

Prophecy and Mystery Contrasted - Mystery 14

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[0 : 00] Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 6, and we will entertain a Q&A; at the conclusion of this morning's session. We are committed to the idea that there needs to be a distinction made between the requirements that are set forth for pleasing the Lord and the requirements that are set forth for understanding the Scriptures in a distinction that must be made between everything on the other side of the cross as opposed to everything on this side of the cross for the simple reason.

It is the cross of Jesus Christ that changed absolutely everything. And it is futile for Christians to try to live and conduct their lives in accordance with events that transpired on the other side of the cross.

However, this is not to say that they are unworthy or unimportant. It simply means that those things that happened prior to the cross of Christ, which changed everything, need to be understood and appreciated from the standpoint of the principles that they convey.

Because there are abiding spiritual principles by which we live that are all over Scripture beginning in Genesis as well.

So you need not think in terms of utilizing only part of the Bible because we embrace and find necessary all of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

[1 : 43] But, and we'll look at this later, we must apply Miles Coverdale's rules for interpreting the Bible. And when you do, it opens up all kinds of confusion that would otherwise predominate.

So we are in Matthew chapter 6. We are not going to spend much time on this because I think we've already dealt with it, I trust adequately. But if you want to bring it up during the Q&A;, you're more than welcome to do so.

We noted the conditionality that is imposed upon believers prior to the death of Christ on the cross. And it is summed up in what is commonly called the Lord's Prayer.

We'll not go into the distinction about that, however. But I do want to draw your attention to verse 14, where Jesus offers a kind of conclusion to the prayer.

And he says, if, and that's a big two-letter word, if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

[2 : 49] But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. I think it is impossible not to see the condition that is imposed here.

It's quite obvious. And I don't think there's any way that we ought to try to argue ourselves around it. It means exactly what it says. Your being forgiven by God, or believers in this case, to whom Jesus was speaking, was contingent upon your being willing to forgive others.

And if you would not forgive others for wrongs that they have committed against you, then you have no reason to expect that God is going to forgive you for wrongs that you have committed.

That was the standard operating procedure in place prior to the time that Christ died on that cross. That changed everything. Because what was the principal reason he died on that cross? For our sins.

[3 : 55] For our forgiveness. That's what the cross was all about. Missed that? You missed everything. As Nathan was saying and talking to his friend who asked the question, what has Jesus done for me?

Or what has he ever done for me? Only everything. That's all. Only everything. But people don't realize that. And it is with Jesus Christ, he either is everything or he is nothing.

And each time I give someone one of those simple little compact discs that answers the question, on being sure of heaven, can we be?

And I usually hand it to them. And I tell them that there is a condition that comes with it. And they say, oh, what do you mean a condition? And I say, well, the content that is on this CD is worth

absolutely everything.

Or it's worth nothing at all. And you get to decide which it is for yourself. Oh, and I trust that.

[5 : 16] I don't know whether it does or not, but I trust maybe that will pique their interest a little bit. They get to be the determining factor as to the content that is on that CD. It means everything or absolutely nothing.

Because as Jesus himself said, he who is not with me is against me. There is no middle ground regarding Jesus Christ.

You are in Christ or you are outside of Christ. And the difference is incalculable. So we compared this passage here about conditional forgiveness with what we find in Colossians 1 and verse 13, wherein the apostle Paul, well after death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, writes to these former pagans, Colossians, and tells them that you are complete in Christ.

And if someone is complete, what are you lacking? Absolutely nothing. And we are forgiven in him all trespasses, not most of them, not the smaller ones, excepting for the big ones.

No, it's forgiven you all trespasses. It is a blanket forgiveness or it is no forgiveness at all. And the reason always has to be kept in mind.

[6 : 47] It is because of what was negotiated on that cross when Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins.

And I want to make a very, very important point here that all too many do not understand. And I'm not sure that even some believers perhaps are lacking in having a real sufficient handle on this truth.

And that is, any time that anything is added or attempted to be added to the finished work of Christ, it is evaluating that work of Christ as still lacking something.

Something you must do. Something you must provide. And someone says, well, you must provide. Belief. Well, belief or trust or confidence is necessary.

That is true. But it is a non-meritorious act. It isn't something that you conjure up or something that you do or something that you measure up to.

[8 : 04] It is simply an exercise of the volition that God gave you to say yes to Jesus Christ and who he is. And whenever something is added to that, it's fine to believe in Christ, but you also need to be.

And that is the thing that grace will not allow for. That is so what rankled Paul's fur, if you will, when the Judaizers came in and tried to add circumcision to faith in Christ.

And that was something that the Apostle Paul simply could not and would not abide. In fact, he even went to the extreme length of saying, Let those who would insist or demand that something be added to the finished work of Christ, let them realize they are proclaiming another gospel, which in effect is not a gospel at all.

It is not good news at all. And then he offered the very strongest kind of condemnation. Let such an one be accursed because they are promoting a gospel that is not the gospel of the grace of God. And that's the only one that will save. When you add something to it, you demean and depreciate the work that Christ accomplished on that cross.

[9 : 31] I would that everybody understood that. That's the big item. It's who he was and what he did that counts for everything.

And it doesn't count for most. It counts for everything. And when you would dare add something to that, 99% grace and 1% works is not grace at all.

It completely changes the meaning of the word. Would to God that everyone understood that. And there wouldn't be a better place for that understanding to begin than in the councils of Rome.

Because that's where the greatest disparity is. Sad to say. While we're talking about this, I want you to come over while we're still looking at Matthew to chapter 19.

About human merit and what can be added and what should be added and all the rest. And I am the first to admit, I don't know that I can explain this because it's not clear in my own mind and heart.

[10 : 40] And that is this. I still lack after, what? After 55 years of preaching this gospel, I still lack what I consider to be an adequate understanding of what really consisted of a salvation message in the Old Testament.

And I would express it this way. If you were one who lived back in Old Testament times, and you were going to communicate to someone, assuming, of course, that you knew, which is a gratuitous assumption anyway, but you were going to communicate to someone what they had to do or what

they had to believe in order to become acceptable to God, what would you tell him? If you were discussing this with some ordinary run-of-the-mill Egyptian or Assyrian, what would you tell him? After the fact, after the cross, after the death, burial, and resurrection, we've got a very simple message.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. And the message is ever so clear. But it isn't that clear before there was a cross upon which Christ died and paid that penalty.

Yet we find vast numbers of heathen, pagans, idolaters in the Old Testament, some of whom apparently came to faith in Christ.

[12 : 27] For instance, I really believe, I really believe we are going to get to meet Nebuchadnezzar in heaven.

And Naaman, the Syrian. Neither of whom were Jews, not having any covenantal relationship to God at all.

But they obviously came to faith in the one true God, the God of Israel. And that was recognized. So exactly what that message would consist of, I don't know.

We've got today a very simple, communicative message. And that is Christ died for our sins. Paul boiled it down in 1 Corinthians 15 when he said, I delivered unto you that which I first of all received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.

That is the gospel in a nutshell. And you can add to that if you want, John 3, 16, that so many have memorized. And there it sets forth the condition and the necessity for belief.

[13 : 35] We call that the good news, the gospel. It's a package. It's simple. It's easy to deliver. It's a communicable concept. One person can tell it to another person. And it requires no great effort.

Which sometimes causes me to ask the question, why aren't we better about doing it? Why aren't we more forward about doing it?

Why aren't we more bold about doing it? That's another issue. Maybe we'll get into that later. But Matthew chapter 19, the rich young ruler.

We talked a little bit about this. I'm not going to read the whole text. But I just want to come down to verse 21. Or verse 20, after Jesus had told him all of these things.

And by the way, keep in mind, Jesus is speaking here in accordance with what the law required prior to this time, prior to his death on the cross.

[14 : 36] And the young man responded in verse 20 and said, All these things I've kept. What am I still lacking? And Jesus said, If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me.

Is that a formula that he's giving here? Do you not see a parallel between this and what we read earlier in Matthew 6 about conditions?

This young man, apparently very sincere, said, I've done all of those things. I've done, what else do I have to do? Tell me, what am I lacking? And Jesus told him. But do you see what he told him?

Go and sell everything and give it to the poor and come and follow me. Now, let me ask you a question. Was that what would have then been construed as the requirement or the gospel message then, before Christ died on that cross?

Think about that. We have attempted to make the point, and how successful we've been, I do not know. We've attempted to make the point that there are numerous gospels in the Bible.

[16 : 12] There isn't just one. There is the gospel of the kingdom, which Jesus and the Twelve preached. There is the gospel called the grace of God, which came into vogue after the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, which made that gospel available.

These are two different gospels. And we've already noted the conditions that were imposed regarding forgiveness in Matthew 6.

Again, it's more do, do. And what is it that you have to do? You have to exercise forgiveness toward those who have wronged you in order for you to be forgiven of God.

That's a condition. And this is a clear-cut condition. Now, there are some who read this that Jesus is saying here, if you wish to be complete, and by the way, we've already identified complete, haven't we, on the other side of the cross in Colossians.

If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven, and come. Follow me.

[17 : 28] It is remarkable how many commentators, and I've got several in my shelves in there, have struggled with this passage, and some of the gymnastics, mental gymnastics that they go into

to try to get around this.

And I remember reading one of them that said, well, Jesus didn't actually mean that. He just said that because he knew that that young man would not be willing to do that, and that's why he told him that that's what he needed to do, because he knew he wasn't serious and he wasn't really fully dedicated, so he just told him that to reveal that to himself.

But that's not what you're supposed to do. Don't worry about that. You don't have to do that. Hmm. But the problem I have with just reading that passage then is we don't have any indication at all that the explanation or the attempt to get around that that I just gave you.

There's nothing in the passage that even hints that that was the case. I mean, it would have been nice if Matthew had said, following, now, Jesus didn't really mean that for you.

He just meant it for this guy because he... So what it has done, in effect, it has left literally millions of people down through thousands of years reading this passage and coming to the same conclusion, if I want to be complete and acceptable to God, I need to divest myself of everything.

[19 : 26] And, you know, this is the basis for some people looking to a life of, what shall I say, a hermit or a solitary kind of life, like confining oneself to a monastic life where they give up and leave behind all pleasures, all material things, and go into a convent where they pray so many hours a day and go through religious exercises, etc.

And you can easily see how people could arrive at something like that based on this. So what is this all about? Why did Jesus tell this man? And not only that, but I want you to read on further.

Let's come down to verse 21. I'm sorry, verse 27. Well, I want to read the context. Let's read the context.

The young man heard this, verse 22. He went away grieved, for he was one who owned much property. And Jesus said to his disciples, Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now, there is a phrase that we've used repetitively, and we'll be using it time and again. And Jesus is not talking about dying and going to heaven like you and I are talking about when we leave this body and go to be with the Lord.

[20 : 53] He's talking about the kingdom of heaven, and the idea is this is God's rule and reign in heaven coming to earth, and those who are worthy will have a place in that kingdom.

It is a works-oriented thing. There are things to do in order to enter that kingdom. This kingdom and the gospel of this kingdom, not to be confused with the gospel of the grace of God.

Totally different. And it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again, I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. In other words, he's talking about the impossibility of it.

For a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, kingdom of God, kingdom of heaven, identical. And when the disciples heard this, they were astonished. Now, these guys are confused. They're really puzzled.

And they look to Jesus, and they say, Well, who then can be saved? And looking upon them, Jesus said to them, With men, this is impossible.

[22 : 02] But with God, all things are possible. Then Peter answered. You can just see the wheels turning in Peter's mind. And he's trying to put all of this together and process it.

And Peter answered and said to him, Well, we left everything and followed you. What did he mean by that? I think he meant exactly what he said.

Peter and James and John and others of the disciples were fishermen. They did it for a living. They didn't just fish to have fish to eat.

But James and John, Peter, Andrew, they were engaged in the fishing business. Maybe as wholesalers. I don't know. But they had boats. They had nets.

They had investments. They had all kinds of things like that. And they were busy, involved in making a living, fishing, selling the fish, providing fish.

[23 : 02] After all, Peter lived right there in Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee, right on the edge. You could even see his home archaeologically made available to us today.

Peter's residence there in Capernaum. So we walked away from all of that. Jesus came by one day, and they had heard something of him, and they had heard something of his miracles, and they met him.

And Jesus said, Follow me. And if you do, you who are accustomed to fishing, I'm going to make you fishers of men.

And they left their nets, left their boats, and followed him. They're going to be his disciples. Do you realize what that means? That means you walk away from your occupation, from your daily responsibilities, from your source of income.

And you throw in your lot with this itinerant preacher who is going to go around delivering a message that will make him dependent upon the offerings and the gifts of others for their sustenance.

[24 : 15] And they're going to be involved in that. And there will be people who will support them. Because once Jesus started performing some miracles, it wasn't all that difficult to find supporters.

People wanted to be in on this. And they supported him, I suspect, handsomely, financially. So much so that they had to have a treasure of the group.

And Judas Iscariot was selected to be the treasure. We are told that he bare the bag. We are also told that he was pilfering from the bag and skimming from it.

But they had assets. They had money. And they had left everything to follow Jesus. And Peter says, What you told that rich young man to do? We did.

That's exactly what we did. What's the payoff? Now, Peter is being very honest. And he wants to know, what's the upside of this?

[25 : 18] We did that. And Jesus answered and said, You who have followed me in the regeneration, which means the renewal or the restoration, this is the millennium that he's talking about, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you, that is the twelve, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or fathers or mothers or children or farms, for my namesake, shall receive many times as much and shall inherit eternal life.

Many who are first will be last and the last first. And if you want something to do, here is something to do.

Are we called to do this today? Come over, if you would, please, to Acts chapter 4. Book of Acts chapter 4.

Be advised, this is shortly after Pentecost, shortly after the arrival of the Holy Spirit, shortly after their speaking in languages they had not known or learned, shortly after the apostles began doing a number of miracles, miracles just like Jesus had done.

[27 : 03] This is shortly after the miracle of the healing of the man at the gate beautiful, inside the temple, the headquarters, where this man had been begging for years and years.

And Peter said, silver and gold have we none, but such as we have in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, get up and walk. And he grabbed that man by the hand and yanked on him. And he came up and started walking and dancing on two good legs that had never held his body any time in his entire life.

So we read here in Acts chapter 4, beginning with verse, let's jump in with verse 18. They, that is the Jewish religious authorities, they had summoned them, that is the apostles, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

And Peter and John answered and said to them, whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge. For we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard.

And they threatened them further, let them go finding no basis on which they might punish them on account of the people, that is on account of the common people who believed these men and were beneficiaries of their miracles.

[28 : 26] And they were concerned that the common people not get riled up. And we're told the man was more than 40 years old when this miracle was performed and so on. And here is the prayer for boldness that followed.

And on through Acts chapter 4, and we'll come down, if we may, to verse 32. The congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul.

That indicates there was a kind of emotional, spiritual unanimity here, where these people were really bonding together, tight together, common cause, rejoicing together, loving one another.

A real spiritual dynamo is taking place here. And we read that in the midst of their threats, they prayed.

And that not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own.

[29 : 40] But all things were common property to them. What do you call that? You call that communism.

That's exactly what it is. Communism. It means everybody had everything in common. And the people in a situation like that often live together, just like many of them do in Israel today, in a commune.

Only the Hebrew name for it is kibbutz. And if you live there and you are a child that lives in the kibbutz, you are a kibbutzim.

And they have everything in common. This is operative all throughout Israel today. And there are fish hatchery communes where everybody in that commune, and it may be 15 or 20 families, they are all involved in this fish hatchery.

And they all work every day in the fish hatchery. And they market the fish and they sell the fish. And everybody divides the profits and everybody gets an equal share.

[31 : 01] And I remember one day when we visited kibbutz, it was close to the Sea of Galilee. And we walked in and they introduced us to the fellow who ran the kibbutz.

And they had a 12-inch TV up there. And he said, this is what we're working on. He was showing us visitors around. He pointed to that 12-inch TV and he said, this is what we're working on now.

And I said, what do you mean, what you're working on? And he said, well, as soon as we have made enough money, then we will buy this television set and everyone will get one in their home, in our kibbutz.

And I said, really? And he says, yes. And he said, but the way it works, he says, of course, nobody gets one until everybody gets one. That was the principle.

But they had that one up there to show everybody what they were working for. And he said, we've got about, we've got our goal about halfway made where we can buy half of what we need.

[32 : 20] And one might think that it would be nice to give half of them some, you know, but no, no, no, it doesn't work that way. You can't give anybody anything until everybody gets one.

That's the idea of communism. And it means everything in common. And this is a principle that's underway here. And we are told that there was not a needy person among them.

And someone says, you see, now that's what happens. That's what happens when communism is in action. That is why it is so desirable, because there was not a needy person among them.

Do we have any needy people among us today? Of course we do. Do you know why? It's because we're capitalists. If we were communists, we wouldn't have any needy people among us because everybody would have their needs met.

Just like they are in Russia. Yeah, and Venezuela. And Cuba. Everybody has their needs met and everybody is equal.

[33 : 36] But some are more equal than others. So what is the flaw of communism? What's the flaw of socialism?

You. You are the flaw. You are a human being. And you are why the system won't work. And can't work. Because humans are humans.

What we've got here is a supernatural thing that is taking place. And you know what? It isn't going to hold. Let's read on. Not a needy person among them.

All who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales. And lay them at the apostles' feet and they would be distributed to each as any had need.

I have, in my years of ministry, I've read some really hair-raising stories about cults and the way they operate and the manner in which they use intimidation and manipulation.

[34 : 51] And you realize, do you not, and if you don't, you should, that the pulpit can be a choice place for manipulation.

You can crank out guilt here and put people on a guilt trip that won't quit. And it can loosen up pocketbooks like nothing you've ever seen.

It's done all the time. And you can see it on television with so many programs. The Faith Healers, the Name It, Claim It, Blab It, Grab It group, they're out there in abundance.

And if you want the blessing of God, if you want God to pour open the fountains of heaven and just drown you in prosperity, send your best gift to such and such and wait for the miracles to happen.

You'd be surprised. And nobody is more susceptible to that than people who are financially desperate. And they're the ones who can afford it the least. So people have always been ripe for

manipulation.

[36 : 11] And the pulpit is one of the easiest, simplest ways of doing it because you can always tie the will of God with it, bend it and twist it and jerk it a little bit here, and people fall for it.

It's just incredible. Now, I'm not suggesting that's what's happened here. And it isn't what's happened here. I am convinced that what we've got here in Acts chapter 4 is completely legitimate. And do you know what these people are doing?

They are getting in line with the program. What is the outcome? What is the benefit? What is the blessing of the kingdom of heaven coming to earth?

This is it. No one's going to have need. There won't be any starvation when Jesus Christ establishes his kingdom. And these 12 apostles are ruling and reigning from Jerusalem.

And David himself is ruling over the 12. And Christ is on his throne. There isn't going to be anyone dying of starvation. There isn't going to be anyone suffering from the kinds of things that we suffer from today.

[37 : 13] These are all going to be cared for. What they are doing is falling in line with the program. The program, the kingdom program, is going to be wonderful.

And it's getting underway here. This is the start of it. Peter talks about this in Acts chapter 2. While you're here in Acts, come back just a couple of pages.

I want you to see something here. Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost. Peter says, These men, verse 15, they're not drunk as you suppose. It's only the third hour of the day. This, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel.

This is what Joel was talking about. What you're seeing here, and these people speaking in languages they haven't learned, this is what Joel the prophet was talking about. It's being fulfilled right in our very eyes.

It shall be in the last days, God says. Well, this was looked upon as the beginning of the last days. You mean to tell me that what is being portrayed here as the last days took place 2,000 years ago, and we still haven't gotten to the last day?

[38 : 23] What is, what's going on here? What are you talking about? What I'm talking about is that Peter is saying, listen, listen, the basis for the kingdom of heaven coming to earth is twofold.

First thing that has to happen is the Messiah has to pick up the tab. The Messiah has to pay for the establishment and the coming of the kingdom of heaven before it will be realized.

And he did that. That's what he accomplished when he died on that cross. Not only the forgiveness of your sins and the payment for your sins, but for the restitution of the whole broken, wounded world.

That's what he paid for. The whole thing. The restoration, the reclamation, the fixing, the brokenness, all the rest of it. That's what, and that's what Peter is saying is underway.

It shall be in the last days. I will pour forth of my spirit upon all mankind and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy and your young men shall see visions.

[39 : 39] Your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my bond slaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of my spirit. That's what he was doing.

And they shall prophesy. Oh, now wait a minute. Now we've got a problem. Hmm. And I will grant wonders in the sky above, signs on the earth beneath, blood and fire and vapor of smoke.

Where are those? The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood. Where are those? What happened to those? It says, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come, and it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be.

Now, wait a minute. What's taking place here? The earlier part of this prophecy was being fulfilled, was being lived by these people.

Peter, Peter, Peter, Peter, Peter's not saying, well, folks, what this is, this is the church. He's not saying that at all.

[41 : 05] What he's saying is, this is what Joel was talking about. This is a fulfillment of what Joel was talking about. But is it a full fulfillment?

Nope. It's only a partial fulfillment. It's just the beginning of what Joel was talking about. Why wasn't the rest of it realized?

Why wasn't the whole ball of wax in play? Why just this? What happened to the moon into blood? The sun turned into darkness. The great and glorious day of the Lord shall come. Where's that?

That's never happened. Why hasn't it? Simply because the result of Peter preaching this in Acts 2, the one to whom Jesus said he gave the keys to the kingdom, significant.

What's that mean? Keys to something represents authority. It means the ability to unlock or to lock something.

[42 : 17] That's the idea of keys. It talks about authority. And Peter is using keys. He is inviting Israel into the blessing and promise that God has made through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

And the twofold things that is necessary for this kingdom to be realized and come, kingdom of heaven, come to earth and be established here so that all of these things, this broken, ruined world will be fixed.

And the second thing is Israel nationally must embrace their Messiah. And when they do, he will respond with this.

And what we've got is out of the two measures required for the kingdom of heaven to come to earth, one has been fulfilled. The other is lacking.

Israel is not on board. We will not have this man to reign over us. They not only rejected him before the crucifixion.

[43 : 33] Now, now in Acts 4 and 5, they are rejecting him after the crucifixion and the resurrection.

They are still in a mode of unbelief. But they are operating on the basis of good faith. They are trying to fulfill the requirements and the conditions that will be realized in the millennium when no one will have need of anyone or for anything because everyone will have everything in common. And nobody will be doing without. Nobody will be starving. Nobody will be... Are they jumping the gun here? It appears that they're just operating...

Listen, all they are doing is what Jesus told the rich young ruler to do. Sell what you have, come and follow me. He wasn't about to do that.

These are doing that. They're doing that. It's a beautiful thing. Sharing them.

[44 : 40] Selling their property and possessions. We're sharing them with all as anyone might have need. This was such an infectious spirit of brotherhood and love that I suspect the world's never seen since.

This is supernatural, what's happening here. And if you were to talk to these people, I think they would tell you, well, all we're doing is getting with the program. We're just doing what God requires. And you know what? We're getting a bang out of it. This is terrific. This is wonderful. This is supernatural. I can't believe this is happening. They were excited. They were thrilled beyond belief. It was just an amazing thing that was happening. They were praising God. Look at that. Breaking bread from house to house, taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart. Praising God. Having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number, day by day, those who were being saved. People were noticing. Have you seen what's going on with these?

[45 : 46] What is it with these people? I don't know, but it's something really special. I want to get in on this. And people are inquisitive. They're coming around. They're asking questions. They're visiting.

They're looking. They're listening. And they are really excited. This is something that's never happened before in the history of our world. And what follows in chapter four is the persecution begins.

And this whole principle. This early arrival involvement in kingdom principles and practices is going to be short-circuited.

And it is not going to be realized. It will not come to fruition. It is going to peter out. And one of the things that's going to happen as a result of that.

Now, what we're talking about here is approximately. Let's see. Somewhere in the area of 32 to 33 A.D.

[47 : 03] Just within a year. I mean, after all, it was just in Acts chapter one that we have the ascension of our Lord. So here in Acts four, it's maybe at the most a year later after the ascension, very early on.

And what has taken place right here is, as I mentioned, is just supernatural. And everybody's having their needs met through this generosity.

And they are simply fulfilling what Jesus told this rich young ruler to do. And as you look in chapter five, we've got the Ananias and Sapphira situation.

And there's a crack in the program. And the text says that they had property, kept back some of the price for himself with his wife's full knowledge.

Bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. This is what everybody else was doing. They were selling land and bringing it and laying it to the apostles' feet. And some of these cults, by the way, that I mentioned earlier, have actually taken in people and seduced them.

[48 : 16] There isn't a better word for it either. Spiritually, financially seduced them. And used a passage like this to get to them. And actually convinced some of these people whom they hoodwinked into turning over the deeds of their homes or titles of their car to the head of this cult, whatever it was.

And doing so, of course, in an effort to please God. Folks, you can't believe how gullible some people can be. I mean, it is incredible.

And you need to be teachable. And you need to be open to things that you've never heard before to at least consider them without just buying them wholesale.

But you never want to be gullible. You never want to be a mark, a sucker for a scheme.

And you probably know better than I because I'm not this familiar with the Internet. But I do know that there are all kinds of scams out there going on all the time. Everything from identity theft to you name it.

[49 : 34] And people can be so vulnerable to this. And what we've got here with Ananias and Sapphira. And by the way, accompanying this is the supernatural.

This is the miraculous. Remember, we've told you before that one of the things that characterizes the kingdom and the kingdom teaching and truth is the supernatural that goes with it.

That's part and parcel of it. That's the miraculous. And when Ananias came in and laid this money at the apostles' feet, like everybody else was doing when they sold their property.

And then they were to take it and distribute it. They weren't supposed to put it in their pocket. They were supposed to distribute it to everybody as they had need. And when Ananias came in and laid this money down, supernaturally, Peter was already in the know.

And he says, tell me this money that you put down here. Let's just grab a figure out of the air. \$5,000.

[50 : 38] Did you sell your property for \$5,000? Yep. Sold it for \$5,000. And here it is. But truth be told, they sold it for \$7,000 and kept back \$2,000.

Is there something wrong with that? No. No. That would not have been a crime. The crime was in deliberately leading them astray, misleading them into thinking that they had done what everybody else had done, they sold the land, and they bought the full price of the land, and they laid it at the apostles' feet.

And Peter says, look, you didn't have to lie. The money was yours. The whole \$7,000 was yours. You didn't have to give it.

You could have given the whole thing, or you could have given that. You didn't have to give it. And he called him out. And to make a long story short, Peter said, Ananias, drop dead.

And he did. Boy, I tell you what, this is no crowd to mess with. This is the power of God at work here. This wasn't Peter's power. This was Peter exercising the authority that God had given him as an apostle.

[52 : 06] And when Sapphira came in, she had no clue that her husband was already dead and buried. And they went through the same scenario. Did you sell this land for such and such?

Yes, we did. And she and her husband had connived together to fabricate this lie. And she dropped dead.

And all this is, this is a scary, scary evidence of a no-nonsense God at work with his people.

And great fear fell upon them all, well, I guess. Now, this is not going to continue. And you know what we're going to have later?

It's an amazing thing. I'm not going to ask you to turn to it now. But let me just, well, we're close by.

Let's come over to Acts 15. And I'm going to close with this. I'm sorry, Romans 15.

[53 : 06] Something dramatic is going to happen. And this whole thing regarding everybody selling their real estate, giving the money to the apostles they distributed, that's going to come to a halt.

That's not going to proliferate. That's going to quit. You know why? Because it soon became apparent to the apostles that Israel, the nation, is not on board.

We have bought into this kingdom thing, and we have actually emptied our pockets to demonstrate our confidence in it. But the nation isn't buying it.

They're just not coming on board at all. And as a result, the program, the kingdom program, is short-circuited.

It just comes to a screeching halt. And it has to, because the second qualification for the kingdom to come has not been met.

[54 : 03] And that is Israel as a nation embracing Jesus as their Messiah. And everything is going to come to a screeching halt. And you know what? It's going to be business as usual.

Now you're going to have people in need. You're going to have people who are unable to care and provide for themselves. And we read in Romans chapter 15, beginning with verse, well, let's just jump in here for time's sake, if we may.

Let's see. Let's see. 15, 22 through 29 of Romans.

And Paul is talking about coming to them, longing to see you. Verse 24 and verse 25. I'm going to Jerusalem serving the saints.

For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Hmm. What does that mean?

[55 : 09] It means just what it says. These saints in Jerusalem. These are fellow believers who are having a really tough time making it, making ends meet.

First century. The whole kingdom program has been abated. That's stopped. And now as a result. And by the way, by the time you get to Romans 15 and Paul writing this letter, it's like 57, 56, 57 AD.

This is about 30 years after what we were talking about in Acts 3. Okay? And remember in Matthew 24.

And we won't go there. We won't go there. But I just want to remind you that this is right before Jesus gave the Olivet Discourse and talked about his second coming.

And the disciples were just enamored with the building that was going on. This was Herod's building. And he was adding to the temple.

[56 : 17] This is the second temple complex. And the first one was destroyed by the Babylonians. It had been rebuilt under Zerubbabel.

And Nehemiah built the wall. And he built this second temple and the wall around it and everything. And when King Herod came to power, he made provision.

And Herod was an evil. He was an evil, psychopathic, architectural genius. He designed and built things that were incredible.

And one of them was this new temple complex. And the apostles were taken by it. And they told Jesus, they said, look at these stones. Look at the work that's been done on these stones and how massive they are.

And they were putting them in place and they were in the process of building. And Jesus said, I say to you fellows, not one of these stones will be left upon another. But all is going to be cast down.

[57 : 23] And that would be 40 years later when the Romans would do that under the Roman general Titus. And while they were taken by that and those stones and the massive size of them and everything, the project, the work project was going ahead full tilt.

And the temple and all of that complex would be completed in like 65 or 66 A.D.

The whole thing would be finished and stunningly beautiful. And in four years, it will all be torn down.

It will all be destroyed. And as the temple was being underway and being built and being added to, there were thousands and thousands of Jewish workmen.

They were stonemasons. Thousands of them. Because they worked with limestone. And limestone is very workable. You can do all kinds of things with limestone that you can't do with a lot of other stones, like granite, for instance.

[58 : 36] And all of these limestone. And if you see pictures of the Western Wall, that's the stone they were made of. And it's still there and it's still standing, the Western Wall. It's a magnificent structure, even though it's just a wall.

And as the progress was being made, thousands and thousands of Jewish men in Jerusalem and in the environs of Jerusalem were employed.

And they all worked as day laborers. And everyone received their pay at the end of the day when they worked. They all got their pay. And as the work progressed and came closer and closer to being finished, more and more of these men were laid off.

They had no income. Unemployment insurance didn't exist. Welfare didn't exist. These people were struggling. These were the poor saints of Jerusalem that Paul was talking about.

And when he went to places like Corinth and Asia Minor at Ephesus and these other cities, he would tell them about the struggles of these folks back in the homeland, back in Jerusalem, and the terrible depression they were going through because everybody was out of work.

[60 : 02] Herod had employed tens of thousands of people working in the stone quarries in different capacities. And now they're all laid off and they've got no work. And as Paul would relay this information, these sad tales of woe and deprivation to these people in Greece and in Italy and other places, they would take up a collection for them.

And Paul would take all of this money that they had given and Silas or Barnabas, whoever he was with, and they would faithfully carry it back to Jerusalem and give it to the people there so it could be distributed among the poor.

So the kingdom program is not in vogue here. It is short-circuited and it is passé. So what we've got is a transitional thing that has taken place and the difference between that and what we are proclaiming today, the gospel of the grace of God, complete opposite.

Very little connection at all. But we need to understand both of them and see the difference and see why they are the way they are. So what are we going to tell people? The gospel?

The gospel not from the other side of the cross. It's the gospel from this side of the cross. And it's believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. You don't have to sell your property. You don't have to give anything.

[61 : 26] You just give your heart to the Lord. And that is called the gospel of the grace of God. And it's radically different. Have you a question or a comment that you would like to offer?

Feel free. Okay. Joe up here has one. Mike is on the way. The gospel before the cross was the good news that Jesus had for each individual he spoke to.

He was dealing with individuals. Let's start with Abraham. Abraham. He told he promised Abraham if you move out of the land of his father's was I'd give you a whole land. And all Abraham had to do then was believe.

And it all comes down to believe what God was telling that individual or person at the time before the cross. And the same thing with your rich man.

If he'd have believed what Jesus had told him, you know, that go sell all your things and you'll be saved. He would have been saved. He would have had salvation. But the whole thing gets down to believing what Jesus was telling that individual or group at that time.

[62 : 44] I hear you. And I couldn't agree more. But what are you going to do with the Egyptians? What are you going to do with the Babylonians? And what about the Assyrians? The only thing that we can offer, the only thing that we can offer, the only thing I can come up with is that they have the knowledge of God written on their hearts.

This is the Romans one thing. So that man is without excuse because he has the knowledge that there is a God. Now, there is no salvation in that. But we've got that passage in Acts 17.

And I rely on that maybe more heavily than I should. But in Acts 17, the apostle Paul is delivering his message on Mars Hill to the Athenian philosophers.

And he talks about the times past. He said that in times past, God winked.

God winked at humanity in times past. But now, again, establishing a huge difference exists now from the time he winked.

[64 : 01] Now, God has commanded all men everywhere to repent. Because he has fixed the day which he will judge the world by that man.

And that man, of course, is Jesus Christ. And when Paul writes to the Ephesians in chapter 2, he reminds them of their background.

They were pagans. They were heathen. And when he went to Ephesus and preached the gospel, these people believed. They received Christ and they were saved. And Paul says, remember, remember that at that time, you were strangers from the commonwealth of Israel.

You were outside of God. You were devoid of hope. You had no hope, no Christ, no nothing. That was your state before. Now, in Christ, you are made complete.

Wow, what a huge, huge difference. So we've got all of these people, all of humanity, that were steeped in idolatry, paganism of every kind that you could imagine.

[65 : 05] And their condition was they were lost. And the only information they had was that which God had put in them by way of a conscience. So and I just have to leave it there because I don't have better answers, but I'm sure open to them.

Anybody else before we dismiss? Yes, up here. You mentioned the kibbutz in Israel that you visited.

The kibbutz, yeah. OK. I'm not saying it right. I'm assuming that's continuing, that that's the way many of them live now.

Oh, yes. Yes. OK. Well, what would be the difference then between communism and the way they live other than the fact they probably pray to God?

Yeah, there really isn't much difference. And to understand, and I don't want to belabor this point, but you need to understand the makeup of modern day Israel. And that is it is a socialist state.

[66 : 19] It is a democratic socialist state. And it is not it. We call it our only democratic friend in the Mideast. And that's true. It is.

But the vast majority of the people who live in Israel live and function just like you and I do. They have jobs. They have offices. They have factories. They work at, et cetera.

But they also have the kibbutz. And the people who live in them are called kibbutzim. And they are dwellers in this kibbutzim. And they function as a group, as an entity.

And what one has, they all have. And the vast majority of Israel today is what would be referred to as secular.

They are not even committed to the God of Israel. Most of them are not at all familiar even with their own Old Testament.

[67 : 17] They are, for the most part, pretty much ignorant of their own Old Testament. They have an incredible history, a one-of-a-kind history. But so many, so many Jews today throughout the world are Jews not by their faith, not by their religion, but by their heritage more than anything else.

And there are, of course, exceptions. There are what is referred to as the Orthodox Jew. They do take their faith seriously, and they have the little skull cap that they wear. And what's his name?

Joe. Joe Lieberman, who ran with, who did he ran with? Ran as the vice presidential candidate for whoever it was that was on the ticket at the time.

He's an observant Jew. Joe Lieberman is an Orthodox Jew. And that is, they go to Sabbath, and they keep the Sabbath, and they have a kosher diet, etc.

But they make up, perhaps, maybe 10% of the Jewish population. And most Jews today, most Jews today are about as committed to their synagogue as most Christians are to their church, which is not much.

[68 : 45] And you see, they've got their problems, too. By the way, Islam suffers the same thing. There are a lot of Muslims who never show up at Friday prayers. So it's just a common, it's a human thing.

It's a human thing. Anything else before we dismiss? Okay, Nathan. Quick, and you're talking about all this.

There's two more contemporary books that I've read that kind of have this view of, you know, looking at the things that Jesus said, this idea of radical discipleship, and that you must be one of these radical disciples selling everything that you own or at least being willing to, you know, because there's a problem.

If all the Christians sell everything, you know, and I think people realize that you're going to be in big trouble because that doesn't last very long. But one is a book called Crazy Love by Francis Chan.

That's been out maybe in the last five years, and he teaches that kind of, that idea that he goes right through the Gospels, teaching these things that Jesus is talking about.

[69 : 56] And, you know, it's coming right from the Bible, but it really confuses a lot of people. The other one is a book called Radical by a guy named David Platt, and the same thing. And one of the things that I've noticed about both of those guys in their books is they're really not sure if they're doing enough.

You can tell by what they write and what they say that they're not sure that they're doing enough. Their discipleship is radical enough to please God, and it's really discouraging. But I thought I'd share those. Yeah, interesting. Well, truth be told, truth be told, the body of Christ contains entirely too many lackadaisical Christians. They almost give you the impression, eh, take it or leave it, you know. Well, yeah, I'm into this Christian thing, but it's as good as anything else that's going. That's somebody that's completely off the mark, really. And I'm not talking about being fanatical, not talking about being radical in that sense, but I am talking about being dead serious.

[71 : 03] It is a really serious thing to be a believer in Jesus Christ and have the position and the truth that he has given you and not treat it accordingly.

And I say that to our hurt because there are so many who they won't come right out and say it, but they live their lives in such a way that you get the impression that their attitude is, Christianity, yeah, take it or leave it, I guess I take it, you know, nothing else going.

And they are so untaught and so unserious about what they have and who they are serving that it just breaks my heart and it breaks the heart of every pastor that sees people like that.

But they're out there. And you know what we're committed to doing? We're committed to teaching the word and trying to live a life of example that will make them see the folly and the inadequacy of that way and step up to the plate and get serious about Jesus Christ and who he is.

Because it really does matter. And the time is coming when it will be very obvious that nothing else will matter. Would you stand, please? We'll be dismissed. Father, we are truly grateful for the time that you've allotted us this morning.

[72 : 31] We are mindful that our numbers are decreased significantly. And yet we trust that those who are where they are at home and the safety of their home, that their spiritual needs are being met as well as other needs.

Thank you for the precautionary safety items that are taken and for those who are serious about this and the effort to preserve the health that you've bestowed upon us.

Thank you so much for the truth that you've given us in your word and for those who were here to give it, to receive it, and for those who will be listening later online. We give you thanks in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen.