

# Prophecy and Mystery Contrasted - Mystery 25 - Nations vs. Individuals

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Good morning. It's a good thing we slipped in here because I see my names in the bulletin for announcements. So that was the first announcement for me this morning. So if you want to take your bulletins, we'll go through and just kind of look at the things that are in there, especially for those that might be listening online that don't have a bulletin.

So it looks like we have the 9 a.m. adult teaching class. That is, I don't know if that's starting up again.

I was trying to remember where we are down in here. So part three is coming up on that. 9 a.m., is that, I mean, that's the morning, I guess, on Sundays. Is that right? Okay.

I was looking, I was thinking, that's this morning. So that's that. I guess I'm on today. We've got, let's see, Tuesday, May 18th, we've got the men's Bible class.

Meets at 7 a.m. That's at what used to be Collier's, but now Sudebaker's on 41. So you don't want to miss that. Wednesdays, we've got the prayer meeting resuming at 7 p.m. here at church.

[ 1 : 1 1 ] And I guess that's Wednesday, May 19th, so that should be coming up this week. So always remember that if you're able to get over here and enjoy a time of prayer with everybody. And then Thursday, May 20th, the Lock and Media Sound of Music.

So there's some information in here. If you're planning on attending that, it looks like they're requiring a mask for entry and it doesn't look like they need people staying in the lobby. But I think if you've got questions on that, is it Chris Bellows?

Yep. So reach out to her. But that's coming up if you're signed up. Thursday, May 27th, we've got the monthly Bible study. We'll return with breakfast at 9 a.m.

And that is at 9.30 a.m. in the morning. Actually, it says breakfast at 9 a.m. And then the study's at 9.30 a.m. So Thursday, May 27th.

And Monday, June 7th, ladies' fellowship resumes at 11 a.m. at the church. Come join for games. And great fellowship. And then, of course, for those of you guys that are here with your birthdays in May, remember to head back there to the table.

[ 2 : 1 6 ] There's books, CDs, whatever you want back there. And then the men and boys' retreat, June 11 and 12. Contact Nathan and Scott Cutlip if you're interested in that.

Can I say a little bit more about that? Regarding the men and boys' retreat, it's just a single night. And it's free of charge. It's a paper facility.

It's got maybe the house 17, something like that. But if you're interested in coming, it would be a great time of fellowship and fun. There'll be fishing and outdoor stuff.

Scott, did you have something else to add? Two nights. Oh, is it two nights? Yeah, two nights and very much. I'm coming back from the family step up. So they allow you to take into your cabin.

I think it's four o'clock. So that's to be the whole day, the whole day, the whole day. But starting up all day Saturday, you need Saturday. You have to come back Sunday after the other.

[ 3 : 21 ] Yeah. And you can only come for a part of it. That's still fine as well. But I found out if you have that two nights. There are some quiet cabins. If you'd rather have to fight it, you're not. You know, a bunch of bunch of 20 boys and men.

Which, that's the fact of that part. That's right. But there are some. But please have an extra talk to you then. But yeah, please pause.

If you are interested, please put your name on it. Please put your name on it. Please put your tentative. And then Scott will be here just today. I think you guys are heading out at our town this coming week.

So, wrap Scott. If you have any questions, you can help or talk to me. But I think that's anything else to add. Thank you. All right.

And we've been before. It's a great time. I will tell you that. My boys still tell me about it. All right. Is there anything else that's not in the bulletin or needs clarification? All right.

[ 4 : 18 ] Well, let's go to the Lord in prayer. Dear Father in heaven, Lord, we just want to thank you for the opportunity to get together as a group here and just worship you. And like the great songs that we sang, Lord, all glory goes to you.

And the great things that you have done, Lord, and salvation and what Jesus did on the cross for us, Lord. I pray that you'll help us to keep that in mind, you know, just all the time. And to recognize, no matter what's going on in this world around us, that we have ultimately something to look forward to as believers.

And that you give us peace, you know, for this life here. And we have an amazing attorney to look forward to. So, Lord, we just want to honor you, glorify you for what you have done.

And we want to pray for everyone here. Just prepare our hearts for the message. And we want to pray for just those who may not be able to be here and be with them as well, Lord.

So, we just give this morning to you in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you. Thank you. I will add, we have a kid's church. What's the age? 12 and under?

[ 5 : 25 ] I really enjoyed your singing this morning.

It was just great. I don't know if my new hearing aids had anything to do with that or not, but you sounded, well, there are more of you here this morning.

I think this is as many as we've had for quite some time. I appreciate your presence very much. Things are not normal, but they're headed in that direction, and we are glad for you coming out and joining us this morning.

A couple of things that I want to mention, one has to do with the devotional that we provided last week for Mother's Day. But I want to emphasize it isn't just for mothers.

All of the ladies would enjoy this, so feel free to pick up one, even if you're not a mother, on the way out, in case you didn't get one. I've already gone through it, and it's called Let the Word of Christ Dwell in You Richly.

[ 6 : 40 ] And it is really good. It's got some great stuff in it, so all you ladies will appreciate that, and feel free to pick up yours as you exit. And if you know of someone else that would really appreciate it and benefit from it, feel free to grab an extra for them.

And speaking about grabbing extras, volume 58 and 59 of Christianity Clarified CDs are available now.

At least there's a couple of copies back there, and they are back there with the other compact discs. And all of the discs are free of charge. You're welcome to take anything that is of interest to you, that you think might benefit you.

But what 58 and 59 are dealing with specifically has to do with the enormous confusion of the first century A.D.

that had to do with, of course, the birth and death and resurrection of our Lord and the transitioning from Israel to the church, the body of Christ.

[ 7 : 48 ] And that content is back there, and a number of those issues are discussed. And as we have shared with you in the past, I am satisfied that it is the difficulty that is found in the book of Acts that involves doctrine developing, doctrine that is on the move, doctrine that is changing.

And the transition that is occurring is the movement that is becoming obvious as you move through the Acts from Israel as a nation to the body of Christ and the emphasis on the individual.

That is a radical change. And it is one that we are going to consider this morning. And those of you who have this little pamphlet that we've made available in time past, it is item number eight that deals with prophecy, mainly concerns nations as such, and the counterpart of that under mystery, the mystery concerns individuals.

So in the body of Christ and when it comes to personal salvation, the emphasis is on the individual, not on the nation. But in the Old Testament, even though several individuals play key roles throughout the Old Testament, the emphasis is clearly upon Israel as a nation.

And we will see how that is borne out even more as we move on. Also, I'd like you to note that if anyone needs a ride for the La Commedia Thursday, let Marie or myself know and we can make arrangements.

[ 9 : 23 ] I know many of you have already decided how you're going to go and you've paired up people and filled up cars. And that's fine, but we don't want anybody to be left out, doesn't have a ride. So if you have a need, let me know or let Marie know before you leave today.

And we'll make arrangements to rendezvous. I really like that song, Steadfast Love of the Lord. That's great. It does need work, however. Yeah.

But it's got a great message to it, and I appreciate you introducing that. We've stumbled through it, but each time we do it, we'll do a little bit better. And the one you sang before that, too, that had the hallelujah in it, I can never see that word without remembering.

And I want to remind you of it, in case you haven't heard it, that there is one word that is the same in every language all over the world, whether it's Japanese, Russian, Chinese, you name it, Svengali, or whatever it is, and it is the word hallelujah.

That's the same in every language. And it means the same thing in every language. Praise the Lord. And you see, if you spell it out in the way it's usually spelled, the last three letters are J-A-H.

[ 10 : 41 ] It's the end of the hallelujah. And that Yah relates to Yahweh, Yahweh, who is the God of the Scriptures, and is described as such, sometimes translated Jehovah or Jehovah.

But Yahweh is perhaps the more common. So thank you for your presence this morning. And if you are ordinarily not here, but are sharing the morning with us, just as a one-time thing, well, wherever you're from, we're glad that you're here.

And thank you for coming and sharing your morning with us. And if there's some way that we can be a ministry to you, that's why we're here. So you just need to let us know how we can be of help. Thank you for being with us.

And if you would, please, I want to introduce something that is not new at all to grace people. In some ways, it's kind of old hat. But I was explaining to the 9 o'clock session this morning, my concern in the time when I will be leaving you as your pastor is that I just want to make absolutely certain to the extent of my ability that the kind of foundation that I believe is so valuable is left behind and not only left behind but emphasized.

And like I said, it isn't going to be anything that is new, but it is everything that is important. And the distinctions that need to be made in interpreting and understanding the Bible, because if you can't interpret it, you cannot provide a proper response to it because you have to know what it's saying.

[ 12 : 23 ] And if you don't know what it's saying and understand what it's saying, you don't know what to do about it. So, we've spent quite a bit of time in dealing with these issues, and I do not apologize for any of it because it is so foundational and so basic.

Everything in the Christian life comes in connection with it. So, first of all, I would ask you to look at that little sheet if you have it, and we've made it available. There are hundreds of copies, and they're all over the place.

But item number eight, prophecy mainly concerns nations as such. Prophecy mainly concerns nations as such.

The distinction we're making is between prophecy and mystery, but I want to clarify what I mean by prophecy. When you hear the word prophecy, you almost always think in terms of, well, that which has to do with the future.

And very often it does, but it also has to do simply with speaking or preaching. And it's the verb prophesy. And the content determines whether or not it's future related.

[ 13 : 31 ] But prophecy has to do with that which is predicted and that which is promised to come, and that is principally involving the nation of Israel.

And right off the bat, distinction needs to be made. The church of which we are a part, which is part of what is called the spiritual body of Christ, of which Christ is the spiritual head.

The church is not prophesied, not predicted, not promised, not mentioned anywhere in Scripture. It just, boom, pops up.

There it is. Where did that come from? Whoever thought of that? Nobody. Who prophesied that? Nobody. Who preached that? Who said that that was coming? Nobody. None of the prophets.

Because we are told in Ephesians 3, which is probably the most definitive explanation of what this is all about, we are told in Ephesians 3, that the church, which is a combination of Jew and Gentile together on one plane, in one body, as equals, with no distinctions between them, that was never prophesied, never imagined, never predicted, never promised, and God just sprung it all at once.

[ 14 : 59 ] And it is referred to as never having been made known to the prophets. They didn't know about it. Isaiah, Ezekiel, Dan, they didn't know anything about this.

But we are told that it was hidden in the heart and mind of God, ready to be revealed when God knew the time was right.

And the time was right when the most unlikely man in the whole world came along to reveal it by the name of Saul of Tarsus, who was probably the number one enemy of Jesus Christ.

But that all changed. One day, on the road to Damascus, while he was en route to persecute other Jews who believed in Jesus, he had a personal encounter with Christ himself.

And that began, that began the emphasis of God dealing with individuals. And Saul of Tarsus was the first such individual.

[ 16 : 10 ] This is why I think he refers to himself, Paul refers to himself as a pattern, a pattern, a topos, a template.

He was a sample. He was the first one that we are aware of that came to faith solely on the basis of grace.

No works, no deeds, no acts, no promises, just believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. He seems to have been the first one.

And then he set about to replicate himself many times over in his missionary journeys and even to this very day. So, I think the first place I would have you turn is the reference that is given us.

And there are so many, but we just have to be selective. And the first one we want to go to is Isaiah chapter 4. Very familiar passage. Also, I should like to have time for Q&A; this morning.

[ 17 : 16 ] So, Ethan, now that you are a high school graduate, you would be even more qualified to run our mic. Okay?

And we're going to have a bona fide high school graduate as our mic man this morning. How about that? We're coming up in the world, I'm telling you. Okay. We are in Isaiah.

What did I say? Isaiah chapter 2 and verse 4. Okay? Well, let's just read those, let's just read these verses here.

In the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains and will be raised above the hills and all the nations will stream to it.

All the nations, think of this, this is going to be, this is going to be an international gathering of the nations of the world. And you know, the nations of the world today are totally clueless about this.

[ 18 : 20 ] They have no idea what they're in for, but this is it. And all the nations will stream into it and many peoples will come and say, come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob.

And can you guess where this is? Of course you can. It's Israel. It's Jerusalem. That he may teach us concerning his ways and that we may walk in his paths for the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

And look at verse 4. And he, this he, is the Messiah. This is called a messianic portion of scripture.

The he is the Messiah. And he will judge between the nations and will render decisions for many peoples and they will hammer their swords into plowshares, their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not lift up sword against nation and never again will they learn war. This is millennial content.

[ 19 : 35 ] This is when the kingdom of heaven has come to earth. This is how it will be expressed. And it is something to which all of prophecy looks forward.

It is the key for what prophecy is all about. And it involves the nation and the nation's Messiah. And that of course is Yeshua HaMashiach.

And in Zechariah chapter 14, let's look at that for just a moment. If you have trouble finding Zechariah, just find the last book in the Old Testament. That's Malachi.

And then right before that, we have Zechariah. And Zechariah chapter 14 and verse 4 says, In that day, and it is talking about this millennial kingdom time when Christ is returning, in that day, the Messiah, his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives.

The last time Jesus stood on the Mount of Olives, he ascended right before their very eyes and went back to heaven. That's in Acts chapter 1 and verse 8. And he says, In that day, his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south, and you will flee by the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel.

[ 21 : 12 ] You will flee just as you fled before in the earthquake and so on in the days of Josiah, and then the Lord my God will come and all the holy ones with him.

I am not absolutely sure, but I think this means you. I know there's a temptation to make all these holy ones with him angels, and how many angels there are, we don't know, but we are told that there are myriads and myriads of angels, yet I think that these are going to be humans and that we are going to participate as observers.

We will not be involved in the conflict, but I think we will participate, and it will be, well, I can't describe it, and it will come about in that day, and that phrase is used over and over, that there will be no light, the luminaries will dwindle, for it will be a unique day which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light, it will come about in that day, that living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea, the other half toward the western sea, it will be in summer as well as winter, and the Lord will be king over all the earth, in that day, the Lord will be the only one, and his name the only one.

this is eventually what prophecy is really all about. Now, if you will come to the New Testament, which commonly referred to that, just a few pages forward, and look at Matthew chapter 5, Matthew chapter 5 and verse 20, the first thing I want to point out to you by way of, by way of observation is simply this, there is a huge difference, excuse me, there is a huge difference in the manner in which individuals relate to God in the Old Testament or on the other side of Calvary before propitiation was made or before salvation was provided through the finished work of Christ, there was different ways that God appeared and dealt with individuals and with nations prior to that time.

as opposed to the way it is today and of course what changed all that and made all the difference in the world was Calvary.

[ 23 : 53 ] The cross of Christ changed everything and even though it was the most ignominious, the most horrible sight and experience ever perpetrated upon a human being, it was at the same time the most glorious and the most blessed event that has ever taken place on behalf of the human race because we and others like us who put faith and trust in Jesus Christ are the beneficiaries of that awful day on Calvary wherein our Lord spent six hours three of which were separated from his father between noon and between three and six o'clock.

Thank you. Thank you. That'll help. The trouble with these vocal cords is they've got a lot of miles on them.

Thank you. My darling daughter. She looks after me like my first wife and my second wife do.

So I can't get away with anything. And the content that is found in Matthew's gospel belongs now perk up your ears because this is going to be a difficult thing for somebody to swallow.

The content that is here in Matthew's gospel as well as in Mark's as well as in Luke's as well as in John's belongs to the Old Testament administration not the New.

[ 25 : 51 ] And I know that is a difficult concept for many people because they say how in the world can you say something like that? It's right here in the New Testament. It's part of the New Testament.

Well it's part of the New Testament because the printers who put this together when they printed it hundreds and hundreds of years ago labeled this as the New Testament. And in a sense it is but in another sense it is not and I'm not about to get up a campaign to try to change it but you must understand that it comes under the purview of the old.

That's why Jesus observed the law of Moses. That's why he kept the Sabbath. That's why he was circumcised. That's why he observed all of the things he did because he was a faithful Jew that was ministering to the nation of Israel and he wasn't ministering to anybody else just the Jewish people.

And this is what makes this concept of prophecy nationalistic and the nation is Israel. So, here in Matthew's gospel chapter 5 and verse 20 I want you to see some distinctions here because there is no grace in the old dispensation the way there is in the new.

Now grace is a characteristic of God's nature and he has always dispensed grace upon human beings as far back as Adam and Eve because when God slew the animals whatever they were to provide a covering for Adam and Eve in place of those ridiculous fig leaf aprons that they concocted that was a demonstration of grace and it was also a demonstration of God establishing the principle of sacrifice whereby an atonement or payment is made for sin and where grace comes in is that the payment was not exacted upon those who were guilty it was exacted upon that which was innocent and what crime did the animal from whom whose pelt whose skins were made to cover their what sin had the animal committed what wrong it hadn't done any because animals are not moral beings they're amoral they have no conscience they have no sense of guilt nor do they have any need to so he took the death of something innocent to cover the guilty

[ 28 : 30 ] Adam and Eve and that established the principle of sacrifice and substitution and although our generation has pretty much completely lost that concept it is the concept of the ages substitution innocent in place of the guilty it's a concept that is so contrary to the way we think that it's really hard to get our brains around it because it just doesn't tend to compute with us we tend to think of the guilty paying for their own crime and we call that justice but when the guilty doesn't pay for their own crime and someone innocent who had nothing to do with their crime when they pay for it for them that's called grace and it is amazing grace it is incomparable it is something that most humans have never really grasped and this is why the doctrine of the grace of God and salvation by faith in Christ and Christ alone is so foreign to people and so difficult for them to accept because they want to do something they want to become something they want to accomplish something because that's the only way you get any recognition and we have a thing for wanting recognition but you don't get any recognition under grace the provider of grace gets all the recognition the recipient gets all the benefit that no wonder it's called amazing grace so this is what we're dealing with but this is not the way it was in the Old

Testament so I say grace has always been operative Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord so grace is not devoid in the Old Testament but when you come into this new thing called the mystery that was never before revealed it's got grace splashed all over it everywhere and Paul in his short epistles uses the term grace I think something like 126 times in those few little books that he wrote it's just saturated with grace and what it's saying is it's a whole new thing totally new never imagined before never thought of never well just and it was so difficult for them to get a hold of it and it still is today it still is today so I'm going to look let's look at this first in Matthew chapter 5 we've got the kingdom concept here and by the way this kingdom this is the same kingdom spoken of in what is commonly referred to as the

Lord's Prayer and those who pray this in churches all over the world sometimes every Sunday I know churches that don't consider themselves having met if they haven't prayed the Lord's Prayer and it is a prayer it's a prayer for the coming of the kingdom prayer says thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven can you not see that that's a prayer that's never been fulfilled yet or do you think the word do you think the will of God is being done on earth today of course not how absurd so the kingdom is still future and it's still appropriate to pray for it to come but it certainly isn't here now unless of course and here's where the confusion comes in I don't want to confuse you but I want you to get this here's where the confusion comes in this thing that I'm telling you right now is that which separates not only Catholics from Protestants but it separates

Protestants from Protestants also and it has to do with you know the prayer for the kingdom to come yes it has this is it we're in it enjoy it this is the kingdom and we just read from Isaiah in that day in that day what in that day nations will turn their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks what's that saying it's saying in that day nations will not learn of war anymore they will turn their war implements into peace implements and nation will not be against nation and there won't be any conflict and there won't be any bloodshed you know just like it is now yeah right so what are we saying we're saying look words words mean things words mean things this is not the kingdom well they're not doing that literally but this is the kingdom spiritually okay how does that work out well they have yet to figure that out in other words all I'm saying and all the text is saying is this world is in a mess and it's going to remain in a mess until the only one who's able to straighten out the mess comes and when

Jesus Christ comes a second time he's going to collect on what he purchased the first time and right now it is under the rule and the domination of the god of this age and that's Satan so here we've got some content that I just want you to look at by way of comparison and look at verse 20 chapter 5 Jesus is speaking and he's addressing the disciples and the crowd is mixed actually it starts out with multitudes and there's going to be a lot of people here this is a sermon on the mount probably the most famous sermon the Lord gave and not and just about as long as long as long as the the Olivet discourse has to do with the second coming but he says in verse 20 I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and

[ 35 : 13 ] Pharisees you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven all right now here's something else needs to be clarified the kingdom of heaven isn't the same place as heaven where God dwells now sometimes referred to as the third heaven and this is misleading and it is difficult to keep straight because we tend to think of heaven as being heaven the dwelling place of God where believers when they die absent from the body present with the Lord your spirit goes to heaven to be with the Lord that's all true but that's not the kingdom of heaven that is the abode of God the kingdom of heaven is here on planet earth when it comes this is not it it is still future but it is confusing because of the very use of the word heaven and what it means is the kingdom of heaven the kingdom of heaven on earth will be

God's kingdom that will come to the earth so that when it does he will bring it here and his will will be done on the earth as it is in heaven so you've got to really get a handle on that term heaven because it doesn't always mean the same thing there's a kingdom of heaven where Christ is now seated at the right hand of God but the kingdom of heaven that is spoken of is millennial and it is on the earth and this is not it it has never happened it has never come into being and what confuses so many is the majority well virtually all of the Roman Catholics and the majority of Protestants think that the kingdom of heaven has come but it isn't literal it isn't actual it is spiritual and you say well what does that mean what does that entail well they don't know well the reason they don't know is because it doesn't exist there is no spiritual kingdom except that when

Paul wrote to the Colossians he talks about being delivered being delivered from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear son there is a sense in which we are members of the kingdom that is spiritual that's the body of Christ and boy that leads to another you see how complex this this is this this this this this this is spiritual that means it is devoid of physicality materiality and when we say that Christ is the spiritual head of this body we are not talking about the physical body of Christ we're talking about the spiritual essence of Christ And let me put it this way.

We as believers, when we have received Christ as our Savior, it is our human spirit that is regenerated and made new in Christ.

That's the part of you and the only part of you that is actually born again. It's regenerated. You are a different person on the inside. You are a converted person, a regenerated person.



[ 38 : 49 ] That's in your spirit, not in your body. And when you die and your spirit is separated from your body, it goes to be with the Lord. And there is a disembodied spirit with the physical body in the grave or buried at sea or wherever, and it's one time going to be reconnected, body and soul, so we will be a glorified body.

And I don't have any idea how that's going to come about except to say that every one of you has your own peculiar DNA, and that's the formula for making you, and God's got all of that on file.

God's got a big filing cabinet with everybody's DNA. No, seriously. He knows what everybody's made of, and your exact replica is going to be reconstituted when the time comes, regardless of what happened to your body physically.

But in the meanwhile, we are spiritual and removed from this body, and Christ removed from his body. He is the spiritual head.

And the difficulty is we tend to think that that which is spiritual has no objective existence, and that's exactly the position that a lot of the scientists today take, that if it isn't physical and material, it has no objective reality.

[ 40 : 03 ] But Christian position is that indeed it does. There is a spiritual element to our body, and there is a physical element to our body, and they are both very, very real.

Matter of fact, it is the spirit that dominates and controls the body, but that's another subject. We won't go there right now. So what I'm saying is this concept of this present day being a spiritual kingdom is really not addressing the issues that Christ is talking about at all because he's talking about a real, honest-to-goodness, physical, earthly, material realm wherein he is going to sit on a literal throne judging Israel and judging all the nations of the world, and it's going to be very physical, very material, and it is referred to as the millennium.

It is the kingdom of heaven come to the earth. And here in verse 20 of chapter 5, he is talking about righteousness and the need for it to surpass that of the scribes and the Pharisees, and he says, Without that, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

All right. Now here's another thing. In the Old Testament, throughout, from Genesis to Malachi, the Jewish people through whom all of the scriptures were written, I mean all of them, no contributors to the Bible that were not Jews, none of them, absolutely none of them, had any idea of what you think of and what I think of as heaven.

We see it as the dwelling place of God where Christ is at the right hand, and when a believer dies, they are absent from the body, present with the Lord, they go to heaven. That was never the Jewish concept.

[ 42 : 03 ] Never. You can search the Old Testament through, and you will not find any of the prophets or anyone in the Old Testament ever anticipating going to heaven and being in the presence of God.

It isn't there. But it is a mainstay of the mystery. It is a mainstay of what you are counting on.

When you die, and you will, unless the Lord returns first, you will be transferred, your spirit will be transferred from your body to the presence of the Lord.

And so shall we ever be with the Lord. That is totally foreign to the Old Testament. Israelites never imagined that.

All they could think of was Sheol, the grave. And that was where the place of the abode of the dead is spoken of in Matthew chapter 16, in Matthew's gospel, and it talks about the rich man who went to Hades and Abraham in his bosom and so on.

[ 43 : 20 ] And the jury's still out as to whether that is a parable or whether it's actual teaching. But the thing you need to understand right now is it was a completely different concept that the Jew had regarding death.

And they never envisioned going to heaven to be with God at all. And that's precisely what's taking place for the believers today. And now, I want you to note that this is all a conditioned righteousness that is required.

Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees. What does that mean? Surpasses them. Well, it simply means this. You've got to be more righteous than they were.

Their righteousness wasn't satisfactory. You've got to have more righteousness than that. But now, wait a minute. If we're talking about more or less righteousness, do you see how that quantifies righteousness?

Doesn't that imply that righteousness comes in forms of more or less or some or none?

[ 44 : 35 ] It is a quantifying thing. The issue is how much righteousness do you have?

How much do you have to have? And how do you know when you've done enough? Follow me now. We are talking about an Old Testament concept of righteousness and of salvation before Christ ever died on the cross to provide salvation full and free for everyone.

So what was the basis for salvation before there was a cross? Before Jesus paid the penalty for sin? What was it? Well, it wasn't qualified.

It was quantified. Well, what was the quantity? Who knows? I don't know. How righteous did you have to be? It isn't stipulated.

You're just kind of left in the dark. While we're... Come to Ephesians chapter 2. And this will clarify it, I trust. Ephesians chapter 2. Because here Paul is going to be talking about the state of non-Jewish people or the Gentiles before Christ ever came.

[ 45 : 55 ] And in Ephesians 2, we read beginning with verse 4, Now what that's saying is that is your official position.

In order that in the ages to come, he might show the surpassing riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Now, if you skip down to verse 11, he's going to do a little reminiscing.

In verse 11, he says, Therefore, in light of what he's just said about this grace, Therefore, remember that formerly, that is before, you, the Gentiles.

Now, who were the Gentiles? The Gentiles was anybody that wasn't a Jew. And the Gentiles make up 99% of the world's population.

In fact, they make up more than that. They make up 99.8% of the world's population. Always have, and they still do to this day. So, he's talking about these people who are not Jews, you, the Gentiles, in the flesh, who were called uncircumcised, so-called circumcision, which is performed in the flesh by human hands.

[ 47 : 27 ] Remember, remember. Now, here's what he's saying. Listen, you non-Jews, I want to remind you who you were and what you came from. Your past.

And here it is. At that time, you were separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, separated, excluded, strangers to the covenants of promise.

Listen, these are all negatives, bad negatives. Separate, excluded, strangers, having no hope.

What a sad plight to be in. No hope? None? No. No hope. And it only gets worse without God in the world.

You people were as bad off as you could possibly be. Do you have any idea how poverty-stricken you were, spiritually and in every other way? You had absolutely nothing going for you.

[ 48 : 37 ] But now, but now, what is he saying? He's saying, that's all changed.

That's all changed. Whereas you were strangers, you aren't strangers anymore. Whereas you were without God, you aren't without God anymore. Whereas you were without hope, you aren't without hope anymore.

Now you've got something going for you. I just want you to remember what you were, the pit from which you have been dug, and the grace that dug it.

But now, in Christ Jesus, you who were formerly far off, have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

That's because of the cross, because of what happened on that cross. God has made something available to you that was not available to you before.

[ 49 : 43 ] And I don't know. I wish I had a better handle on this. I've fought this thing for decades. And I still have never come up with a satisfactory conclusion of what happened with all of those people.

Millions of people. Hundreds of millions of people. Not Jews. Not recipients of the law of Moses. Not recipients of the Old Testament.

Having nothing to do with it. Being completely ignorant. Call them barbarians. Call them whatever you want to call them. Uncivilized or whatever. There were millions and millions of them. Before there was a cross.

Before there was a penalty that was paid to redeem the entire human race. What was the lot of those people? I know one thing.

And I take great comfort in this. And I relish passing it on to you because it has provided enormous comfort for me because I've spent some sleepless nights over this. Because as a preacher, you're supposed to have these answers.

[ 50 : 49 ] You know? And all I can tell you is that in the final analysis, where everybody is, wherever that is, whatever they are experiencing, however good or however bad, it will be for them absolutely, totally, completely as it ought to be.

it will be totally appropriate for whatever they are suffering or whatever they are enjoying, it will be completely appropriate.

And now the question is, appropriate according to whose estimation? it will be appropriate according to the estimation of the only one whose opinion matters.

And that's not yours. And it's not mine. Thank you, Lord. Now I'm going to sleep. And I did.

Now, you may think that's a cop-out, but I find great comfort in it because I have loved ones who passed on.

[ 52 : 19 ] I didn't know. I still don't know where they were. I don't know whether I'll see them in heaven or not. I don't know where they were spiritually. I don't know that they were in Christ.

I don't know that they weren't. And I know one thing. It doesn't do any good with all respect to our Roman Catholic friends.

It doesn't do any good to pray for those who are now deceased because there is no amount of prayer that is going to relieve anyone from perdition to heaven.

And wherever they are, it is the final state. So I take great comfort in the fact that absolute, total, complete, perfect justice will be served.

That to me is very comforting. So of my four-part message for you this morning, we've just covered the first part.

[ 53 : 23 ] And I'm going to ask if you've got comments or questions now because I'm intent on concluding this at 1130 like I tell myself every week I'm going to only today I really mean it.

So, Ethan, get those graduated legs going. Okay? And if you have a question or comment, and I apologize for not getting further in this message, but one thing leads to another and the older I get, the more disorganized I get in my thoughts.

Comments or questions? Ethan's got the mic. Joe? Testing. Testing, one, two, three. You're on. You mentioned that when we die, our soul, we go to heaven.

Our body goes to the grave, we go to heaven. Right, because Christ died for us. He's paid the price for the blood, blood shed for us.

Blood has to be shed for those. Now, the old saints, Abraham, like Abraham and Noah, they basically are also received salvation, but just how they get their salvation, you know, questionable.

[ 54 : 42 ] But they believed and they got their salvation. They were believers. But then, before Christ died on the cross, they, didn't they go then to paradise instead of to heaven straight?

They went to paradise. There was two separate, separations in, there was hell and, or Hades and paradise. Hell and paradise. And then when Christ rose, rose on the third day, went to heaven and we went to, he took those old saints with him and there's no longer a paradise down there because of the blood shed.

That had to happen, that had to happen for that, for salvation actually to really occur. Okay, Joe, I appreciate that but so far as the whole of that is concerned and I would like to tell you that there's a more definitive answer but I have not been able to find it.

I think the jury is still out and the whole issue about the Matthew 16 parable, the rich man and Lazarus, everything depends on whether it was an actual teaching of Christ or whether it was simply a parable that he was giving, a made up story in order to illustrate a point and that's what most of his parables were.

Most of his parables were made up stories designed to illustrate a spiritual truth. A sower went forth to sow and as he was sowing he sowed some seed and it fell on this kind of ground, that kind of ground so he was using that as an illustration and as far as the Matthew 16 and the parable, if it is a parable, I've been on both sides of that issue in my 60 years of studying the Bible and I still don't know which it is so I cannot base an interpretation or understanding upon a passage that I find to be unclear and to me that is still unclear so I don't know, Joe.

[ 56 : 36 ] You may have a point and you may be right on but I just can't endorse it and I can't deny it either. I just don't know. I just don't know. Other comments or questions? I wish I could be more of help. Somebody ask me a question and I can answer.

Any other thoughts? All right, let me close with this. Okay, thank you, Ethan. They've had their chance. The most dramatic thing, the most incredible difference that occurred that occurred as a result of Christ's death on the cross is wrapped up in those two little words there in Ephesians 2, but now, but now, as opposed to back then, you Gentiles, when you were all of those negative things, but now, in Christ Jesus, you have been brought near to God, but, be reminded, it is only in Christ Jesus you are brought near.

If you are not in Christ, you're still separated. You're no better off than those pagans who lived thousands of years ago if you are not in Christ.

that's the only place of refuge and safety. That's the only place of salvation, and it is in Him, and that's why we make such a big deal of Jesus Christ, and we see Him exclusively because God sees Him exclusively, and it doesn't matter what anybody else says.

if you or anyone else wants to make human salvation and acceptance with God available any other way than through the finished work of Christ, there really wasn't any point in Jesus even coming.

[ 58 : 54 ] Paul wrote to the Galatians and said, if salvation, if righteousness is attainable through the law and law keeping or any other way, then Christ is dead in vain.

It really didn't matter. Some people believe, oh, God is wonderfully creative. He's got all kinds of ways to salvation.

Don't limit God. Listen, God has limited Himself. I wouldn't limit Him. He's limited Himself. This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

He never said that of anyone else there in the Sermon on the Mount or at the baptism. God has put, vested everything in His Son.

and to suggest that, well, there's this great mountain and God is at the top of the mountain and there are all these different roads up the mountain and they all lead to God, even though there are different roads and people argue and fuss and fume about which way is right and this way is wrong and all the rest.

[ 60 : 14 ] They're all right. They're all right. Everybody's going to end up at the same place. They're all going to be at the top of the mountain. That is just so much satanic deception. That's all it is.

And to say that there is any other way not only makes the death of Christ unnecessary, but when you look at it, then it makes it terribly deficient, as if it wasn't enough.

So God had to do all of these other things. Listen, it was God who was going to make something so final, so full, so complete that there would be nothing else that could interfere with it or compete with it.

And that's exactly what he did in the person of Jesus Christ. And if you deny that, you deny the very heartbeat of God Almighty in what he did through Christ.

You need to understand that. This is why we say, and without apology, that Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one comes to the Father but by him.

[ 61 : 20 ] And you need to understand, that's not the Christian's idea. We didn't think that up. That's God's position.

He established it. All we're doing is getting in line with it. And we're asking others without apology to get in line with it. So, do we preach the exclusiveness of salvation through Christ?

You bet your bottom dollar we do, and there isn't anything else. And I want to close with these wonderful words uttered by John Lennox, his mathematics professor at Oxford University in England.

Christian, he was giving a lecture on the exclusiveness of Christ, and he closed with something like this. Christians are called narrow, bigoted, for insisting that Christ is the only way of salvation?

And I would ask you, why should we be called narrow and bigoted for accepting something from Jesus Christ that no one else even offers?

[ 62 : 38 ] Let that sink down in your heart, would you please? Pray with me if we deal with that. Father, every time we come to this book, we find it inexhaustible.

We just see a truth and we can't get beyond it. It just grows and looms so large, just like your mind and heart that had it written.

And we are woefully inadequate for it, but we so deeply appreciate it. And our prayer right now is that anyone and everyone, by way of listening, whether in this auditorium or whether listening by computer and electronics, would you be pleased to let them see the futility of life outside of Christ and the incredible value of vesting everything about themselves in him.

For every boy or girl, man or woman here today or listening through whatever means, our prayer is that their hearts may be captured by the truth that God so loved this world he gave his only forgotten son, so that whosoever believes in him would not perish.

And the perishing is our right is our rightful end. But Christ has died to take our pain and our punishment upon himself so we can go free.

[ 64 : 31 ] And all you're asking of us is that we acknowledge our sin, admit our waywardness, admit that we are just another member of the human race out of step with you.

and because of who Jesus Christ is and what he did, we want our case to be put in his hands and we want to receive his salvation.

Father, if you're dealing with someone here now, we pray you give them that needed courage and impetus to make that ever so important decision that so many of us here, maybe even all of us here have made some time in the past and we know what an incredible life-changing event and peace-providing thing it is.

And we relish our salvation so much we want everybody to be able to enjoy it. And we know you've provided it so that whosoever will may come.

In this closing moment, if you're struggling with this, would you in the quietness of your seat in your own mind and heart be willing to say even now, Lord Jesus, there's still a lot about this that I don't understand, but I do know this.

[ 65 : 57 ] I do know that I don't enjoy your peace and I don't enjoy your forgiveness and I know I need it and I want it and I know Jesus died to provide it for me and I want to put my case in his hands.

I want to receive Jesus as my Savior and whatever that involves. Thank you for going to the extreme lengths that you have to provide it for me and I know it's because you love me and I want to respond to that as best I can.

Dear friend, if that's your choice, settle it and seal it with God right now and then you need to tell someone close to you what you've done so they can encourage you.

Thank you Father for the time to share together. For the truth that's been presented with all of its deficiencies, we are grateful in Christ's name.

Amen.