you are interested in attending, let me know, and we'll be glad to include you in the class. So that will be January 9 and January 16. You'll have opportunity to ask any questions that you may have about membership and our position, as you probably already know. Regarding membership is certainly different from most churches because everyone's membership is valid for just one year, including mine. And at the end of the year, it expires. Everyone's expires. That's why we have the insert in the bulletin for the month of December for those who would like to maintain their membership. And we hope everyone does, but we give people that option. All you need to do is fill it out and drop it in the offering box, and we'll see to it that you are included in the official membership list. There are a number of folks on the list that are not members, and they are just as welcome as those who are, but they do not have the opportunity to vote when decisions come up that need to be made by the congregation. So you might want to keep that in mind. We do appreciate everyone who is a member or those who are not. And as we pointed out, we do not have a biblical mandate. There is no chapter and verse in the scriptures that say you have to have an official membership list.

So we cannot tell you, if you're not an official member of Grace Bible Church, you are out of the will of God. That's nonsense. That's just not true. It is membership is something that we provide because it enables us to maintain orderliness in the congregation, establish the government, have a basis for making decisions, which means each one who is a member then has one vote. And those who are not members, of course, do not vote. So it gives you an opportunity to take responsibility for the church and also to have input regarding future decisions and the directions that the church takes. So that makes it very important and I think very practical as well. Now, would you open your Bibles, please, to 1 Timothy chapter 3 where we will continue our theme of the secret of godliness or the mystery of godliness that the Apostle Paul is talking about. And it isn't talking about God's godliness.

[8 : 46] God is godly automatically simply because he's God. But when it comes to human beings, we are godly or we are ungodly. And if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you have a position and a status of godliness simply because Christ dwells in you by faith. Those who do not have Christ dwelling within them are ungodly. I know that might not sound very nice because there are a whole lot of people that seem to be really nice people. But the scriptures say they are ungodly. That doesn't mean that they're wicked in their behavior or anything of the kind. It just means that God is not present in a real way in their life and he has not regenerated their spirit and made them alive in Christ. So they are without God in that sense. Even though they may be very nice people, very kind to everyone, and very generous, and all the rest of it, godliness and ungodliness is determined by whether or not

God dwells in you. And if you are a believer, he does. So the mystery or the secret of godliness that Paul is talking about as he writes to Timothy, beginning with verse 14, says, I'm writing these things to you hoping to come to you before long. But in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. And by the way, what is it, Timothy, that enables you to do that? What enables you as believers in that congregation there to behave and conduct yourselves as you ought?

What's the dynamic? What's the power? What's the energy? What is it that's provided to enable you to do that? And then he launches this litany of things regarding the person and work of Christ, because that is what makes it available for you to be who you are and what you are. The key to all of this, I think, is in the context. And he tells them by common confession, great is the mystery or the secret of godliness, that is, of that which makes you a godly individual.

And here's what it took. In order for God to make you a godly person, this is what God had to do. He was revealed in the flesh. This is the incarnation. He was vindicated in the spirit. He was beheld by angels. He was proclaimed among the nations. He was believed on in the world, and he was taken up in glory. This morning, we're going to look at the one which is next, and that is proclaimed among the Gentiles. Actually, when you look at this passage, you may be at a loss to wonder, well, what does this have to do with what went before? Everything. Everything. If you will look back at the beginning of chapter two, and we've often said, connection with the discipline of hermeneutics, context always determines the meaning of a passage. You've got to look at what went before and what comes after the passage. And here, as regards what comes before, he starts out in chapter two.

First of all, good place to start. First of all, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order 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. And then he talks about Christ having given himself a ransom for all in verse six.

[12 : 49] And then he was appointed a preacher in verse seven and an apostle. And then in verse eight, I want men in every place to pray. This is what you're to do when you gather together. And oh, by the way, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modesty, discreetly, and so on. And then he tells us about Adam, who was first created, and then Eve. All of this has to do with the makeup of the assembly, the body of Christ. And then in chapter three, it is continuing with the organization and government of the church. Trustworthy, if a man aspires to be the office, to the office of overseer, to find work he desires to do, what is it that enables him to be the kind of man he is supposed to be as an overseer? That's all connected with this. And then he must not be a new convert in verse six. He must have a good reputation with those who are, and deacons or elders, we would say.

Likewise, must be seen as men of dignity, not double-tongued. You get all of these qualifications, and then he comes down to this. And what is it that enables you to fulfill and be and do all of those things? It is God became flesh and dwelt among us. And he went through these steps that are enumerated here. That's what it took. In order for you and for me to be made acceptable to God, God himself had to leave glory and come down to this earth and become one of us and live among us and die on a cross and be raised from the dead and ascended back to heaven. And he left behind all of the accoutrements and all of the necessities for you and for me to be who and what we are supposed to be through the person of the indwelling Christ that is within us. This is absolutely amazing, stunning, absolutely stunning. And now, what we are also discussing in connection with this is that that having been a reality and Christ having presented himself to Israel as their Messiah and there having rejected him nationally, but great numbers of Jews did not reject him. Individually, we know there were, on the day of Pentecost, there were 3,000 who bought into the message that Peter delivered about

Jesus being the Messiah and Israel responsible for his crucifixion. And 3,000 repented and they demonstrated their repentance and change of heart and mind by submitting themselves to baptism.

There is not a shred of indication that this was somehow what people call Christian baptism. That's complete nonsense. It was baptism and it was water. It was John's baptism. It was the only baptism with which they were familiar. And it seemed to be the logical thing that among those 3,000, or in fact, probably all of those 3,000, were 3,000 who earlier rejected Jesus being the Messiah of Israel and, consequently, were not baptized of John, as many others were. But now these 3,000 have been penetrated to the heart with the message that Peter delivered. You, by wicked hands, have slain the Lord of glory.

But God raised him from the dead. And as Peter delivered that powerful message, these people are sitting there and looking at each other and they are in awe and in shock and it begins to dawn on them. You know what?

[16 : 48] That's right. This man is right. We see it now. Now it is becoming clear. And they were, as it were, connecting the dots.

And they look at each other and say, what are we going to do? How can we handle it? What is our response to this? What can we do?

The text says that they were stabbed? They were pricked to the heart. That means Peter's message really got to them.

They got it. They got it. It sunk in. And they're saying, oh, no. Look at what we did.

But it's over. We can't undo it. Men and brethren, what shall we do? Peter says, you can reverse yourself. You can do an about face to the position you held previously to this new position.

[18 : 01] And that's what they did. At least 3,000 of them. And Peter said, and to follow through, you need to be baptized with John's baptism. And they did. 3,000 of them. And this is not, this is not the birth of Christianity. It was the birth of what was going to become an important segment of Christianity.

But the whole concept of Christianity or the Christian faith did not come into the picture at all in Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost.

And nobody was thinking of Christianity. They were only thinking of getting in line with the program that John the Baptist had been preaching. And what was that? Same one that Jesus had been preaching. Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And that's what they did. They changed their mind. They reversed themselves. And now they become an additive to the 12 apostles and to those whom they had already reached.

And we know that there were 3,000. You read on a little bit later in Acts, and the number is growing. And then we are told that there are now 5,000. And as this gospel of the resurrection, the resurrection of Christ is preached and proclaimed throughout, more and more people are coming to faith and believing, and it's getting to be a problem with the establishment.

[19 : 35] Peter gives a message that buttresses what he said on the day of Pentecost in chapter 3.

It's essentially the same message, but with a different crowd of people. And he tells them, if you, Israel, if you will repent, God who has received Jesus back to heaven, God will send him back again upon your repentance.

That's a powerful, powerful message and wonderful promise in Acts chapter 3. And as a result, many people did, but the vast majority did not. And the problem surfaces when you read the next chapter, Acts chapter 4.

It says that the chief priests and the scribes became very concerned because they were preaching Jesus and the resurrection, and the numbers of people signing on were really growing.

And this is becoming a matter of concern to the official establishment. What are we going to do? Well, we've got to shut these people up.

[20 : 57] So they threatened them. And when that didn't work, they beat them physically, put them in prison overnight. Angels saw to it that they were released and they were out preaching again.

Again, this thing is starting to get out of hand. And the persecution began. And it was Jews who were persecuting Jews.

And the big thing I want you to understand now is there appear to be no non-Jews involved at all.

No Gentiles in this picture at all. These are all Jews. That's very significant. Because the time is coming, and it's the focus of today's message, when there's going to be a radical departure from this being Jew only to incorporating everybody.

Are you kidding me? What a contrast. This select little group of people that today still only make up two-tenths of one percent of the world's population is going to be expanded, if you will, to incorporate the entire world.

[22 : 18] And whereas there were twelve apostles who were commissioned to deliver the message of the kingdom, the preaching of the kingdom, God's kingdom in heaven will come to earth, preaching that message exclusively to Israel, because Israel was to be the spearhead nation that upon their reception of the message, then they would fulfill that passage in Exodus chapter 19 that talks about Israel becoming a nation of priests.

And when the whole nation of Israel gets on board, embracing the gospel of the kingdom, with Jesus being the king, they will then permeate all the rest of the world, and they will be a company or a kingdom of priests to the Gentiles.

But that never happened, because the message was never bought into by Israel as a nation.

True, thousands of people did, but greater numbers of the thousands did not. They maintained their position under the authority of the chief priests and the scribes, which was Jesus was not the Messiah.

He was not raised from the dead. What actually happened is that his disciples came in the middle of the night and stole away the body and announced that he was resurrected from the dead, and the whole thing is a hoax.

[23 : 55] And by the way, that is still the official position of Jewry to this day. You see, everything is hinging on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Either he was or he wasn't. And the staunch position that is maintained by our Jewish friends today throughout the world. Jesus was not the Messiah.

Son of God was not crucified on the cross. And Jesus did not come back from the grave with a bodily resurrection. That's all something that is a hoax.

Unfortunately, that's where Judaism is to this day. Time is coming, however, when that's going to be reversed. So what we're talking about now in this text that Paul delivers here, proclaimed among the nations something that was earlier unthought of because the message was intended.

And someone asked the question, well, what's the big deal about the Jews? Why was God just focusing on the Jews? Why 12 apostles to the Jews? Because, as I've already mentioned, it was the Jewish nation as a nation that was to serve in the priestly function for all the other nations of the world.

[25 : 16] But because they rejected the Messiah, that program never got off the ground. And as it was started out in Matthew chapter 10, when Jesus calls the 12 disciples, he tells them, don't go to the Gentiles.

Confine your ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Listen, it wasn't because God didn't care about the Gentiles. Of course he did. He loved the world. Jesus loved the world and gave himself for the world.

But it was Israel was to be the spearhead nation. Israel was to be the nation that in their embracing Jesus as a nation, then they would take the message to all the other nations.

But the message was still born. It never got beyond Israel with the kingdom. Israel was the key nation for the world.

Now, there are a lot of people, a lot of Gentiles, that don't understand that and don't appreciate it. But it was true then and it is true today. Israel is the key nation of the world.

[26 : 32] And the time is coming when this kingdom, that is the rule and reign of God, when it comes to earth and the earth is restored and fixed from its brokenness, its corruption and revitalized and made into what it ought to be.

When that occurs, Christ will be sitting on that throne and he will be judging the entire world nations from Jerusalem.

And he will occupy the throne of David. That becomes the basis for the millennial reign of Christ or the thousand year reign of Christ. But because that message was short circuited, never came to be, but something else absolutely unthought of, unimagined, was going to take place.

And it is almost as if God is saying, all right, Israel, nationally, Israel, leadership, you reject the concept, you reject the Messiah, you reject the kingdom.

I'm going to open this thing up apart from you without your cooperation or your involvement. And I'm going to open the way of access to me, to everybody, without your efforts.

[28 : 07] And I'm going to start it, not with 12, 12 assigned to reach one nation.

I'm going to start it with one man designed to reach the entire world. What do you think of that, Israel? And that's quite passage.

Let's go for just a moment to, if we may, Romans chapter 10. This is just, I tell you, it is so good, it needs to be preached.

Romans 10 and verse 16. However, Paul's talking about Israel.

Romans 9, 10, and 11 are all about Israel. However, Paul says, they did not all heed the glad tidings, for Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report?

[29 : 18] This is a complaint. It's a lamentation that Isaiah is giving 700 years before Jesus is born.

And it is prophesying the response of the nation that they will have when the Messiah comes. And Isaiah says, who has believed our report?

If you've got a new American standard, you see it's in capital letters here. And that indicates, of course, that it is taken from the Old Testament. And in this particular case, it's Isaiah 53.

Who has believed our report? It's a lamentation question. It's the equivalent of saying, nobody's believed us. We deliver this message and it falls on deaf ears.

Nobody believes us. That's what he means when he says, who has believed our report? So faith comes from here.

[30 : 19] Hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. But I say, surely, they have never heard, have they? Well, the idea is, well, if they've heard, they would believe.

Surely, of course, naturally, if they've heard, they will believe. No, no. Who has heard our report? No. But I say, surely, they've never heard, have they? Indeed, they have.

Their voice has gone out into all the earth and their words to the ends of the world. But I say, surely, Israel did not know, did they?

At the first, Moses says, and this is way back in the Deuteronomy, I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation. By a nation without understanding will I anger you.

And Isaiah is very bold and says, I was found by those who sought me not. Who's that? Were the Jews seeking the Messiah?

[31 : 20] You better believe it. They started seeking the Messiah when God made that promise to none other than Satan himself that the seed of the woman is going to crush your head.

And that time began the interest and the anticipation of God sending the seed of the woman.

What's that mean? That means the baby, the offspring, of the woman. This will be the offspring of the woman, Eve. And he, the offspring, will deliver a fatal blow.

He will be struck on the heel by the serpent. Christ will be struck on the heel by the serpent, but it will not be final. Yet, he will crush the head of the serpent.

That's got the essence of finality built into it. You don't survive a crushed head. That's what's going to happen. I was found by those who sought me not.

[32 : 30] I became manifested to those who did not ask for me. Who's that? Gentiles. Gentiles. Did the Gentiles, and by the way, you understand that a Gentile was 99.8% of the population.

They still are. Vast, vast majority, like 99% to one, is Gentile. Only a tiny, tiny, tiny percentage is Jewish.

It's always been that way. Still is. So, those who were not seeking him, virtually almost everybody, they were not seeking him.

What were they seeking? They were all involved in paganism, in idolatry, in all kinds of superstition. The Romans had a list of gods, and the Greeks had a list of gods, and all of the paganism that went on dissociated everything and everybody from Israel.

And in verse 21, but as for Israel, he says, all the day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.

[33 : 49] Who's that? That's Israel, big time. They really fit that description, and it's described of them time and time again. And then, if you will look at chapter 11 and verse 11, well, let's, let's read a little bit more of the prophecy and start with verse 8.

Romans 11, 8, just as it is written, God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not, down to this very day.

And David, David says, let their table become a snare and a trap and a stumbling block and a retribution to them. Let their eyes be darkened to see not and bend their backs forever.

Why? Why? This is God's response to their rejection. They're none so blind as those who will not see. And Israel's problem from the get-go was rebellion and a stubborn spirit that rejected the truth when it was presented to them.

And it isn't in keeping with just Israel. This is a human trait. This is a human trait. There is a good reason why the estimation has been given, and I think it's probably very valid, that in order for someone to come to faith in Jesus Christ, even if they are open and receptive to the idea, it usually requires a repetition of the message 7.2 times.

[35 : 20] What? That means very, very few people, very few people ever embrace the gospel and receive Jesus Christ as their Savior when they first hear about it.

It is a seed that is planted, and it begins growing. And they may hear a second time, maybe on the radio. They may hear it the third time or read it the third time when someone gives them a tract.

They may hear it again when a next-door neighbor talks about it. They may hear it again when they go to church. And all of this is building a case in the spirit of the individual so that it usually requires repeated hearings over a period of time for someone to connect and really get the message.

So often, the gospel to a lot of people is just like water off a duck's back. It's just so much religious gobbledygook that doesn't seem to make any sense to them.

They got a little bit here and a little bit there, but they've never made the connection. You mean to tell me that this person who died on a cross 2,000 years ago was God and he was doing that and suffering that for me?

[36 : 58] Are you serious? For me? 2,000 years later, how does that affect me? How does that have anything to do with me? Everything! Everything!

That's why he's called the Savior. It is a message that is so critical, so important. It not only changes your life here and now, it changes your eternal destiny.

It makes you a whole brand new person on the inside. there is nothing like this in the world. This is what he's talking about.

This is, this involves the secret of godliness. This is what it took. This is what God was willing to provide.

My, oh my. Now, verse 11, chapter 11, I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they?

[38 : 09] Well, who's stumbling? Israel is stumbling as a nation. They're stumbling. You stumble when you are walking somewhere and while you are in route to walking, you trip over something and you fall.

What did Israel trip over? They tripped over Jesus. Jesus became the stone of stumbling.

Think of that. Stone of stumbling. When you stumble and fall, it has kept you from getting to where you were going.

So you fall, usually, flat on your face and usually very ungracefully. Someone says, anyone who's walking, doing something like it and they fall, there they are laying flat on their stomach or on their back and they fall, first thing they always do is to look around and see who saw them.

Because it's an embarrassing thing. It really upsets everything. And we feel clumsy and awkward and all the rest and we want to know, who saw me fall? Do you know nobody falls gracefully?

[39 : 29] Everybody falls awkwardly because your arms and legs are going this way trying to support you. Well, and when Paul says, they did not stumble so as to fall, it means their fall is not permanent, is it?

No, because Israel, although they've stumbled over Jesus, Israel's going to get up one day and they're going to continue.

But right now, they're still down. They're still down. They're still in a fallen state and I'm talking about the Jewish nation.

Thanks be to God, there are numbers of Jews, great numbers of Jews, who've gotten up and they have responded and they have become believers in Yeshua HaMashiach.

And he says, they did not stumble so as to fall or as to fall to be permanent. May it never be. This is a beautiful, this is a meganoito in the Greek.

[40 : 37] It's the strongest expression of God forbid. Don't allow the thought to enter your mind. Meganoito, God forbid. But, by their transgression, whose?

Israel's. What was their transgression? Rejection of the Messiah. By their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

Gentiles. Now that is news. Gentiles. Uncircumcised? Gentiles? Pigs?

These people eat pork. Dogs? Gentile dogs? Why do they call them dogs? They call them dogs because the dog will eat anything. And so will a Gentile.

A Gentile will even eat shrimp and oysters and catfish. Can you believe that? These are Gentiles. God doesn't want anything to do with the disgusting, uncircumcised, contaminated, filthy, pagan Gentiles.

[41 : 52] Oh, yes he does. God loves the unlovable. God desires the undesirable.

That's the love of God. God loved in this way that he gave.

Oh, my. And what God has done as a result of Jews shutting the door against Jesus, God reached down and he opened the door to the whole world.

Oh, my. Now, verse 12. If their transgression be riches for the world, how about that? Somebody's downtime is somebody else's uptime.

That's exactly what he's saying. Their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be?

[43 : 04] Now, he's talking about when Israel comes back, when they recuperate from the fall. I'm speaking to you who are Gentiles inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry.

If somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen, their Jews, and save some of them, for if their rejection, the Jews' rejection of Jesus, be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

And the time is coming when Israel as a nation will embrace Yeshua as their Messiah, as their national Messiah, and that will be when they are the remnant during the tribulation period, threatened with extinction and right on the edge.

And then, Jesus comes to the rescue, and he'll be riding on that white horse described in Revelation chapter 19. This is all wonderful, wonderful content, and this is involved in that great hymn that Paul is giving here or repeating as he closes out his letter to Timothy.

It is a beautiful, beautiful thing. Now, while we are nearby, and we're not too far away, I want you to come to Ephesians, and in Ephesians, we're going to emphasize the status of the Jews before the Jews stumbled and made Jesus available to the entire world.

[44 : 45] Here in Ephesians chapter 2, well, if you look at chapter 1, I want you to notice the very first verse, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus.

Who are these saints at Ephesus? They're Gentiles. They're not Jews. There may have been a few Jews in the congregation, but they were Jews who had come to faith in Jesus as their Messiah, and they did not stop being Jews.

When a Jew comes to faith in Jesus as his Messiah and Savior, that doesn't mean he's no longer a Jew. He's still a Jew. He was born a Jew. He'll always be a Jew. You realize that Jesus Christ is a Jew and he'll always be a Jew?

It's true. He's God in the flesh and he is the Savior of the world, but he's Jewish. He's born of the tribe of Judah. He's a Jew. And Paul, writing to these people at Ephesus, reminds them to the saints, and a saint is simply someone who is set apart.

The word in the the word in the Greek has to do with separation. And one who is a saint is a separated one.

[46 : 09] If you are a saint, just envision, if you will, when you came to faith in Jesus Christ, whenever it was, wherever it was, however it was, you were a child, you were an adult, makes no difference.

At that point in time, when you became a believer in Jesus Christ, it is just as though God reached down and picked you up out of the crowd of the world.

He just reached down and picked you up out of the crowd of the world, and he brought you over here to a much smaller crowd, which is called the church, the body of Christ, the spiritual body of Christ, and he set you down there in that new position with a new environment and new people, and you now become a member of the body of Christ.

That's what it means to be a saint, and the term has been so corrupted and so mismanaged by religionists that it just lost its meaning.

We talk about a saint as somebody, you know, who has the unseen halo and so on, and everyone, everyone, even if you are not behaving in a saintly fashion, if your faith is in Jesus Christ, you are a separated one.

[47 : 39] You are a saint. Now, keeping that in mind that that is the group of people that he is addressing, then come over, if you will, to Ephesians chapter 2, just right across the page, and he says, and you, he's talking to the same people he's writing this letter to, you were dead, spiritually dead.

You were alive, physically up, walking around and observing your pagan worship and everything else, but you were spiritually dead toward God in your trespasses and sins in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, because that's all you could do, that's all you had the ability to do, according to the prince of the power of the air, who is none other than Satan, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience, among them, we too all formerly lived in the lust of our flesh, Jew and Gentile, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest, but God.

Ha, ha, ha, I love it. It changes everything. It changes everything. But God, this little three-letter word, but, is a conjunction of contrast, and it means what is coming next is the complete opposite of what has just gone before.

But God, being rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ by grace, you have been saved.

You know, physical death, physical death has a terrible odor about it. I'm sure you probably smelled the remains of a dead thing.

[49 : 35] Maybe it was just a rat, but whatever it is, decomposing flesh is odorous. I mean, you can't stand, you see people at rescue scenes where they are trying to recover bodies from the rubble of an earthquake or something like that, and all these people are walking around with a mask on.

It's not because of COVID. It's because the odor and the stench in the air is incredible. Nothing smells so bad as decomposing flesh.

That's why we bury people or we cremate them. Now, let me ask you a question. We can understand that with physical flesh and physical death, but what does spiritual death smell like?

Well, frankly, and it's probably a really good thing, we don't have a nose that is designed to smell spiritual death, and it's probably a good thing that we don't, but let me tell you something.

God does. God has the ability to experience spiritual death in the lives of human beings, and I am convinced that as odorous as physical death smells, spiritual death is probably a lot worse.

[51 : 19] Spiritual death in the nostrils of a holy God, and he is willing to contend with that and overlook that and address that.

We're talking about an ugliness and an odor that is just mind-boggling. And God looked beyond that and was not deterred by that and was intent to do something about it.

That's why Jesus came. My, oh my. And verse 3 says, we were all children of wrath.

Verse 5, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved and raised us up with him, seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

This is all from God's perspective. This is the way God sees you now. We see us as seated right here in Grace Bible Church. God says, no you're not. As far as I'm concerned, you're already seated with me in the heavenlies.

[52 : 33] It's a done deal. There isn't any question. Raised us up with him, created us, seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come he might show the surpassing riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, that not of yourselves, don't you get the idea that you get credit for this? It is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

And look at verse 11. This is a little reminder. Therefore, remember, remember that pit from which you have been dug. Remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by the so-called circumcision.

In other words, you're Gentiles called the uncircumcision by the Jews, which is performed in the flesh by human hands. Remember, don't you forget for a moment that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

How bad off were they? As bad off as you could get. This is really scraping the bottom. But now, there's that conjunction again, but now, in Christ Jesus, you, who formerly were far off, that is, far off from God, have been brought near by the blood of Christ, the death of Christ, for he himself is our peace, who made both groups, Jew and Gentile into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall by abolishing in his flesh the enmity, which is the law of commandments contained in ordinances that in himself he might make the two, Jew and Gentile, into one new man, thus establishing peace and might reconcile them both, Jew and Gentile, in one body to God through the cross by it having put to death the enmity.

[54 : 49] Oh my goodness. Folks, it doesn't get any better than this because this is God's best.

This is God's very best and poured out upon us. This is breakthrough stuff and you know something? What we are talking about here is completely apart from, separate from, has virtually nothing to do with the gospel of the kingdom that the twelve preached.

Do you see the difference here? Do you see the contrast? Do you see how that was for Jews only? Different message? Rejected by them? So God brings in another message that he says in Ephesians 3, this is something that God had in mind all along.

It was hidden in the heart of God but it was never revealed, never brought forth, never imagined, never thought of, never prophesied, never expected, never anticipated, and just boom! Right out of the blue.

God makes this provision upon the rejection of Jesus by the Jews. He opens it to the whole world. That is called amazing grace.

[56 : 14] How sweet the sound. Now let me ask you a question. What kind of validity then does this give to the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom for today?

None. None. We really, really miss the boot and everyone that we preach it to misses the boot also if we preach the gospel of the kingdom.

We preach the gospel of the grace of God that supersedes the kingdom. This doesn't mean the kingdom message was wrong.

It was right for the time and circumstances under which it was preached. It was exactly what they were supposed to be preaching. But it was Israel's rejection that changed the direction of everything.

And yet it was through Israel's rejection that God opened it for the whole world. That's just... So we at Grace Bible Church and numbers of other grace churches like ours.

[57 : 37] And by the way, a grace church isn't necessarily a church that has the name Grace in its title. There are probably more churches that have the word grace in their name that are not grace churches at all.

A grace church has to be one that recognizes these critical important distinctions. It's called things that differ.

It's also called a progression of revelation. It's also called rightly dividing the word of truth because the word of truth has to be divided. What are you doing when you divide something?

You cut it. Why do you cut it? Why do you cut anything? Why does mom cut a piece of pie for the youngsters?

She's got a tire and she cuts it. What's the purpose? Purpose is in separating. It's dividing up things. That's what happens when you rightly divide the word of truth.

[58 : 40] There are certain truths that belong to one administration or dispensation and certain truths that belong to another. And when you mix them and put them together and try to make the message of the kingdom and the message of the grace of God be one and the same, you just bought into a ton of confusion where nothing connects, nothing works, and nothing fits.

And it leads people to the conclusion, you know, the Bible says one thing here and says something. We're talking about the progress of revelation. There is a progression of revelation.

And almost everybody sees this between the Old Testament and the New. Almost everybody gets that. Well, the Old Testament, you know, the animal sacrifices and so on, but the New Testament is different.

We see there's an update in the New Testament. Updates the Old. Right! Now, let's just move a little bit further. What we are saying is there is also an update within the New.

The four Gospels. Precious Word of God, Beloved. Study them, read them, believe them. But they were for another time.

[60 : 04] They were of Jesus on the other side of the cross. The Gospel and the Grace of God is all about Jesus on this side of the cross.

They are not the same. The cross changed everything. Everything. Will we change with it? Or are we going to hang back with the Jesus before the cross?

Oh, he was our example and blah, blah, blah. Listen, Jesus didn't come to be our example. He came to be our substitute. He came to die on that cross for our sins.

Wow. So within the New Testament, there is a progression between the Gospels and the Acts. You know where it starts? It starts in the book of Acts.

The book of Acts is 30 years long. It takes a long time to work through that. Things are happening. And not only does Paul being raised up and gets new marching orders that nobody else had or had even thought of, and he is raised up exclusively to be the apostle to the Gentile.

[61 : 19] What? They don't get any apostles. God doesn't care about Gentiles. Oh, my dear friends, they completely missed the boat. Paul is called the apostle to the Gentile under the administration of the grace of God, not under the administration of the kingdom.

But doesn't Paul say some things about the kingdom? Of course he does. Of course he does. Because of the confusion moving from the kingdom to the dispensation of the grace of God, there is overlap there.

There is a time of transition from one to the other, and there are people who lived in both of those segments, and that's what makes it confusing. But we are called upon to rightly divide it, and I call it nothing more than a progression of revelation.

And I want to close with this because this is important for you to keep in mind. Not only is there an update, a progression of revelation from the gospels to the epistles via the book of Acts, but after Paul's epistles, where he is emphasizing the update that God gave him, which is to preach the gospel of the grace of God to everyone, Jew and Gentile, that too is going to be updated.

The gospel of the grace of God is going to come to a conclusion as we know it, because that is for the body of Christ, and when the body of Christ is translated, raptured out, taken into glory, according to 1st Thessalonians 4 and 1st Corinthians 15, the catching away of the body of Christ, then what happens?

[63 : 19] The Pauline message is gone, and believers are gone with it. What do you have then? Then you have, guess what? You have Hebrews, and 1st and 2nd Peter, and James, and 1st and 2nd John, and 3rd John, and the book of the Revelation, and what are all these books principally, characteristically Jewish?

You do not find the gospel of the grace of God in those epistles, and it isn't supposed to be there. That left with the church. and what is returning is a program of the kingdom, and that is specifically for the people who will be living then, and it includes those letters that we've described that are devoid, devoid of the gospel of the grace of God.

They do not contain it, and they aren't supposed to. Everything in the book is exactly where it belongs. The problem is we so often are not with it, and it gets so frustrating sometimes when you try to explain this to some preachers, and I remember years ago, I probably spent 45 minutes talking to this dear saint about it, and he was so steeped in his denomination and in his background and everything, and when I got finished, he said, well, I hear what you're saying, brother, but actually he says, I prefer to take the whole Bible.

Oh, man didn't hear a word I said. God forbid that anybody should get the impression that I am saying all that matters is just what Paul said.

you don't have to pay any attention to anything else. You just go with the gospel of the grace of God. You ignore everything. Listen, if you ignore the rest of the Bible, what Paul said doesn't make any sense.

[65 : 35] You've got to have the whole thing. You've got to take everything in it. There is not one single word in this book that is unnecessary. Everything in it is connected to everything in it, and if you leave anything out, Old Testament, Psalms, whatever, you are doing a disservice to yourself and to the God who inspired it.

It's a wonderful message, but it's a progressive message, and we just really, really need to keep that in mind. So what's the message we preach today? What is it?

It is this gospel of the grace of God, which means you put your faith in Jesus Christ, you trust him as your savior and sin bearer, plus nothing.

It is called justification or being declared righteous by God on the basis of faith, just believing.

And for those dear folks who say, but that's too easy. My point is that's the point. it is so easy, anybody can do it.

[66 : 51] That's why it's called good news. It isn't something hard. You don't have to crawl on your hands and knees on the pavement to beg God to save you.

You simply believe on Jesus Christ who did for you what you could never do for yourself, and that is satisfy your sin debt before a holy God.

that's why it's called amazing grace. How sweet the sound. Oh, my.

You know, sometimes I think, Marv, you've been preaching this message for 50 years. I think you're starting to get it.

But you know what? Let me close with this. If you aren't profoundly grateful and somewhat overwhelmed by this message and by the secret of godliness and what it took to make it available to you, you just don't understand.

[68 : 00] But I'm not going to give up on you. I'm just going to keep trying because there's a breakthrough out there someplace. There was for me. And as many people have to hear the gospel of the grace of god many times, sometimes 7.2 times before they can embrace it and hear it.

So it is in the body of christ there are people who know and love the lord and they're going to be in heaven when they die. But when you try to teach them or tell them about the gospel of the grace of god and the contrast and rightly dividing the word, it's almost like goes right over their head just like the message of salvation does to an unbeliever.

So there is a breakthrough there that is needed as well and I'm going to keep stumping for it and try to provide a breakthrough for everybody who's looking for it because it is glorious.

let us pray. Father, we are not adequate even in our appreciation for this message.

We just cannot express to the degree of gratitude that you deserve.

[69 : 17] We just don't even have that capability within us. So we would just say and ask you to take the limited gratitude that we have to the extent of our ability to understand it and grasp it and we just want to offer it up to you with thanksgiving knowing that it is deficient, knowing that we need more, knowing that we want more, and knowing that you've provided more and it's there for us and we want to search it out and explore it and embrace it and live it and love it and die with it and be resurrected with it in your very own presence.

We look forward to that time. So many things about it we don't know and can't explain, but what we do know we are profoundly grateful and we love you for it in Christ's wonderful name.

Amen.