

Prophecy and Mystery Contrasted - Mystery 21

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] Those hymns that we just sang might be reflecting of the church militant or something of that nature. And the one that we were just singing, Soon and Very Soon, it might be sooner than you know.

The way things are going makes you wonder just how much longer we're going to have to wait before we see that King. And not interested in making any predictions.

And I'm not saying that he's going to come real soon, but I am telling you this. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he does. For me, the surprise is not going to be there.

And we may be thinking, well, it's about time, but it won't be that much of a surprise. And I had a little challenge for you this morning, and it's in connection with your standing and all of this good stuff.

And what it has to do with is with our scripture reading. And it is taken from Nehemiah chapter 8. So would you please open your Bible to Nehemiah chapter 8.

[1 : 03] And the challenge is, I want you to see if you are, I want to see if you are alert enough to pick up on what was said and done before about the standing up.

In connection with what was said just a little bit later. And I mean just a very little bit later as we read the text. And all I can ask you to do is, if you pick up on it, then do what you ought to do.

Okay? So, let me set the stage, if I may, for what is going to be read. And this has to do with a time period that is approximately 500 years before the birth of Christ.

And let me give you this scenario. The children of Israel have already been carried into captivity into Babylon. And they have been there for a total of 70 years.

Now, in accordance with what we'll be reading in Nehemiah, they have returned from Babylon to their own land in Judea, Jerusalem, Israel.

[2 : 28] However, many Jews will remain there in Babylon and won't come home. They'll stay there. And then they'll be scattered in other parts of the world. Not only that, but many of those who are returning will be second and third generation because many of the older generation died off during that 70-year period in Babylon.

So, in many respects, we have what I guess you could call a bunch of Jewish newbies. They're not all that familiar with the Judaism that their fathers had been practicing.

Because things were different in the land of Babylon. And it was a time of upheaval and disorganization and everything. Now, they have returned home. Nehemiah has undertaken the building of the wall.

That's finished. And they're reconstructing the temple. And things are getting back to the way they were before the Babylonian invasion took them all away from their homeland. So, in Nehemiah chapter 8, keep in mind that the audience who is hearing this read are, for the most part, hearing it for the first time.

This is new content to them. So, bear that in mind, if you will. Let's begin. Follow along, if you would. And all the people gathered as one man at the square, which was in front of the water gate.

[3 : 54] And they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel. Then Israel the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women, and all who could listen with understanding on the first day of the seventh month.

And he read from it before the square, which was in front of the water gate, from early morning until midday.

In the presence of men and women, those who could understand, and all the people were attentive to the book of the law.

And Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium, which they made for the purpose. And beside him, and with your permission or without, I'm going to skip all of these names.

Half of them you can't pronounce. But anyway, just suffice it to say that these were real flesh and blood people with their names. But in verse 5, Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people.

[5 : 10] And when he opened it, all the people stood up. Okay. Okay.

And there are a few slow learners. But. Thank you. Thank you. All the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, while lifting up their hands.

And then they bowed low and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. You don't really have to do that. Okay. But that is the way that they worship. And by the way, if you've noticed in any of the TV news blurbs and whatnot, if you ever see the Muslims that worship in their mosque, this is the way they do.

They get down on their knees and they put their forehead on the ground. And I suspect that that's one of the ways that the Jews do too. Although most of the Jews today, when they go to the wailing wall, they stand vertically and face the wailing wall and so on.

But anyway, this is biblical and this is with their faces to the ground. And then there's this list of names again that I'm going to skip in verse 8. And they read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.

[6 : 37] And that is really, really important. Because if you can't understand what has been read, there is no way you can make an intelligent response to it.

You've got to understand. And this is how preachers keep their jobs. Because it's our duty to help people understand. And then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe and the Levites, who taught the people, said to all the people, This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep. For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law. Think of that.

Now these are people that have been so tremendously deprived of this truth for so long. That when they heard the words of God, the tears could not be held back.

Wow. And then he said to them, go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared, for this day is holy to the Lord.

[7 : 56] Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, be still, for the day is holy.

Do not be grieved. And all the people went away to eat, to drink, to send portions, and to celebrate a great festival, because, I love that, because they understood the words which had been made known to them.

They got the message. Priceless. Thank you so much. You may be seated. Oh, by the way, remain standing. And look, if you would, at Luke chapter 4.

You're going to have an aerobic workout before this morning is over. Luke's gospel, chapter 4, and verse 14. Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through all the surrounding district.

And he began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up.

[9 : 14] Did you get that? And stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. And he opened the book and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.

And he closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. So, you may be seated. And actually, the Lord sat down, too. And I will remain standing. But sometimes I think the time is not far off when I, too, will sit down. So, anyway.

And I share this with you with just a tinge of regret, because, and maybe this is, maybe you would consider it just ritual.

[10 : 21] But I would like to think of it as an intelligent respect more than ritual. And I'm sorry to tell you that I wish 50 years ago we had adopted this principle of standing when the word of God is

read.

And no, I'm not trying to make Jews out of anyone. But I am saying that the word of God, whether it is read by Jews or Gentiles, is worthy of showing respect by standing when it is read.

So, maybe in the future, and if I forget, you could remind me, that when the word of God is read, you probably ought to stand and just show that respect.

Would to God that we've been doing this for the last 50 years, but better late than never. So, keep that in mind if you would, please. Now, by way of announcements, the first thing that I want to care for is a gross misunderstanding.

And the responsibility for that must be laid at the feet of your aging pastor. And that has to do with the resurrection breakfast. And we had, I guess I had surmised that with the modified service that we've been running and so much unknown by way of who was going to be here and the food situation, I thought it was just going to place an undue burden on the ladies who provide probably 95% of the food to know how much food to bring or who would be coming.

[12:02] And those who, of course, who will not be coming would not be bringing food. And there were just so many questions involved, I thought maybe it would be the better part of wisdom just to skip it. But others have given additional thought to that and decided that they want to go ahead with it.

So, the plan now is to go ahead with it. And resurrection breakfast is scheduled for resurrection Easter Sunday morning at 9 o'clock.

We didn't have one last year because of the COVID thing. And we're going to do it with however many people are involved. That will be, of course, two weeks from the day.

And that means we will dispense with a 9 o'clock teaching hour and we'll have a feeding hour instead. And it's just an sumptuous meal that everybody really enjoys. So, what we need to do is have all of the ladies who plan to be here and plan to be involved meet in the rear of the church when the service dismisses.

Put your heads together. And the first thing you have to do is decide who the coordinator for this is going to be. So, I know this is short notice and we don't know who all is going to be available two weeks from now.

[13:16] But some of you do know that. So, what we need is a volunteer coordinator, somebody who will pull this thing together and see to it the proper food dishes so we don't get all of one thing or all of something else in the variety.

And that's something that only women have the expertise to care for as far as I'm concerned. So, if you gals would meet back there, put your heads together and decide what you want to do, then we will go from there.

So, that's the plan now. And it is on for two weeks from today. And we'll be able to maintain with some degree of propriety the social distancing because we'll be meeting down at the North End and it will all be spread out through the whole length of it.

Families, of course, will sit together. But those who are not families will maintain a certain amount of distancing. And I don't know what to tell you about the mask. So, okay. And, oh yes, I have some handouts.

The same ones that you got last week. But I mention it again because I know every Sunday there are folks who were here who weren't here last Sunday and you didn't get the handouts. Copies of Decision Magazine.

[14:25] It's got some outstanding articles in it. I know many of you get this at home. But for those of you who don't, be sure to take a copy with you because you will want to read the articles in here.

They are what is fomenting right now as we speak in our nation. And we need to be as advised and informed as possible. On the front page talks about the cancel culture and we discussed that a little bit last Sunday.

And additional copies were made up of the Imprimus article. Imprimus is simply Latin for means in the first place. This is from Hillsdale College.

And I do not detract, retract at all the comment that I made last week when I said this is maybe the scariest article that I have ever read of all the handouts that I've given you.

And it's all about the need to rein in big tech. If you do not, if you are not really familiar with social media, and by that I mean more than do you just get on Facebook once in a while.

[15 : 35] That won't cut it. That's not adequate. If you do not understand what's involved with social media and the potential that is there for big tech, trust me, you really need to read this article.

And you may not be any more technologically qualified than I am, which is very little. But this is super, super important. And I want you to be very careful to read it and ponder it because it is very ominous.

And I'll tell you what, it has all of the marks of tough times coming. It has all of the marks of the screws being tightened more and more against Christians.

And the time is coming. I'm not saying it's going to be in our lifetime because I don't know. But I'll say this, I wouldn't be surprised if it is. The time is coming when Christians and your Christian faith and your Jesus is going to be persona non grata.

You are not going to be welcome on the public square. It's only a question of when, not if.

[17 : 00] And this article will help explain some of that. Our monthly Bible study that we have canceled for the last year is going to resume.

This is for men and women. And it meets in the area in the back. And that will be Thursday. Now, previously we had these on Tuesday, but we had to make a change.

So be advised, it will be Thursday, the 25th. And it will be breakfast at 9 o'clock in the morning. And Bible study will follow at 9.30.

And you're usually on your way out of here by about 10.30. So plan on coming. If you can make it, reservations are not required. And we will be spread out back there, too.

We've got quite a bit of space we can spread out and give the social distancing its due. And the article in there that talks about Resurrection Sunday, you can scrap that because I talked about our regular meeting, the elders' regular meeting, Thursday, the 25th.

[18 : 12] And it isn't Thursday, the 25th. It was Thursday, the 18th. It was a couple of days ago. And yours truly missed it because I thought it was the 25th. And I put it in the bulletin it was the 25th.

Only it was the 18th. So once again, you've got to love old people. Amish spring dinner is scheduled for April 17.

I don't have to say anything to you who have ever been there before because you know what a sumptuous feast it is. And if you were interested, we are in need of 24 guests.

And the number is getting close to that. So if you would like to be included, we go up at 5 o'clock. It's just on the other side of Bell Fountain. It's a private home.

It's just laid out wonderfully well. And the food is unbelievable. Really, really good. So what would you like to noise abroad that is not in the bulletin?

[19 : 15] Hon? It's clear to the sun that weren't here last Sunday. They're coming in the shower. Maybe sign on the... Okay. If you were not here last Sunday and you're planning on coming to the wedding shower for Rebecca McConkie, would you sign the sheet that is back there?

Is that on the sound desk? Back on the sound desk? Okay. And just let us know that you will be coming. You'll be participating in that. Anything else? Okay. Well, this morning is...

It's already been a different morning and it's going to continue to be different because I've got some special things that I want to share with you. And having been with you as long as I have, we always...

We never know exactly how much longer we're going to be available. In fact, none of us do for that matter. But Marie and I were comparing notes yesterday and looking back over some history and we are...

Grace Bible Church will before too long be coming up on its 50th anniversary from the time we were organized. And we started out meeting in...

[20 : 38] We started out meeting in Marie and Dave Weinbrenner's living room, which is now where I live with Marie. And every time I walk into that living room, which is pretty often, I often think of that first meeting.

When we were invited to teach a Bible class there for just a one-time thing, and Barbara and I arrived and we walked in Weinbrenner's home and there were 50 people crammed into that living room and practically sitting on each other.

And we had a wonderful evening. And out of that, eventually, Grace Bible Church came into being. Started meeting at Roosevelt Junior High. And the congregation, such as it was, appointed five men to serve as a steering committee to try to provide some kind of direction because we were not

organized as a church.

We had no officers. We had no income. We had no name. We had nothing. We were just a group. We were a church. We were a called-out assembly that met for a special reason. But we didn't call ourselves a church.

And the congregation, as it existed at the time, elected Dave and Marie Weinbrenner and Bob and Marty Holdsworth and Jim and Marianne McGinnis and Paul and Joe Pontus and myself and Barb as the five teams of that steering committee.

[22 : 26] And out of the ten, five couples, eight of them are with the Lord. And Marie and I are the only two who remain.

And who knows how long it'll be before we'll be with the Lord. So shortly after that, we had a meeting.

We were a fledgling congregation. We didn't even know whether or not we should even become a church. And we didn't want to just run on the headlong end of this and say, yeah, we're a church. Let's organize, et cetera. We were very cautious about that. And I, as well as others, weren't convinced that we should even be a church. Maybe we should just kind of invite all the people who were here.

And by this time, there were about 80 people. Maybe we should just invite everybody to just break off and go to a church of your choice that's already established. Why should we just add another church to the long list of churches that are already under-attended and underserved?

[23 : 37] Why should we just add to that when we could just go to different ones and beef them up a little bit and help them wherever that would be?

And maybe we shouldn't even become a church. So somebody came up with a bright idea and said, well, why don't we just meet as a study group and don't even have a name and you've got no officers, no anything, nothing official at all, for a whole year and see what happens.

And the idea was, if this thing is going to go somewhere, it'll stay together, it'll hang together, and maybe eventually it'll be a church. And if not, people will just peel off and the thing will fizzle and that'll be the end of it.

And we would be the better off for having done that. So we didn't know. We just wanted... So after that year, there were about 80 to 100 people on Sunday morning meeting at Roosevelt Junior High School.

And we decided that we do need to pursue this. This is something that... These people aren't going away. But the question still remains, do we have anything different to offer the community that isn't already being offered?

[24 : 51] And what's the point in just providing more of the same? And if that's all we're going to do, we couldn't justify our existence. So what is it we're going to offer that would be different? And we thought about that long and hard.

And we decided we've got to come up with a doctrinal statement if we're going to be a church. You've got to have some kind of bylaws and rules to go by, things that people have voted on, agreed on.

So what are we going to do? And the issue of church administration and the issue of baptism came up, water baptism.

Almost all of us, not all of us, but almost all of us had a Baptist background. And if you know anything about Baptists, water is sacred.

And it's very, very important. And after all, you've got, they believed and were baptized. It's there in the book of Acts and it's there in the gospel so many times. Who can argue with that?

[25 : 53] But still, some of us had some serious questions because there were passages of scripture that said something like, there's one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

Ephesians 4, 5. What does that mean? Well, we didn't have any trouble discovering one Lord, what that means. Don't have any problem discovering what one faith is, what that means.

but one baptism is not so clear. What does that mean? And do you realize that there are actually seven different baptisms in the Bible?

Four of them are water. Three have nothing to do with water at all, but they're still called baptisms. So what are we going to do? How are we going to decide this?

Coming from a Baptist background, personally, I was saved in a Baptist church, married in a Baptist church, ordained in a Baptist church, baptized in a Baptist church.

[27 : 05] From the time I was 21, I did not grow up in a Christian home or know the Lord until I was 21 years old. But baptism, and the Baptist was the only thing I knew, so my loyalty and my allegiance was there emotionally because you tend to develop an emotional tie and gratitude toward the man or the person who led you to faith in Christ.

And for me, that was Reverend Harold Sweetland, and he was a Baptist minister. His responsibility was to plant churches. He was from Michigan. God will forgive him for that.

And he was in Washington State at the time and starting this little church, little First Baptist church, or Main Street Baptist church in Ellensburg, Washington.

And that's where I came to know the Lord, and that's where Barbara and I were married. And then we came back to Springfield, and then I just got discharged from the Army, and we started attending, started attending Blessed Hope Baptist Church, and Glenn Greenwood was the pastor. And he approached us one day and asked if we'd like to join the church, and we said, well, yeah, sure, I guess we should do that, yeah. And he said, well, of course, you'll have to be baptized. I said, oh, well, okay. Okay, if that's what's required.

[28 : 28] And you know, I had been a believer. I came to faith in Christ in December of 1956, and here this was probably the following October or November, almost a year later, and the subject of baptism never came up, never entered my mind.

But I can tell you, immediately after my coming to faith in Christ, I developed an intense interest in something that I had zero interest in before, and that was the Bible.

I couldn't get enough, and I'd take off reading. I'd come to these names. I couldn't pronounce them. Couldn't explain them. I had no way. I knew this was a holy book.

I knew it was a special book. I knew it was God's Word. But man, you talk, it was just over my head. I just, but I knew it was worth studying and worth finding out about, and I would witness to people, and I'd share the gospel with people, and I didn't know anything about baptism.

Hadn't heard anything about it. And yet, I was doing what I thought a Christian ought to be doing and sharing your faith with others, and I was excited about it, but I didn't, never even entered my mind.

[29 : 52] But when he mentioned about joining the church, he says, of course, you'll have to be water baptized. I said, well, yeah, okay, fine, fine. Never entered my mind to dispute it, and after all, the scriptures made it very clear that they believed and they were baptized, and how much plainer can it be?

So, I was baptized. My wife, Barbara, was baptized, and I told you before, she was baptized as a baby when she was born into the Roman Catholic faith.

She was baptized as a Roman Catholic, and she went to a Nazarene church there for a while, and, or, no, it was a Presbyterian church, and as a young girl, and they sprinkled her, and then she went to Blessed Hope, and they baptized by immersion, and she was immersed, and then she says, and I come to Grace Bible Church, and I get dry cleaned, as only she could put it.

So, anyway, we were all baptized, and you know, my mom and dad, who are now with the Lord, and my kid sister, who's eight years younger than I, they too were baptized, because when Barbara and I came back from Washington State to Ohio, my mom and dad, and my sister, were quite stunned, because of the difference in me.

They couldn't quite figure out what had happened to me, and they attributed most of it to just being married, and yet they suspected that there was something more than marriage involved here, and my mom and dad raised us to be honest, patriotic Americans, pay your bills, you don't lie, you don't cheat, you don't steal, and just a good moral family, but zero spiritual input.

[31 : 52] Never went to church, never prayed, never read the Bible, none of those things. They weren't exposed to them, they just didn't do them, were important. So all of us were baptized at Blessed Hope, and of course it was immersion, and then we became members of the church, and from there, eventually, there were problems there with the morality issue with the pastor, and the church has gone through a number of pastors, and eventually is sold and has become a church for another group now.

But at any rate, we had this issue of, what are we going to do? If we're going to be a church, we've got to decide, what are we going to do about baptism? And we frankly didn't know, because enough questions had been created by that one Lord, one faith, one baptism thing.

And not only that, but the Apostle Paul made the statement when he wrote to the Corinthians that Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel.

And the Baptist answer to that was, and the one that I gave, the only one I'd ever heard and ever knew, and it satisfied me at the time, was, well, what Paul was saying is that his emphasis was not on baptism, but preaching the gospel.

And that satisfied. But then somebody asked the question that was a rather unnerving question, and it was this. Well, the Apostle Paul said, Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.

[33 : 32] Could the twelve apostles have said that? Absolutely not. Because Jesus made it very clear when he called them in Matthew chapter 10 that you are to go not to the Gentiles, not to the Gentiles, but you limit your ministry, he told the twelve, to the sheep of the lost house of Israel.

And you preach the gospel and you baptize them for the remission of sins. And that's what they did. And then, Paul says, Christ sent me not to baptize.

Well, and then, he also wrote to the Corinthians, and this still puzzles me to this day. I still can't put a handle on this. Paul said, writing to the Corinthians, he said, I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I baptized in my own name.

And I said, wait a minute, what is that? Now, my Baptist brethren, God bless them, put a big emphasis on baptisms.

And sometimes, they don't even count conversions. They count baptisms. Because, for that denomination, historically, the greater verification that regeneration has actually taken place is not somebody saying so, but somebody following their profession with baptism.

[35 : 17] So, they record baptisms and make quite a big deal out of it. And if that's the case, rightly so. I think they should. But all these questions came to mind and we were struggling with this.

What are we going to do? And the congregation was somewhat divided. I don't know who came up with the idea, but somebody said, well, maybe we ought to, maybe we ought to hold a debate and debate the issue and get all the views out in the air so people could make up their mind.

And we kept giving some thought about that and the more we thought about it, the more we thought that's a good idea. Now, how are we going to go about this? And we don't want to call it a debate because when you call something a debate, it looks like you got pro and con and for and against and whatnot.

So we came up with the name of a symposium. Let's have a symposium. And let's have some people representing different points of view and ask them to present and make their best case for their point of view and let the congregation ask any questions that they want to ask.

And then the congregation can make up their mind and decide afterwards. So in November 21, 1970, almost 51 years ago, we held that symposium.

[36 : 49] And it was in the morning, in the afternoon, and in the evening. It was three-hour stints from 9 to 12 and 2 to 5 and 6 to 9 o'clock in the evening.

Nine hours. And we selected men who had different positions, completely disagreeing with each other, but we knew could present the content in the right spirit.

So we invited, well, I need to tell you this. I called Dr. David Jeremiah, not David Jeremiah, David's son. I called Dr.

James T. Jeremiah, David Jeremiah's father. And he was the president of Cedarville at the time. And I was just, had I even graduated from Cedarville then?

I don't know. But anyway, it was close. I called Dr. Jeremiah, and I thought, boy, if there is anybody that could do a bang-up job presenting the Baptist physician a really strong case, it would be Dr.

[37 : 57] James T. Jeremiah. And I was really excited. And I, hey, Dr. Jeremiah, I've got a wonderful opportunity for you. I know you're going to just, and I told him what it was about, and he said, well, I wouldn't be interested in participating.

I said, really? What? He said, no, I just, I just, I wouldn't, I wouldn't, I wouldn't be interested in participating. And I said, well, all right, could you, could you, could you recommend somebody else on the faculty there at Cedarville, preferably somebody in the Greek department who would really present a strong case.

He said, Marvin, I would not permit anyone on the faculty to attend. or to participate. And I was shocked.

I was stunned. I thought they'd jump at the chance. I thought he would jump at the chance. He didn't want anything to do with it. I didn't realize why at the time, but I think it later became clear.

So, I said, well, well then, I know Dr. Jeremiah was a big name in Baptist circles.

[39 : 12] In the whole country. And I said, well, could you name then, could you name some men who are not associated with the university at all? It wasn't a university then. It was not associated with Cedarville College at all.

And, and I'll call them if you don't want anyone from the school. And he said, sure, I can give you a list of names. and he gave me a half a dozen different prominent Baptist pastors.

And he said, any one of them could do an excellent job. And I recognized some of the names and I thought, well, sure, they could. And one of them on the top of the list was Dr.

Warren Wiersbe. Warren Wiersbe, outstanding Bible teacher, commentator. In fact, I've got most of the books he's ever written. And he's, he's just a tremendous scholar.

He's with the Lord now. I called him and he said, well, he says, that sounds very interesting. Who else is going to participate? And I said, well, we have a gentleman from Columbus, Ohio, and he pastors the Riverside Bible Church.

[40 : 20] And he's going to take the position that water baptism is optional. If somebody wants to be baptized, fine. If they don't, that's fine too. It doesn't make any difference to him.

It takes an optional position. And I said, we've also invited Mr. C.R. Stamm from Chicago, Illinois.

And there was a long pause on the other end of the line. And I said, have you ever heard of Mr. Stamm? And he said, oh yes. He said, I know Neil. Neil.

Well, Neil was the name that he often went by. His real name was Cornelius, named after that wonderful Bible character is one of my favorites in Acts chapter 10.

He was a Roman army officer and his name was Cornelius and Mr. Stamm was named after him.

And Mr. Stamm has had a brother, John, and his wife, Betty.

[41 : 23] And John and Betty Stamm were martyred. they were murdered by Chinese communists in China in 1934 as missionaries and made headlines around the world.

This is when Mao Zedong was just feeling his oats and getting a grasp on China. And Mr. Stamm said that he would be glad to come and present the position that water baptism is certainly found in the Bible but it is not part of the dispensation of the grace of God.

It belongs to the kingdom message as do all the miracles and everything else like that. And when Warren Wiersbe said, yes, I know, Neil. And he said, well, I don't think I would be able and I said, well, we'll pay all of your expenses and give you a generous honorarium.

Make it worth your while. Well, I just wouldn't be able to come. And I said, well, okay, thank you very much. I called five more Baptist preachers and got turned down by every one of them.

And finally, one agreed and his name was Glenn Davis. And I'll never forget his name because Glenn Davis was one of the two outstanding football players for Army in the 1940s, Doc Blanchard and Glenn Davis.

[42 : 50] and they were called Mr. Inside and Mr. Outside and they lit up the gridiron in football for a couple of years. They're just great football players. So I'll never forget the name Glenn Davis.

And you know, all three of these men, Art Crawford and C.R. Stamp, were just very gracious, knowledgeable men. We had a wonderful day.

I mean, it was incredible. It was, I still remember it was one of the highlights of my Christian life.

These three men and they were completely diverse in their positions. Didn't agree with each other at all.

But there was such a wonderful spirit, great attitude on the part of the Congress. It was just a good spirit. You know, you just, if you'd like to package it, it was wonderful. And yet, they presented their positions with real conviction.

But I must say in all honesty, Mr. Stamp just, in a nice, sweet, gentle way, made absolute mincemeat of both of them.

[43 : 52] I mean, they just had, they just had no arguments for his arguments. And it was, it was kind of like a slam dunk. And pretty much everybody in the congregation came to the same conclusion that the case that Mr. Stamp presented was just undeniable.

And yet, at the same time, we had to admit it is a distinct minority position. And if you go with this, you will pay a price.

And the price you are most likely to pay is you will remain small in number. Because if you are a church that doesn't baptize in water, what?

How can you even be a church if you don't baptize? How can you be a church? Well, that was a legitimate question. But you know, most of the people that you tried to explain that to never, never came back with any kind of a legitimate answer to refute it.

And they still haven't to this day. And we, I think, as a congregation, and I know certainly I, as an individual, have a great, great depth of gratitude to Cornelius Stamm and to the legacy that the man left behind in his writings, in his teachings.

[45 : 18] I've met and talked with and fellowshiped with a lot of men, a lot of men over the last 60 plus years since I've been a believer.

but I can't think of any of them that could just even come close to the authority, the understanding, the expression of the Word of God in a very kind, grandfatherly way, just, just remarkable, just absolutely remarkable.

And I am so indebted to him and his ministry. And I want to, if you look in your bulletin, what grace is, what we're talking about now, the fruit of grace, this is from that little book, Two Minutes with the Bible.

This is it. And there's some on the table back there, and I know many of you already have it. But I'll tell you this, if you, if you obtain this book, you will get something from two minutes from the Bible that is almost on every page priceless.

And it will help you make connections and gain understanding and put things together in your mind like nothing else that I can, that I can imagine.

[46 : 54] And this morning at 9 o'clock, we had a session that was devoted almost entirely to the kingdom concepts. And we're talking about trying to present material related to the subject of prophecy in the kingdom at the 9 o'clock hour, and then subjects relating to the mystery in the church at 10, 15 hour, with the idea that people can compare these and see the real critical distinctions between them.

And, and the reason I'm doing this, quite frankly, I told you before I ever started it several months ago, was I'm not going to be here much longer. And I don't know how long that is.

None of us do. But when you're four score and five, you wonder about buying unripe bananas, you know.

So, so my concern for you as a congregation, and my prayer is that you may have instilled within you, whether you get it from me, or whether you get it from additional writings and teachings of others, a really firm, firm grasp of what it is that really makes Grace Bible Church different from every other church in this area.

And this is what I'm talking about. I don't want this congregation to lose sight of this vital distinctive, and that's why I am hammering it on my way out, to leave it behind for you as an indelible impression that you will carry on into the next generations forever, however long they may be.

[48 : 56] And that's my real concern. I'm not, I'm not at all concerned about you not preaching the gospel, but I am concerned about you not understanding or making the distinction between the gospel of the grace of God and the gospel of the kingdom, which so many insist on merging much to their confusion.

And that's where most of Christianity is, and I have told you before, and so say I now again, this issue, this issue that I'm talking about is the principal reason why Christendom, including Roman Catholics and Protestants, are so divided.

And this is why Protestantism is so divided within itself. And how many times have I told you, 500 years ago, just 500 years, that's not long.

That's not very long at all in human history. 500 years ago, there were no Presbyterians, no Methodists, no Nazarenes, no Episcopal. They didn't exist.

There was a Roman Catholic church, and whatever didn't belong to that was just made up of very small splits and splinters scattered all over Europe that didn't amount to much with any influence at all.

[50 : 12] And now we've got all of these denominations, and you know what we do? As all these denominations, we present a fractured front. A fractured front.

So many divisions. And so many of them are fractured over baptism. someone has said, you know what?

No matter what position you take regarding water baptism, no matter what position you take, you're in a minority. That's true. That's true. What we are saying is that water baptism, water baptism

belongs to the same sphere and element as does physical circumcision.

What? Where is that? That's with the Jew. That is Jewish. That is kingdom oriented through and through.

well, what takes the place of this? What takes the place of physical circumcision? Spiritual circumcision?

[51 : 35] Well, who in the world ever heard of spiritual circumcision? We know physical circumcision is done with a knife, a sharp knife. What is spiritual circumcision anyway?

Listen, when a Jewish baby boy, eight days of age, was circumcised, that symbolized his being set apart for the true God of Israel and he was placed in communion as a member of the covenant of Israel and that was his badge of identity.

Now, you say, well, badge of identity, whoever saw it? Lots of people saw it. Well, maybe not lots of women, but lots of men saw it. How so?

Why? Public baths, public baths all over Europe. They all went to public baths, Jews and Gentiles.

They went to public baths. How did they go in? Buck naked, buck naked.

They weren't wearing anything and nobody thought anything about it. You know, I can still remember as a kid, I think I was eight years old, and went to the old YMCA and they called us, I think they called us tadpoles, eight years old.

[52 : 54] And you know, every one of us was naked as a jaybird, eight years old. and what's more, nobody thought a thing about it. But listen, if you were in this culture as a Jew and in the public baths and you were not circumcised, you were obviously not one of them.

You were an uncircumcised dog. You were a Gentile and you were ostracized or not allowed into the same company.

And that was very important to them. So what is spiritual circumcision? Anyway, spiritual circumcision is made without hands. That means there's no knife involved, there's no flesh involved, there's no cutting involved, but it means if you are in Christ, you are not only baptized into Christ.

And this is what John meant when he said, we're all children of God by faith in Jesus Christ, there's neither Jew nor Gentile, bond or free, etc. And he talks about, for by one spirit are we all baptized into one body.

And there's not a drop of water in it. Not a drop of water in it. And this is what Paul is talking about in Romans chapter 6 when he says, know you not that as many of you as are identified with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection, and you are identified in his baptism, and that is a spirit baptism.

[54 : 27] There's no water in that. So, when you come to faith in Jesus Christ, you are spiritually circumcised so that you are in that new relationship with Christ.

And this applies to women too. Now, don't ask me how. That's God's problem. And the baptism, the baptism is not with water.

It too is spiritual. It is, you are identified with Christ. And these elements that are used belong to the Jew because the Jew, the Jew was accustomed to signs and wonders and physical manifestations. They wanted something to see. That's why they were so big on miracles. It was what you see. And we walk by faith, not by sight. So, our baptism is spiritual, and when you come to faith in Jesus Christ, you are spiritually baptized with him.

You become one with Christ. You are in union with him. You are circumcised. You are identified with him spiritually in every way. You are sanctified.

[55 : 45] You are set apart. Christ is what it's all about, and if you are in him, you have everything that he has to give. We are heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ. That is just amazing. I want you to take this little sheet now before our time is gone, and it almost is, and look at the March 19.

This is what Mr. Stamm wrote, among many other things, and it is just marvelous. And I thought, you know, this all ties together in such a way that I couldn't put together, so I'm satisfied that there is more here than my simply putting this together.

And on March 19, what grace is, Mr. Stamm says, never let the devil deceive you into supposing that God plans sin, I'm sorry, yes, that's the right one, that's the right one, that God plans sin as a gracious means to a glorious end.

For then, salvation from sin would be simple justice, not grace. No, you cannot legitimately charge God with your sin. It is to the guilty, the undeserving, far and wide, that God offers the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.

Ephesians 1, 7. There are two significant phrases in Ephesians 2, which shed clear light upon the character, the nature of grace.

[57 : 15] They are found in verses 2 and 3, which speak of the unsaved as children, that is in the Greek, we always, or full-grown sons, children of disobedience, and children, or young ones, born ones of wrath.

Now meditate for a moment on these phrases, children of disobedience and children of wrath. It is against this dark, black background of deserved wrath that we read further, but God, oh, these are two of the most important words in all of the Bible.

this changes everything. These two words change everything. But God, who is rich, rich in mercy, God is not, what shall I say, stingy in mercy?

He's rich, rich in mercy. For his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, he's quickened us.

And that word quickened means he's made us spiritually alive, quickened us, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

[58 : 52] What does that mean? God? It means, listen, from God's perspective, this is the way God looks at it. This is the way God sees you. This is a done deal.

This is God's perspective of reality. He's made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. See, we are crucified with Christ.

Christ. We're buried with Christ. We're raised with Christ. We're seated with Christ in the heavenlies. None of this is a reality to us.

All of it is a reality to God. This is the way he sees it. Everything's wrapped up. It's done. It's over with. We are in process. And God says, this is the way I look. This is my perspective.

We've got a limited perspective and we look at it as the days and the years and the months roll by. God looks at the whole shebang and sees everything all at once. And as far as God is concerned, we are already seated with him in heavenly places.

[59 : 55] Incredible. So that in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Somehow, it takes a load off one's heart and mind to come to the end of his rope. As it were. And admit that he is a sinner deserving God's wrath.

And you know, every plan of salvation always includes that as being the first part that has to be met. You have to acknowledge your sin. Because listen, you cannot have the grace of God, the righteousness of God, and the forgiveness of God.

You cannot have that applied to you if you don't qualify. And in order to qualify, you not only have to be a sinner, you have to be an acknowledged, admitted sinner.

Because if, now, when you use that word, people are thinking of dope peddlers and murderers and rapists and so on. They are the sinners. But I'm not a sinner, I'm a nice guy. Baloney!

[61 : 10] You belong right in the same pack with all the rest of us. You're cut from the same bolt of cloth. We're all sinners. Deal with it. Every one of us. Even people with good intentions and live good moral lives, we're all sinners.

Because, like Billy Graham defined what is a sinner when he was asked, he said, a sinner is anyone who is less perfect than God. Okay, so we're all sinners.

sinners. So if you are not an acknowledged, admitted sinner, like the rest of us, God's grace and forgiveness and salvation doesn't have any place to go.

It can only be applied to where there is a need. This is why the scriptures say, whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Well, who's going to call? And why would anyone call? You call for just one reason. You have a need and you know you can't meet it. And you hear about one who can.

[62 : 12] And you call on him. That's what salvation is. How sweet to the ears of such is the wonderful message of redemption by grace through the finished work of Christ at Calvary.

We were all the children of disobedience and therefore by nature the children of wrath. But God, when hope seemed gone, he intervened and now offers salvation to all by grace through faith.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. There are no hoops through which you have to jump. not church membership, not giving money, not making promises, not being baptized, not being circumcised.

It is justification by faith and faith alone. You believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, as your substitute and God saves and justifies and cleanses and forgives and pardons and he does it all just like that.

He transforms you into a child of God bound for heaven and you didn't deserve it one bit. That's why it's called grace.

[63 : 39] Oh, my, oh, my. Our Father, we will never ever get over this message, not even when we see you face to face.

grace, we will still be stunned at your love that was extended toward those like ourselves so utterly, totally undeserving.

Oh, we are so grateful that your love outstripped our sin, no other way we can put it, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

How thankful we are for that truth. Father, if there is anyone here this morning who is perhaps hearing this for the first time, or maybe making some connections for the first time, gaining some understanding, or those listening by way of technology, we simply want them to understand this enormous love you had for them, the extent to which Christ went to demonstrate it, and the fact that if we will simply freely acknowledge that we're just like everybody else, we are sinners in need of a Savior, and we see the Lord Jesus Christ as being who he says he is, for he came to save, and our prayer is that anyone without the Savior may right now reach out in their own heart and mind and say, Lord Jesus, there's so much about this I don't understand, but I do understand that

I am so lacking in perfection, and you are absolutely holy, and you promised to give me your holiness and make me a child of yours, if I will simply acknowledge who Jesus is and why he came and what he did for me, and I want to do that.

[65 : 50] I just want to, with every fiber of my being, say, Lord Jesus, I want you as my Savior. I want you to come into my life and do with it what you want. I recognize you have a right to it, and I don't.

thank you for doing what you did to be my Savior. If you make that your prayer, dear friend, God will most definitely hear you, and he will welcome you with open arms, and he will make you his child. He will forgive you. He will pardon you. He will cleanse you. He will do for you everything that needs to be done, if you recognize that need. Thank you, Father, for the time to share together, and thank you again for the memory of this blessed saint, Mr. C.R.

Stan. We know that he's enjoying things even now that we cannot begin to imagine, and we're thankful for him and for other men in the grace movement that have often sacrificed much to make this simple message available.

Most of all, we thank you for making it available. Dismiss us now, we pray, with your blessing in Christ. Amen. Amen.