

The Epistles: Paul's Commission

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[0 : 00] This, I believe, is our tenth session together on the subject of progressive revelation in the Bible. And I have strived to make each study somewhat stand on its own, so that in the event that someone drops in and gets just one study, they'll have something to chew on.

But I still want to enable those who are usually here each week to see the manner in which each study builds upon that which has preceded it. The previous nine sessions, by the way, are available on cassette tape, and the last three or four of them are located in the tape carousel in the rear of the church.

I don't mind telling you that I have faced the reality that there are many Christians who do not feel that these things are important at all, although I hope none of them are here today.

But it has come to my attention repeatedly as I talk to believers outside these four walls particularly, that these doctrinal items, which I consider to be so critical, upon which our faith and practice is built, comes across to a great many people who profess to know the Lord as just, eh, I could much care less, you know, take it or leave it, if that's what turns you on.

If doctrine's your thing, if you like that, fine. And they're just not too excited about any chapter or verse about anything. And that really concerns me. I don't know exactly where they're coming from or how it is that they can be that way, but that's the way some people are.

[1 : 34] And I am also somewhat troubled with the sneaky suspicion that there are some of you here, I don't know how many, I hope not very many, who really don't have a clue as to what I'm talking about.

Paul's ministry, Peter's ministry, the gospel of the grace of God, the gospel of the circumcision. Well, I'm not sure I care. All I know is it's all in the Bible and I believe it all and that's all that matters. But there is little or no effort given to trying to see what belongs where and how that ought to affect our particular ministry and doctrine today. And if there are any of those here, and I don't know for sure that there are, if there are, you're well hidden.

Stay that way. Please don't surface. It would discourage me. But I just want you to crank up your hearing and gear up your gray matter and try to dig into this and see if you can't start picking up on it.

Because it will do you more good and give you more mileage than anything that I can think of. It troubles any preacher, of course, who always likes to think that everything he preaches is of terribly vital importance and the world is just waiting for his message.

[2 : 58] Else why preach it? But I know that many do not share my enthusiasm and my commitment to some of these things that I have demonstrated. And I have to learn to live with that with a somewhat tolerant spirit.

But that will not keep me from trying to excite as many people about it as I can. And that's what I'm going to do. I must remember that there was a time when these things did not excite me very much either.

So that means that if I've gotten plugged into it, there is hope for anybody and everybody. In our previous session, we pointed out the uniqueness of Paul the Apostle's calling and his ministry. We felt justified in doing this because he himself did so, not boastfully, but humbly and gratefully. Paul said, I magnify my office.

And when we say that Paul's ministry and calling and Paul's apostleship was unique, what we mean by that is exactly what the word unique means.

[4 : 01] It means one of a kind. It means there were no others like that before, and there are none others exactly like that since. The man's calling and apostleship and credentials and commission and everything about him was strictly one of a kind.

That's very important. We are saying that Paul was not an add-on apostle. I always thought of him as being that way. I really did for years and years and years.

I mean, I know our Lord chose twelve. One of them disqualified himself, Judas, and a replacement was chosen, Matthias.

And then a little later, the apostolic band was added to by Paul. Some Bible teachers are even of the persuasion that the apostles who chose the replacement themselves and came up with Matthias were really acting prematurely and they were disobedient to the Lord because God had a different man in mind all the time, but the apostles jumped the gun and they ran ahead of the Lord. And the Lord really had Paul, the apostle, in mind to be the replacement for Judas. But, well, my contention is that is not true at all.

[5 : 23] Matter of fact, you may not have considered this, but I am convinced on the basis of the record that is given that Paul, the apostle, would not have even been eligible to be one of the twelve.

Now, you're wondering how I arrived at that, and I can't wait to show you. Acts chapter 1. Let's go there, please. When our Lord chose twelve, as are enumerated in all of the Gospels and repeated again in the Acts, the inner circle who made up the closest companions to our Lord were Peter, James, and John.

And to them were added Nathaniel and Thomas and the other James and Judas and the other Judas and so on until there were twelve. But in Acts chapter 1, we find the criteria given regarding the qualifications of an apostle.

May we begin, please, immediately following the ascension of Christ with verse 13. I'll just jump in here. When they had entered, they went to an upper room.

Now, the they refers to the apostles. They went to the upper room. Jesus had just ascended before their very eyes. That's where they were staying, that is. Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James.

[6 : 51] This Judas, not to be confused with Iscariot, who has already committed suicide. There are eleven of them. And as they look around, they realize there are only eleven of us.

But there are twelve tribes of Israel, and our Lord said that when he comes into his glory, each of us is going to occupy one of the twelve thrones of Israel. But for sure, Judas is not going to be one of them, and there are only eleven.

What are we going to do? Well, they were still thinking in terms of the kingdom and of the promises that were made, and they were moving in that direction. So they concluded, verse fourteen, these all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

His brothers, by the way, have since become believers. They were not believers in Christ as the Messiah prior to his crucifixion. They came to faith after his resurrection.

Verse fifteen. At this time, Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren. He is the logical one to do so. He is the spokesman of the twelve. He is the one to whom Jesus committed the keys of the kingdom.

[8 : 04] He is numero uno in the apostolic band. The Roman Catholics have that right. They really do. Peter was given that privilege of chief spokesman of the twelve, of the key representative of the Lord.

And he is simply fulfilling the responsibility that was given to him. A gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together, and here is what Peter said.

Brethren, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became guide to those who arrested Jesus, for he was counted among us, and received his portion in this ministry.

Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle, and all his bowels gushed out. Kind of gross, isn't it?

And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem, so that in their own language, that field was called Hakeldama, which is the field of blood, or the potter's field.

[9 : 11] This is where you buried people who were considered indigent, or poor, or unable to provide a decent burial. This is where you buried the poverty-type people, the welfare people, who couldn't afford a funeral, were buried out in the potter's field.

That's what Judas' money, the thirty pieces of silver, were used for. When he threw them down in the temple, the priest said, well, we can't put this money in the temple treasure. It's the price of blood. It was used for the betrayal of a man who was executed.

What are we going to do with it? And somebody said, well, let's donate it to charity. Let's buy a pauper's field, a pauper's graveyard. And that's what the money was used for.

Verse 20, For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his homestead be made desolate, and let no man dwell in it, and his office let another man take. It is necessary. Now, here are the qualifications. And I do not know that there is any reason to suspect that Peter is not inspired in his speech. I think he is speaking with authority.

[10:18] We have no indication at all in the context that Peter is out of line. And he says, Of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us.

What does that mean? That means during the three to three and a half years that Jesus ministered in public, there were certain ones who were with him from that time right up to the crucifixion.

And mind you, not just the twelve. There were a great many other people, in addition to the twelve whom Jesus chose, who were very close to Jesus and the twelve.

And they spent a great deal of time with him. Do you think that Jesus had only twelve people who really wanted to be with him all the time? He had far more than that.

We know that even Lazarus was a good friend, so were Mary and Martha, and so were a great many others. But out of all of the disciples who surrounded the person of Jesus, who were awed at his teachings, and who were absolutely captivated by his miracles, there were many more than twelve.

[11:33] But of all of those that there were, he chose twelve for special consideration, special concentration, for a unique kind of discipleship that others would not enjoy.

And here he says, Of all of the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning with the baptism of John, which was the public introduction of Jesus into his ministry, until the day that he was taken up from us, one of these should become a witness with us of his resurrection.

And out of all of those, however many there were, they put forward two men. Apparently there were a lot more than two, but they selected two. Now, you might ask the question, What gives these men the right to do this?

Jesus gave them the right. He had already said, As the Father sends me, so send I you. All authority is given unto me. This is what I'm giving to you. You go out in my name, and you heal the sick, and you cleanse the lepers, and you raise the dead, and you preach the gospel of the kingdom.

You do the same things that I've been doing. I give you authority. They were exercising that which Jesus gave them. They didn't have this power and authority in and of themselves.

[12:53] It was derived from our Lord. They put forward two men, Joseph, called Barsabbas, who is also called Justice, and Matthias.

And they prayed and said, Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two thou hast chosen to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.

They drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. And from here on out, the Holy Spirit refers to this band, not as the eleven plus one illegitimate, but as the twelve.

As the twelve. That's significant. Now, if what Peter says is necessary criteria for one to be an apostle, Paul would not have qualified.

We do not know for sure because the scriptures do not say, but we do not know that Paul or Saul of Tarsus ever saw Jesus Christ in the flesh before his crucifixion.

[14:02] He may have, but he never says he did. And there is no record in scripture that he did. There were a great many people who did not see Jesus while he was here for three and a half years.

Thousands did. Many thousands did not. Paul infers that he saw the Lord for the first time when he was the resurrected, ascended, glorified Christ.

He refers to himself as one born out of due season. Our Lord was seen by Peter, by the women, then by the twelve, then above five hundred brethren of whom the most are alive at this present time, and last of all, he was seen also of me.

And that was on the road to Damascus. So in accordance with the apostleship of the twelve, and in accordance with the criteria that are given here, if that indeed is what it is, and I don't know what it is if it isn't that, Paul would not have been eligible.

That simply lends more credence to the idea that his apostleship, while legitimate, was different from the twelve. There is not one hint anywhere in Scripture that their selecting Matthias to replace Judas was premature, or that they were acting out of disobedience.

[15:21] Paul's apostleship was unique, and he was uniquely equipped to fill that role because he was a man who was a Jew, he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, that means his mother was a Pharisee, and his, I mean his mother was a Jew, and his father was a Jew.

He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. And he was a Pharisee, that meant that he had to have a certain amount of training, understanding, background, indoctrination into Judaism.

And Paul, or Saul, knew Judaism. You may be sure he really knew what it meant to be a Jew. He boasted of all of the things he had going for him in his pedigree in Philippians chapter 3, and you can read the list yourself.

It is a very impressive list after the flesh. In addition to that, he had another very significant thing going for him that none of the twelve could obviously boast. Paul was a Roman citizen.

That was really something in those days. When you consider that 60%, 60 to 70% of the people who lived in Rome, who lived in Rome, were slaves.

[16:32] And only a small percentage were Roman citizens. That's significant. And Paul had doors open to him virtually everywhere that would not have been afforded him apart from his Roman citizenship.

In fact, it was because he was a citizen of Rome that he was able to stand before Caesar and King Agrippa and Festus and plead his case and give his testimony. And do you realize that there are almost 100 verses of Scripture in the New Testament that are given in account of Saul of Tarsus' conversion to Jesus Christ?

And as I pointed out to you, the Word of God has more to say about the conversion of Saul of Tarsus than it does everyone else in all of the Bible combined, Old Testament and New.

That's significant. That's significant. Why does the Spirit of God spend so much time and effort and space on the page with one man? Because he is unique.

And I want you to understand this, whatever you do, Paul's being chosen was simply due to the boundless grace of God.

[17:40] He did not choose Saul of Tarsus because he deserved to be chosen. If anything, he was the last person who deserved it. unto me who am less than the least of all the apostles is this grace given that I should preach Christ among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Paul was absolutely overwhelmed. He was flabbergasted with the grace of God. He never got over it. You read his epistles and Paul uses the word grace and the concept grace and talks more about grace as a recipient of grace and a preacher of grace than everyone else in the Bible put together. Is that coincidental? I think that's extremely significant. But it was not of his doing. It was the Spirit of God that led him to extol the virtues of grace as vested in Jesus Christ.

And he was a Greek-speaking, cultured, educated man. He could travel in any circle. He could go anywhere. He could minister in Greek, in Hebrew, in Aramaic.

He had the culture down. He didn't suffer from the culture shock that many might. He had doors open to him that others would have had closed. He was in every respect the ultimate apostle.

[19:02] And Christ made him that. His conversion account is given in chapter 9. It's repeated by testimony in chapter 22. It is repeated again in chapter 26.

Now this question. Are we placing Paul above Peter and the 12? No. Absolutely not. And for any who would say that we are, I would deny that.

We are not placing Paul above Peter and the 12. We are placing Paul after Peter and the 12. and we are suggesting that they really are ministering to two different constituencies.

And I think we saw that in our last session. I would like to return to it if we may please. There are some unfinished things we need to tidy up in Galatians chapter 1. We are saying that Peter and Paul had two different constituencies, although both of them crossed over on occasion, as in Acts 10 with Cornelius and in Paul going to the synagogue of the Jews.

In the main, however, Peter and the 12 ministered to the Jews, Paul ministered to the Gentiles. We are saying they preached two different messages.

[20 : 22] Peter and the 12 preached a message that was peculiarly adopted to the Jews and the emphasis was upon the coming kingdom of God. Paul, on the other hand, preached a message that was peculiarly directed to the Gentiles and his emphasis was not upon the kingdom of God.

His emphasis was upon the grace of God. Question. If Paul were preaching the same thing as Peter and the 12, why did he see the necessity of going to Jerusalem to brief them on what he was preaching?

Now, make no mistake about this. The central core of the preaching of both of these men, Peter and Paul, was the same. They both preached Christ.

Make no mistake about that. But the one preached the Messiah as he was specifically tailored and adapted to the Jew and the other preached Christ as he was proposed to the pagans, to the Gentiles who had no frame of reference for Mosaic law, for ritual, for the sacrifices, or for none of that.

And do you know what Paul did when he went in and preached his gospel of the grace of God? He just simply eliminated a lot of the things that a Jewish audience would require.

[21 : 55] Gentiles did. Let me put it this way. Paul had a streamlined gospel. It was very simple, direct to the point. Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.

He was buried and raised the third day according to the scriptures. When Peter proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah and proclaimed him to Jews, circumcision was never an issue.

Do you know why? Because every Jew in Peter's audience had already been circumcised. He didn't preach circumcision. And circumcision never became a problem until Paul went out and began reaching Gentiles with his streamlined gospel that did not include circumcision that was very upsetting to some of the Jews.

Look, if you will, at Galatians 1. And verse 6. Paul said, I am amazed. Now, in the main, the recipients of this document, this great charter of Christian liberty called Galatians, in the main, they are Gentiles.

But you may be sure there are Jews there among them. There always were. I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel, which is really not another.

[23 : 23] That is, it is not a true another. Only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. What is the distortion?

distortion. It will become very clear as you move on through this epistle. The distortion is mixing human works and human merit with the grace of God so that it waters down that which is pure grace and keeps it from being grace at all.

And this is precisely what is taking place here. Now, you didn't have this kind of conflict among Jews because you're not going to go in and preach circumcision to people who've already been circumcised anyway.

That's not an issue with them. But it becomes an issue with the Jews for the Gentiles. And that's the problem. Boy, is it ever the problem.

They convene a council in Acts chapter 15 and they thresh out these matters. And the conclusion of the council is we will not require Gentiles to be circumcised. Well, what about Jews then who are circumcised?

[24 : 32] Paul says, So? If you're circumcised, don't seek to be uncircumcised. If you're uncircumcised, don't go get circumcised. Let every man abide wherein he is called. If you're married, don't think that because you are a Christian, now you have to get rid of your wife so you can go out and be free to preach the gospel in an unhindered fashion like I do.

And at the same time, if you are single, don't feel that now because you are a Christian you have to take a wife. You don't. That has no bearing upon it at all.

And neither does the issue of circumcision. Well, Paul goes on and really takes a very strong stand. Even though, verse 8, Even though we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

That's pretty powerful. Paul says, If anybody tries to add to or take from the gospel as I delivered it to you, let him be accursed. Does he really mean that?

I think he suspects that there will be some who think that I really don't mean that. So let me repeat it. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you have received, let him be accursed.

[25 : 43] What would that gospel be? That gospel would be these Gentiles who have come to faith in Jesus Christ on the basis of grace plus nothing were going along their merry way growing and maturing in Christ and here comes this wolf pack from Jerusalem and says, Well, when were you people circumcised?

Oh, we've never been circumcised. We've just believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and we've been saved and redeemed and it's wonderful and we're serving and loving the Lord. But you haven't been circumcised? Well, no. Well, you've got to be circumcised.

You aren't all the way saved. Circumcision will seal your salvation. Circumcision will make it certain. You've got to be circumcised.

We can't take thousands of years of human history and the traditions of Moses and just lay them aside as though they count for nothing. Paul says, Oh, yes you can.

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. It is Christ, Christ, Christ. That's it. Plus nothing. And if anybody tries to add to that, let him be accursed.

[26 : 57] That's powerful. Now, folks, I cannot look at that and say, Well, Paul's expressing a personal opinion and he sure is steamed up because you see, this is something that's close to him.

I take these words as the words of God through an inspired man and if I can't take them that way, I don't want to be your pastor.

I don't want to be anybody's pastor. Forget it. Let's go home and read the funny papers. He says in verse 11, He did not receive this gospel that he is preaching.

You know, you stop and think about it. This man, Paul, having been a Pharisee, you would look far and wide to find somebody more steeped in legalism than he was.

I mean, this man knew Moses backwards and forwards. Circumcised the eighth day of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Oh, he was as Jewish as Jewish could be.

[28 : 03] If there would be anybody who would really be hard to knock the legalism out of, it'd be Saul of Tarsus. But when Jesus Christ called him and saved him by his grace, just pure, unadulterated grace, he got that message and he became the apostle of grace.

And now, he is saying, don't let anybody put on you what I once would have put on you because I was dead wrong and they are wrong too.

That's what he's saying. He tells us where he got his gospel. He did not receive it from men. That means he's not talking about the gospel of the kingdom.

It'd been preached. It'd been around for years. But this is a different thing. And he didn't get it from men. He received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. And that was not until the Damascus Road experience.

You know where I'm coming from. Verse 13, and he refers to that again. Now, in verse 1 of chapter 2, I want to run this by you one more time.

[29 : 17] It's very important. After an interval of 14 years, I went up again to Jerusalem. Now, we're talking about quite some time after the resurrection. Went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also.

And it was because of a revelation that I went up. That means I would not have gone up on my own accord, but Christ revealed to me in accordance with a whole lot of revelations he gave me, one of which was I was to go up to Jerusalem and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles.

That just grabs me. Why did he see a necessity to do that? Can you imagine Paul going in and saying, Peter, how are you?

Fine, brother. Good to see you there. Shaking hands, slapping backs, and you haven't aged any, and oh, you look just the same. Put on a few pounds here. Lost a little bit. Well, I'll tell you why I came by. I came by that I might communicate to you, brief you, fill you in on exactly what I have been preaching to the Gentiles.

Would not Peter have been taken aback and say, what do you mean what you've been preaching? You've been preaching the same thing we have. There's only one gospel. Surely you aren't preaching anything differently from what we are.

[30 : 40] We're all preaching. It is precisely because they were not preaching the same thing that Paul is going there to clarify this. lest he run in vain or had run in vain.

He did not want to cause confusion and division because he was preaching one thing and Peter and the twelve were preaching something else and the opportunity for confusion and division and

difficulty is rampant.

And Paul says, hey, I want you guys in Jerusalem to know what's going on. What I'm telling these people out there in the regions beyond. Because word is going to get back to you. The scuttlebutt will be, you name it.

And that's true. That's exactly what happened. All kinds of rumors. And I'm preaching salvation by grace through faith.

I'm not preaching the law of Moses. I'm not telling them. Now you Gentiles have to become good Jews. You have to be circumcised. You have to keep the Sabbath. You have to keep the law of Moses.

[31 : 41] I'm not telling them that. I'm not telling them that. But the people to whom Peter and the twelve were preaching were already doing those things. Now do you incorporate what the Jews are already doing in with the message that you preach to the Gentiles so they'll start doing all those things that the Jews have been doing?

Paul says, no. No. And that got a lot of, got him in a lot of trouble. A lot of trouble. The conclusion is, in verse 7, on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted, seeing, understanding, agreeing with, that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, that's another way of saying Gentile, just as Peter with the gospel to the circumcised.

Now, in the original, the gospel is not there. And quite literally, the original would read this way. I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter with that to the circumcised. But it is not a bad insertion, and it certainly makes sense. For he who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised, effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles.

And recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas, another name for Peter, and John, who were reputed to be the pillars, that is, the backbone of the church there at Jerusalem, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship.

[33 : 27] That means we support you, fellows. We're in agreement with you. We bless you. We wish you well. that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

Two different constituencies, two different messages. Christ is at the center of both. No one is saying that Peter and the twelve are not preaching truth.

We are saying they are preaching a specific truth directed to a specific people because the kingdom possibilities are still a reality for Israel.

This is the difficult transition time when Paul comes in and begins preaching the gospel of the grace of God. The gospel of the kingdom is being preached at the same time. There is an overlap here. That's what makes this concept so difficult to understand. Which one of these gospels is true? They are both true. true. They are both true.

[34 : 30] Paul's message is an update of Peter's message. Peter's message is fading away and Paul's is coming on stronger and stronger.

With the end result is that Peter's message and the concept of the kingdom will be ultimately set aside in its entirety in conjunction with Israel's disobedience and the gospel of the grace of God to the Gentiles.

becomes full blown through Paul's apostleship. Christ was the heart of both. Now I want you to see another very, very striking contrast.

Come back with me please to Matthew chapter 28. Familiar passage. I could quote it and you probably could quote it too but I want you to see it in black and white.

Matthew 28. remember when this occurred. This account historically precedes by somewhere between three to five years the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

[35 : 47] this is right after the resurrection and right before our Lord's ascension. And he gathers the twelve apostles or eleven if you will.

Matthias has not been chosen yet as the replacement. He gathers the eleven apostles around him. Verse 16. They saw him. They worshipped him.

Verse 18. Jesus came up and spoke to them, the eleven, saying, All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. And here's what he said. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them.

Now I suspect there are some, not very many, but there are a few who do not see the baptism here as with water. They think that this means identifying them.

And I think that it is unmistakably, irrevocably water. And it would appear to be baptism in the same mode and with much the same reason for which John the Baptist baptized.

[36 : 57] And I cannot escape H₂O. Verse 19 is as wet as you can get. It is wet water. Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Now there is their commission. Jesus has charged them to do that. What are they supposed to do? Well, they are supposed to go, first of all.

That's going to affect their geography. They are going to make disciples. That means make learners and followers out of those who are not. Of all the nations, that incorporates multitude of nationalities, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Now I would suggest that they would not have been true to their calling if they had omitted any of those things. All of these things together make up their commission.

Question. Did Christ send these apostles to make disciples? Yeah. Did he send them to make disciples of all nations?

[38 : 21] Yes. Did he send them to baptize? He sure did. At least that's what he says he did. All right.

Let's look at another. John's Gospel. Come over just a couple of Gospels. John's Gospel chapter 1. John's Gospel chapter 1 verse 6.

There came a man, I want you to note who sent him. Sent from God. No doubt about that.

There came a man sent from God whose name was John. He came for a witness that he might bear witness of the light that all might believe through him.

He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light. All I wanted to establish here is that John the baptizer was sent from God. Now look at John chapter 1 and verse 26.

[39 : 31] Verse 25. People come to John and ask him, Why are you baptizing if you are not the Christ? Now notice they didn't say, What are you doing? They knew what he was doing.

Baptism was not new to the Jews. John didn't originate it. They knew full well what he was doing. They asked him, Why are you doing it? If you are not the Messiah, if you are not Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet, John answered them saying, I baptize in water, but among you stands one whom you do not know.

It is he who comes after me, the throng of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie. These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

This is he. I'm sorry, verse 29. The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

This is he on behalf of whom I said, After me comes a man who has a higher rank than I, for he existed before me. And I did not recognize him. But in order that he might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water.

[40 : 46] And John bore witness, saying, I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and he remained upon him. And I did not recognize him.

But he who sent me to baptize in water said to me, He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.

Question. Were the twelve in Matthew 28 sent to baptize? Yes. Was John the Baptist here sent to baptize? He says, He who sent me to baptize in water.

Can't be any clearer than that, can it? John's Gospel, chapter 4. When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, although Jesus himself was not baptizing, but his disciples were, he left Judea and departed again into Galilee.

I cannot emphasize how much of an integral part water baptism was to the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom. How much it was ingrained into these people, because it represented, there was nothing magical about water baptism, not even with John.

[42 : 10] it was that it represented a purification or a cleansing on the part of those who submitted to it, saying that they were in agreement with John's message, that they too were anticipating the Messiah, and they were making themselves morally, spiritually prepared to receive him when he came.

And John was not just baptizing priests, John was baptizing everybody who came to him, but they were all Jews. There were no non-Jews, all Jews. Now, 1 Corinthians chapter 1.

If you can find a more pronounced difference than this, I do not know where it is. 1 Corinthians chapter 1. Paul is talking about divisions that existed.

People were choosing up sides, naming their favorite apostle. In verse 12, he says, Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Well, let me ask you, says Paul, has Christ been divided? There is supposed to be unity in the body of Christ, not little factions, that say, this is my guy, and I follow him, and I identify with him.

[43 : 34] Hey, you're all supposed to be one body. not have all these little clicks. Paul was not crucified for you, was he?

Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? No. What is he implying there? What he is implying is, you were baptized in the name of Christ, not in the name of Paul.

I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius. I really have a problem with that. I really have a problem with that.

In light of what all we have talked about thus far, about water baptism, them. Doesn't look like Paul has a very good attitude here. Now, granted, he is perturbed with these people, and I am sure that this is one reason that he's not all that eager to be identified with.

He is provoked with them. The way they're carrying on is shameful. And he says, I thank God I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, that no man should say you were baptized in my name.

[44 : 44] Now, I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. Now, folks, does he really mean that?

Or is that tongue-in-cheek? Is he being facetious or what? Is he saying? Is it possible that he is saying, you know, this thing of water baptism has become to me such a peripheral issue, such a non-essential, I know I baptized some of you people, but I'm not even sure who all it was that I baptized.

I am persuaded that what Paul is saying is that sometime, sometime in the prosecution of his ministry, water baptism, began to become less and less important, and it is just fading away.

And he goes on to say, for Christ did not send me to baptize. Well, Peter couldn't say that.

He absolutely could not say that. Peter would say, Christ sent me to make disciples, to baptize, and to teach them to observe all things. Paul says, Christ didn't send me to baptize.

[46 : 08] What do you mean he didn't send you to baptize? He sent all the apostles to baptize. But Paul is a different apostle, with a different commission. That's just not where it's at.

If you're preaching a Jewish Messiah to Jewish people, you incorporate all of these things that are part and parcel of the kingdom message. Part of which was, had to be, water baptism.

But it isn't here. Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel. Now that is interpreted variously by those who do not agree with what we say.

And some say, well, what that means is, Paul is saying that compared to the preaching of the gospel, baptism is unimportant. Well, I would not disagree with that. But that isn't what it says.

And that certainly isn't the implication that you get when you connect the earlier passages and the importance of baptism with it here. Neither does this ring true with what Peter said.

[47 : 12] Acts 2.38, a verse that has driven Baptists up the wall. They sing and dance around that and try to avoid it. I know. I put on my dancing shoes with that verse when I was there.

Oh, it's a troublesome verse. Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. What is that? That's Peter talking.

To whom is he speaking? Israel. Jews! Jews! Jews! Long before Paul ever came on the scene. It was the right message at the right time for the right people, but it is not our message today.

It just isn't. And neither, follow me, neither are all of the other attendant doctrines that go with it, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing the lepers, and all the rest, and speaking in tongues.

That's all part of the same package. That's not ours either. here. But you know, sincere, earnest people who love the Lord look at these things, and they say, well, there it is in black and white.

[48 : 34] That's what they did. That's what we're supposed to do. Could anything be clearer than that? There it is, right? They believed and were baptized. How can you say? Why shouldn't we be doing miracles?

If we had the faith that they had, we would be doing the miracles they did. We're not supposed to be doing that. If we were, I'd be the first one to stand in line for that gift. 1 Corinthians 12.

Here is our baptism. And if you are not baptized with this baptism, all the water in the world will not cleanse you from your sin.

1 Corinthians 12. You want to know our baptism? Here it is. This is the baptism that we say must be administered if one is to be regenerated and be a believer.

1 Corinthians 12 and verse 13. For by one spirit we were all baptized into one body. This is not ritual baptism.

[49 : 50] It is not water baptism. It is spirit baptism. It is that baptism which places you in union with Jesus Christ.

When you exercise faith in the Lord Jesus, you were baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. No H₂O anywhere. It is a spiritual operation.

Whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one spirit. That is our baptism.

baptism. If I were not prepared to make some changes and reach some different conclusions than the standard denominational party lines, I'd stay away from these passages.

And the easiest way to stay away from them is just don't preach these things verse by verse, chapter by chapter. Just pick and choose and that way you can avoid all the difficult ones and zero in on the easy ones.

[50 : 52] And I've got as much tendency to do that as anybody. But when you go verse by verse by verse, and you've got a group of people sitting out in front of you who won't let you get away with anything, you just have to tackle these things.

And I love it. So I get put on the spot. So what? I need to be put on the spot. It's the only way you learn anything is to get put on the spot. Let's take a look briefly.

at the subject of baptism. Block these out and take them one at a time.

First of all, the motivation for water baptism. Why do it? Why baptize anybody with water? Religious sentiment. It's nice.

Babies. Every now and then, not too often, for which I'm grateful, but every now and then I get a phone call. Is this Reverend Wiseman? Yes.

[52 : 00] I got your name out of the telephone book. How much do you charge to baptize babies? I said, Ma'am, I don't even baptize adults.

What? No, I just don't. Is this Grace Bible Church? Yes. What kind of a church are you if you don't baptize?

I said, Lady, it's a long story. I don't think you want to hear it. It's nice. It's a nice ritual. It's a nice service.

Do something mystical. Water, sprinkle it, whatever, you know. water baptism. Or for some, it is required for membership in a church. Now, there is going to be a lot of overlap between some of the churches here because a lot of the churches are in more than one camp.

For instance, I have never known a Baptist church for which water baptism was, by immersion, was not required for membership in the church.

[53 : 06] church. And that is true with most of the brethren. It is true with Roman Catholic and Episcopal, Methodist. Most Protestant churches take that position.

Some take the position the reason we should be water baptized was because Jesus was. And they follow the Lord in baptism, which is an utterly unscriptural kind of concept. Jesus was baptized for a reason that nobody else was ever baptized.

Not Peter, James, John, or anyone else. And John made that clear in chapter 1. So that's not really valid, although it sounds nice. It's required for obedience following conversion.

Most of my Baptist and brethren friends take this position. You do not have to be baptized in water to go to heaven. But you do have to be baptized in water if you are going to be obedient to the Lord. And if you have become a Christian and you have not been baptized in water, then you are clearly disobedient to the Lord in one of the first things in which you are enjoined to obedience. And this is a position that I personally took for years and years and years.

[54 : 16] One reason was because I'd never heard the other side. I didn't even know there was another side. I had just gotten the party line and I preached the party line and everybody was happy because as long as you travel in those circles, everybody agrees.

But when you get out of the circle, people start asking embarrassing questions. And you find out that there are other Christians who don't see it that way. And whoa, what a revelation. And some

say that water baptism is an essential part of salvation.

You can have exercised faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, but if you have not been baptized in water, you are not going to heaven.

You can believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you can exercise faith in Him. If you do that today and die tomorrow without having been water baptized, there is no salvation for you.

You are hell bound. We had a meeting several years ago when Ford Philpott came to town. It was an evangelistic type thing and several churches got together and we had a couple of churches in Springfield that would not participate in this cooperative evangelistic effort because the leadership of which I was a part refused to provide a tank, a portable tank of water there at the crusade site so that those who came forward and responded to the salvation could be baptized right then and there on the spot.

[55 : 46] And we wouldn't do that and they wouldn't cooperate. And that church, of course, still holds that position today. Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Episcopal, see this. As an essential part of salvation, some of them, for instance, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Episcopal, baptize infants and adults and they connect it with salvation.

And the Church of Christ and the Christian Church believe that it is essential for salvation but they do not baptize babies. They limit their baptism to adults. Here are the modes of water baptism today.

This is what has led me to make the statement as I have many times. It doesn't make any difference what you believe about water baptism. You are in a minority. There is probably no single thing over which churches in Christendom are more divided than this.

And one of the reasons is because the scriptures just do not make it all that clear. It's very ambiguous. You know, there are theologians and pastors and teachers who argue and write books this thick for immersion, for sprinkling, for pouring, for you name it, and they argue this thing long and hard, but they never seem to discuss the possibility of whether we should be water baptizing at all.

Period. Oh, we know you've got to be water baptized. We just can't agree on how it's done. My sweet wife, she was baptized as a baby, as a Roman Catholic.

[57 : 23] She was later sprinkled as Presbyterian, and more recently she was immersed as a Baptist. She's had the works. I'm telling you, she's squeaky clean. You can pour.

That's a fusion, called a fusion. Lutherans do that, and Methodists do it, but some Methodists sprinkle, and some Lutherans sprinkle, and some Lutherans pour, and the churches are not completely united on that.

And then there is the immersion, which is once backward. All of the Baptists that I know immerse once backward. So do most of the Nazarene, Pentecostal, Church of God.

Many Methodists immerse, especially the Old Wesleyan Methodists, some of the more modern Methodists sprinkle, and some Methodists say, any way you like it. Most non-denominational churches immerse, although not all.

And then there is immersion three times backwards, which is what some of the brethren do. I know I have Grace Brethren friends who feel very strongly that it is three times, I'm sorry, three times forward.

[58 : 27] I put backward there. It's three times forward. The name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Spirit. And then there are those who dip. And this is limited to the Greek and Russian Orthodox.

They dip. They do this with babies. They take the little tyke by the ankle and they dunk them right straight down, head first. And it is performed on infants only, thankfully.

Some of you 200-pounders, that'd be appalling. I can see this big old hoist lifting, dipping somebody down in the water. And here are the subjects for water baptism.

For Roman Catholics, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Lutheran, they baptize infants. And then there are some who baptize only catechumens, that is, those who have had specified periods of instruction.

Like if you were an adult and you wanted to convert to Roman Catholicism, you would have to take the catechism and learn the teachings and so on. Then you would be baptized. Same with the Episcopal, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist, and most of the Baptists.

[59 : 33] And then there is the, those who baptize either children or an adult on the confession of faith in Christ. And there are many Baptists and some of the others above who do that.

I have some Baptist friends who feel very strongly that when someone makes a profession of faith, they are to be baptized immediately. And if it's at the end of a morning service or evening service or whatever, and they come forward and they receive Christ, they're taken right back and outfitted with a baptismal gown and, and baptized right on the spot.

Now, I close with this. What difference does it make? What practical difference does it make? All right, just these things. First of all, if we are to embrace what I have suggested, it means that we place no emphasis upon building the kingdom of God.

And I hear this mentioned everywhere I go. We're working for the kingdom and building the kingdom. But it does emphasize building up the body of Christ by ministering as individuals to individuals.

And the emphasis is on individual edification of the believer. Secondly, it means that miraculous sign gifts cease. And the emphasis is not upon miracles and miraculous being raised up, healed of this or that or something else.

[60 : 47] The emphasis is on my grace is sufficient for you, as Paul said. And thirdly, water baptism ceases and the emphasis is placed upon baptism by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ, which is accomplished at the point of salvation.

And it too is a work of grace. You have nothing to do with it. You do not ask to be baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. And when that happened to me, I didn't even know it occurred, but it had.

It had. It had. It had. It had.

It had.