

An Overview of Right Division. Part 4

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[0 : 00] The message this morning is an overview of right division, part four, the greatest difference it makes.

I'd like you to please turn to the book of Ephesians, and this morning we'll be in chapter three. Ephesians chapter three, verses one through ten. Ephesians chapter three, verses one through ten. I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read, you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the spirit.

To be specific.

[2 : 07] The very least of all saints. This grace was given. To preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery, which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things, so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.

I don't think that there is any passage of scripture that so clearly spells out what this business about the mystery is all about.

And I must tell you, although I am so grand to do so, that for the first several years of my Christian life, I don't know how many times I read Ephesians chapter three and never saw it.

Never understood it. Didn't attach any particular significance to it. And I cannot help but wonder how many others there are just like me.

You just don't see the significance. And this is one reason, perhaps the principal reason, why we are addressing this from the vantage point of what difference does it really make?

[3 : 41] And I've encountered that question a number of times over the years as I've tried to explain to people the distinctions that characterize the grace message. The bottom line for a lot of people is, yeah, well, I kind of see what you're talking about.

And I guess maybe it's a little bit important, but it seems to me that you're making a mountain out of a molehill. And really, the only thing that actually matters is that you preach the gospel and get people saved.

And all the rest of this stuff is just kind of incidental. And I can understand that because that's pretty much the same kind of attitude, I suppose, that I would have had when I first heard it.

But the difference it makes is really significant. And we want to spend some time trying to delineate that difference and how it is and why it is that so many get off track.

And really, the underlying issue of this whole thing, as far as I am concerned, is that this difference and this distinction that we are going to take at heart, it is the ignoring of it or the refusal of it that I think mightily contributes to the divisiveness that exists in the Christian community today.

[5 : 04] You know as well as I do, and we've talked a little bit about this, about all of the different denominations and groups and splits and splinters and sects and whatnots that exist.

And these all do so almost exclusively on the basis of certain doctrinal positions they have taken. And they all have to do with how they interpret a given passage of Scripture.

For instance, just to give you an example, if you are Pentecostal, now these are dear brethren who know and love the Lord, and they're going to be in heaven where, as I have often said, when we get there, we're all going to get straightened out because we all have flaws and wrinkles in our theology.

But our Pentecostal brethren base their doctrinal positions and the distinctions that they set forth almost entirely on Acts chapter 2 and the day of Pentecost and those few other passages that relate to that.

And on that basis, they are able to not only justify, but to see as essential, as an expression of one's true Christianity, the ability to speak in tongues.

[6 : 22] And that, of course, literally means you have the ability to speak in a language, an actual language that you have never learned. And when you hear these folks speak in what they call an unknown tongue, they have been analyzed by linguistic experts with sophisticated technical equipment and have been found to not actually be any kind of a language at all.

It is just gibberish. Now, this is done, I am confident, in good faith and by sincere people. They're not trying to hoodwink or fake out anybody. But how do you explain that? Well, they've got an explanation for it. And, oh, well, that's because it doesn't fit the mold of any human language. That's because when we speak in tongues, we are actually speaking the language of angels. So they wouldn't be able to detect that. You see, there is almost no end to the comebacks and the excuses that can be given when someone insists on holding fast to a doctrinal statement and what it sets forth.

And I'm not picking on them, but I'm just using them as an example because they are probably the most obvious example. And the Pentecostal church has many very dear brethren in it who really love the Lord.

[7 : 49] And as I've said, they're going to heaven just like we are if you have your faith in Christ. But all of these different things, and the water baptism issue, that's just one more in addition to the tongues.

And there are several other things. What I'm saying is these things divide true believers in Christ. And they keep us from providing a concerted effort to reach the lost and to evangelize.

We've got so many differences among us. And the world looks at us and says, those Christians, they're always arguing and fussing and fighting over their doctrines. They can't agree on anything. They've got all these different positions.

Well, does the Bible actually teach all of those different positions so that they are justified in holding them? No.

Of course not. Well, Wiseman, how can you be sure that you, right along with the Pentecostals that you are taking to task, how can you be sure that you haven't made some faulty assumptions and drawn some wrong conclusions on your own?

[8 : 57] There isn't any way that I can be sure. And I assure you, I am aware that I am very capable of that just as much as anybody else is. And the one thing that I think that, at least for me personally, that I have found that has given me more assurance and more comfort and more confidence in the positions I hold is that the doctrines that we set forth here or attempt to set forth here at Grace Bible Church, which, by the way, we're not saying are 100% accurate, but I'm saying this, they at least are able to fit into the overall scheme and program of Scripture.

They make sense. They fit. There is a place for things. We do not have needless contradictions and difficulties that cannot be addressed. And this system, if you want to call it a system, which I refer to as understanding the progressive revelation of Scripture, this system and interpreting the Bible in this way allows things to fit and make sense and come together in a way that is otherwise not possible.

At least that has been my finding. And perhaps the greatest area of difference and distinction has to do with delineating in the Bible those things that were given earlier.

This is just the progressive revelation thing spoken in a different way as opposed to that which has been provided later. And we've got numerous examples, and we'll just turn to a couple of them, but I want to show you right at the beginning what I think is the greatest difference that it makes.

And if you will turn, please, to Luke's Gospel, Chapter 19. Luke, Chapter 19. And while you are turning there, let me just continue to address this issue.

[10 : 59] The four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, provide the background for the message of grace, but they are not the message.

The four Gospels, more properly, refer to and belong to the Old Testament content wherein the law of Moses reigned supreme.

Now, this in and of itself will set a lot of people off because they say, now, wait just a moment there, Wiseman. The four Gospels are part of the New Testament.

And my response to that is, who says? Well, it says right here on this page that opens the New Testament that this is the New Testament.

Well, who put that there? Who said that? You see, we make a distinction that the Old Testament ends with Malachi, and the New Testament begins with Matthew.

[12:09] Well, doesn't it? Well, it sure does in most of our Bibles, but in actuality, it doesn't at all. Well, the four Gospels represent a continuation of the Old Testament.

Did you get that? It is a continuation of the Old Testament. Malachi, the last book in what we refer to as the Old Testament, closes chapters 3 and 4, first with an introduction of the Messiah's appointed enunciator, and that will be John the Baptist, the one who will come to prepare his way.

And then chapter 4 deals with his actual coming, that is, the Messiah himself. And then we've got 400 years of silence, nothing.

God is not revealing himself through any of the prophets. Heaven is shut up for 400 years. Now, it doesn't mean that nothing was happening. There was a lot happening.

But it wasn't such that God wanted recorded in Scripture. So what we have is 400 years, an interim wherein the revelation of God is not coming forth.

[13:35] And then, one day, John the Baptizer appears on the scene, and that is in fulfillment of the prophecy that Malachi made that closes out what we commonly think of as the Old Testament or the Old Covenant.

Now, this question needs to be addressed as well, and this is very, very important stuff. I think that it is so important.

Maybe it is so obvious that's why it's been overlooked. You know, sometimes things are so apparent that you can't see them.

And I think that this is, at least for me, this is the way this has been. We've got what we call the Old Testament and the New Testament. And each time that word is used, it is used incorrectly.

It should never be translated that way, either in the Old or in the New. It should always, invariably, without exception, be translated covenant. And that really makes a big difference when you really look at the strict derivation of the word.

[14:40] It's a covenant. And the covenant God made with Israel. Let me just inject this right here. Here, God has not made any covenants at all with Christians.

God has not made any covenants with the body of Christ. Operates on an entirely different plane. All of the covenants are between God and the nation of Israel.

There is the Abrahamic covenant. There is the Mosaic covenant. There is the Palestinian covenant. And there is the new covenant. These are all exclusively with the nation of Israel.

God never made any covenants at all with any non-Jews. They're all with the Jewish people, without exception. When Jesus died on the cross, he provided the basis for the establishment of the covenant that Jeremiah prophesied 500 years before Jesus was born.

When Jeremiah said, Full anticipation that the Jewish people, for hundreds of years, looked forward to that time.

[16:23] After all, Jeremiah promised that the new covenant was coming. God was going to establish the new covenant. And it would provide the basis for their obedience to God that was not included in the old covenant.

And that night when Jesus was betrayed, he took the cup. You've heard this, I'm sure, many times. And he held the cup up. And he said to the apostles, This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

And he passed it to each of them, and they drank from it, as well as having eaten some of the bread. Then when Jesus died on the cross, just a few days later, after having made that announcement, His doing so provided the basis for that new covenant to actually be realized.

And I am confident that the mistake that so many make, and I have to include myself among them for many, many years, was that that was the beginning of the new covenant.

The New Testament is the beginning of the new covenant. It's just misnamed. It should be the new covenant instead of the New Testament, but it's called the New Testament. So everybody knows, and it starts with Matthew chapter 1 and verse 1.

[17:49] But it doesn't at all. Because Jesus providing the basis for the establishment of the new covenant does not mean that the new covenant is therefore in force, that we are now living under the new covenant.

Why do I say that? Because to reinforce what was said earlier, the covenants are always and exclusively established with who? The Jewish people.

And when Jesus was gathered in that upper room with the 12 apostles, you may be sure there were no Gentiles there. They were all Jews. And He was talking about the new covenant promised by a Jewish prophet, Jeremiah, and it is going to be fulfilled by a Jewish Messiah, and that will be the Lord Jesus.

And when He died on the cross, He provided the basis for the establishment of the new covenant. So then, why isn't it? Where is it?

The new covenant is in limbo. It has never been fulfilled. And the reason it hasn't been fulfilled is because all of the covenants that God established with the Jewish people were always entered into in a dual kind of way.

[19 : 12] In other words, it was never God establishing the covenant singularly without any cooperation or involvement of those with whom He was establishing it.

And that's exactly the point. That's the whole point. The covenants that God established with the people of Israel were not one-sided. They were two-sided.

God made a covenant with Abraham. God made a covenant with Moses. God made covenant with David. God made covenant, the new covenant. But there are always covenants that are presented to the second party with the requirement that the second party agrees to the terms of the covenant. Is that so far-fetched? In other words, what I am saying is God is not imposing these covenants on the Jewish people.

He is providing them, extending them, giving them an opportunity to sign on, to agree to it. But this is exactly what we find in the Old Testament when the covenant with Israel was established that we refer to as the Old Covenant or the Mosaic Covenant or the Covenant of the Law.

[20 : 30] Moses came down from the mount, gave the children of Israel the tablets of the Law, the Ten Commandments, told them what all it was going to involve. And he said, Moses said to the people of Israel, God told me to tell you, if you will sign on to this, he will be your God, and you will be his people.

Exclusive to all the other nations of the earth, you will be a peculiar people unto him, and he will look out for you, and you will worship him as the only true God. So, what do you think?

And the people of Israel said, Moses, you go back up there and tell God, all that he has said will we do. We agree.

We'll buy it. We sign on. And Moses relayed the message, and God said, all right, let's ratify the covenant.

Let's sign it, if you will, in blood. So, they slew an animal. And they took the blood of the animal, and Moses took a hyssop branch, and he sprinkled it on the tables of the law, and he sprinkled it toward the people, and that solidified the covenant.

[21 : 49] That made it official. That ratified the covenant with blood. In other words, it was a signed deal.

It was complete. The contract is valid. Both parties have signed on and entered in. When Jesus said, When Jesus said, this cup is the new covenant, is the new covenant in my blood.

Of course, he was speaking prophetically. He wasn't going to die on that cross for several hours yet. But he was providing the basis for that new covenant to be extended to the nation of Israel so they, in that generation, could accept it and sign on just like the Jews did in the wilderness.

I am confident that this is exactly what the twelve apostles, perhaps I should change that, eleven apostles, because Judas by this time had already gone out to strike his deal.

That's exactly what the eleven apostles thought was going to happen. After all, Jesus said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. The new covenant. The new covenant.

[23 : 21] That means Israel is going to get a whole new fresh start. This is going to really be something. And when you turn to Luke chapter 19, let's look at this just quickly.

Verse 11. This is right after the incident with Zacchaeus. Verse 11 says, And while they were listening to these things, he went on to tell a parable.

Because. And that word, because, is really important. I have told you over the years, every time you come to a parable that Jesus is teaching, you always need to stop and ask yourself, why is he teaching?

Why is he giving this parable at this time? Because it's always connected. Jesus didn't just go around spouting stories and telling parables for no reason.

They were always connected vitally to a point that he was making. And this is no exception. They were nearing Jerusalem, and that's why he is telling this parable.

[24 : 29] And they, that is the twelve, they supposed. What were they doing? They were making a faulty assumption. I'm sure they did so in good faith.

They really believed this. I don't think there was any doubt about that. They supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. Well, the kingdom of God and the new covenant are not exactly the same thing.

But let me put it this way. They are inseparable. This kingdom of heaven coming to earth will not be a reality without the new covenant being established.

And the new covenant cannot be established without that new kingdom coming to earth. So they are inseparable. And they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. And then he goes on to give this lengthy parable about a certain landowner who is going to be absent from the scene and he's going to be gone for a long time before he comes back.

[25 : 37] And what is all that portraying? It's portraying himself. He's going to be leaving. They are looking for the establishment of the kingdom of heaven. And Jesus is saying, Fellas, it's not going to happen when you think it is.

That's the whole purpose of this parable. There is going to be an extensive amount of time passed between the giving of the parable and the establishment of the kingdom. They thought it was going to happen when they get to Jerusalem.

And that's going to be on Palm Sunday. And the people are going to line the streets shouting, Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord! And it didn't happen.

Then, when Jesus died on that cross, he fulfilled God's portion, God's requirement for God's part of the new covenant to be established.

that consisted of the offer. And the offer was made on the basis not of animal blood, but on the basis of the Son of God and His blood being shed.

[26 : 53] For it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin. But this man, by his own blood, entered into the holy place once, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

So, Jesus, in His death, burial, and resurrection, provided God's portion for extending the offer to Israel.

And all Israel has to do is say, God, you've got a deal. All that the Lord has said will we do.

But what did they say? They said, we will not have this man to reign over us. And that covenant was never established.

Still hasn't been established. The basis for the covenant has been laid. But Israel has never signed on.

[27 : 55] So, what we have in effect is like a legal contract drawn up between two parties and you have the party of the first part and they sign here on the dotted line.

And then you have the party of the second part and they sign over here on the dotted line. And each one representing their constituency. And when both signatures are affixed, that formalizes the contract.

Then, you've got a deal. Now, if you go to sell a piece of property, and I don't know that much about the mechanics or the legality of it, but I suspect that on that terms of the contract there is a statement regarding the seller and an understanding regarding the buyer.

And the seller signs here saying, I agree to relinquish this property for X number of dollars to such and such a person. And then the other person, who is the buyer, signs over here and says, I agree to purchase this from so and so for X number of dollars.

And they both sign and you've got a deal. That's called closing the deal. But what do you have when just one party who is the seller signs and the document is handed to the buyer and the buyer says, eh, I don't think I want to do this.

[29 : 26] I'm not going to sign. What do you have? You have no deal. The basis was made for the deal to be completed.

But it wasn't completed. So it's called no sale. The deal's off. There isn't going to be any transaction. Now, I want you to come for a last reference to Acts chapter 3.

It is very critical. Acts chapter 3. Peter has preached this message in chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost.

And by the way, it was not, it was not a salvation message at all, although it is commonly referred to that.

And when you read Peter's Pentecostal address, it is not a plea for people to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved, such as the gospel we preach today.

[30 : 35] Not at all. What Peter preached was the leveling of a scathing indictment against the nation of Israel for having crucified their Messiah.

Peter makes that very clear. They repented of rejecting Jesus as their Messiah. At least 3,000 of them did. They were baptized in his name under John's baptism.

And that was a very positive thing. But the vast majority of Israel was not on board with this. And the intelligentsia, the people who were the shakers and movers, the people who made the decisions spiritually and morally for Israel, the chief priests, the Sanhedrin, all of them, they were not on board with this at all.

They just had two representatives out of the whole bunch, and that was Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. So what we've got here is Peter preaching a message that is not basically a salvation message at all.

It was a message that was designed to cause these people to acknowledge and recognize that the one whom they earlier rejected and demanded be crucified was in fact the Messiah that God had sent.

[31 : 48] That's what they repented of. They changed their mind about that because Peter's message convicted them and it got through to him. But that's just a very small contingency.

We tend to become, I know I as a preacher would be absolutely thrilled to the bottom of my souls if 3,000 people were at the place that I was preaching repented and believed.

But I'm confident that was a small minority compared to the number who were needed to repent and believe. So in Acts chapter 3, we've got this very, very significant statement.

It is Peter's second sermon and he is preaching to the children of Israel. These are all Jews, by the way, and it is the second sermon and it's in connection with this man who was healed miraculously. and he says in verse 17, we're going to skip a lot of this content, but in verse 17 he says, and now brethren, don't be thrown by that word brethren, don't think that this is a Christian talking to Christians.

[32 : 53] This is a Jew talking to Jews and they are brethren because they're Jews, they're fellow Jews. And now brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, that is, in rejecting Jesus as your Messiah, just as your rulers did also.

The chief priests, the scribes, all of them, they were the ones who were saying, crucify him, away with him, we'll not have this man to reign over us. Now verse 18, but the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ, his Messiah, should or would suffer, he has thus fulfilled.

What that means is, the party of the first part signed on. Where is the party of the second part?

He has fulfilled. Repent therefore, that's to be your answer, your response. Change your mind therefore, and return to him that your sins may be wiped away in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus the Christ appointed for you.

Well, he just left two months earlier. This is only about two months after the ascension, and now he is saying, if Israel will sign on collectively, nationally, God will return him, and that thing called the new covenant will get underway with the establishment of the kingdom.

[34 : 53] What happened? Israel still remains in disobedience. They refuse to sign on. If you read the very next chapter, the persecution begins.

That's their answer. And the persecution is Jew on Jew. The Jews who did not believe began the persecution of the small number that did believe.

And eventually, God said, that's enough. The new covenant that my son died to provide the basis for is held in abeyance.

And anyone and everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ will derive the benefits of the provision that Christ made for the new covenant with the salvation of their souls when they believe on Christ.

But the new covenant has not come into fruition. It still hasn't. And what this means is what we call the new covenant does not now exist.

[36 : 07] Well, what in the world then do you call the four gospels and all the rest of what we call the new testament? You just call it the continuing the ongoing revelation of God.

The thing that really tends to throw us is the 400 silent years between what we call the old and the new. But never lose sight of the fact that when Jesus and John the Baptist and others came on the scene in the four gospels, they all functioned under the Old Testament economy that remained in place from the time it was established way back in the Old Testament.

That's why Jesus kept the Sabbath. That's why he was circumcised. That's why he appealed to the law of Moses, referred to the law of Moses, quoted the law of Moses, because he was functioning under the law of Moses, not under the grace of God as we are today.

That's why it makes so much difference. The message is changed. You look at a great deal of the preaching that takes place today and so much of it is found in the Gospels.

Why? Well, because that's where Jesus is. Now, wait a minute. Jesus is there to be sure. But don't you understand that Jesus is in Genesis?

[37 : 36] He's in Samuel. He's in Isaiah. Jesus is in Philipians. Jesus is in the Revelation. Jesus is in Acts.

Jesus is in Colossians. The real problem that so many people have, even though they may not be aware of it, is an inadequate view of the inspiration of Scripture.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable. It is to our own hurt that we elevate portions like sentiment, demands, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Does this mean that we ignore those? Of course not. Why do you think I spent five years here in John's Gospel? The Gospels in the Old Testament are just loaded to the brim with all kinds of spiritual, biblical principles, sound principles that are cross-dispensational, that are to be applied any time and every time.

But there is a huge difference between that which says go and do likewise and that which says extract from it the principle.

[38 : 56] So, when we look at the go and do likewise, I'm Abraham and Maria Sarah.

And we want to claim that promise. Wouldn't it be nice to have a baby? Wow. Are you mean to tell me surely you don't mean to limit God, do you?

I mean, God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. I mean, he did it for Abraham and Sarah, honey. Why can't he do it for us? Wow. No.

No, it isn't go and do likewise. But what's the principle there? The principle is God can be taken at his word. God always makes good on his promise. And we extract the principle and we take great comfort in that and we rely on that.

But the go and do thou likewise is going to have you sacrificing animals and keeping the Sabbath and all the rest of that stuff. Now, nobody has any problem with ejecting those things because we say, well, that's not for us.

[40 : 11] Okay, why isn't it for us? You're right, it isn't for us. Why isn't it? And when you extrapolate that and see where it leads you to, you come out with a huge distinction between that which was committed to us in the day of grace, in the body of Christ, that reflects what Paul calls the mystery, as opposed to what was in vogue for thousands of years before.

What we're saying is a whole new paradigm has developed, and it is called the body of Christ, and it's made up of Jews and Gentiles together in one body.

The separation is done away with. The middle wall of partition is broken down. Is that so difficult? Well, it's difficult enough to escape this hardhead for the first 15 years of my Christian life.

I didn't see this, and when I first heard about this thing, some of this content, my response was, well, I know that's not true, and the reason I knew that wasn't true was because that's not what I'd always believed.

Isn't that great? Isn't that really consistent logic? I'm embarrassed by it now, but you'd be surprised how many people think that way. That's not what I've always believed. Well, maybe you ought to give what you've always believed a second look, and a third look, and a fourth look, because that's what growing is all about, maturing and developing.

[41 : 44] Are we 100% on track here at Grace? I'm confident that we are not. I know we're not. We can't be, because only God is, and there's no vacancies in the Trinity that I could apply for.

So we know that we're off track. What we're doing, though, in studying and researching is we're looking for those places where we're off track so we can correct our course and get with it, and

that's what spiritual growth and development is all about.

Well, there is so much here that my burden is for Grace people to understand that there really is a difference, and knowing and understanding it is important.

And I suspect that in a number as large as we are, not a great number, but a significant number, that there may well be some people here who may be here for years and say, well, you know, I kind of like the fellowship, and I kind of like the people, and I kind of like the preaching, and a lot of it I don't understand, but I just kind of go along with it.

That's not good enough. We need to be people of conviction. We need to understand what we believe is important, and we need to be able to defend it.

[43 : 14] Because if it isn't worth defending, it isn't worth believing. Think of that. Well, maybe if I've just given you something to think about, that's all I can expect, and I hope that I've done that.

Would you pray with me? Father, we know that there's a lot about this that we still don't understand, but we want to build on what we do understand, and we want to have hearts and minds that are open to your truth.

We don't want to be naive. We certainly don't want to be misled, and I certainly don't want to mislead these people. And we trust that as we continue to examine the implications of this, we will come to a new sense, a new appreciation of that incredible gospel of grace that is still lost on most of the world.

They cannot understand, they cannot embrace a thing that would be the most wonderful thing that ever happened to them, a real appreciation and understanding of your grace.

But for those of us who have, we trust the spirit of conviction and enablement will weigh upon us so heavily that we will not be able to rest or sleep without expounding it, and proclaiming it whenever and however we can.

[44 : 40] To that end, we thank you in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. And amen.