

NoCovButGrace

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[0 : 00] We are dealing with a kind of assortment of things because we are actually between studies. We plan to launch a new verse-by-verse study in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

And I've been reading it over a couple of times a day for about the last few days anyway. And I'm already amazed at what I have found that I never saw before.

So that's the nature of the Word of God. But it is inexhaustible. And the more you get into it, the more you become aware that there's no bottom in these books of the Bible. It just goes deeper and deeper and deeper.

And that's the nature of the Word of God. And that's one of the things that makes it so exciting. So eventually we will approach the Epistle to the Hebrews.

And I think you will find it to be extremely enlightening. And it will enable you, as it has me, to connect a lot of dots that perhaps don't have a connection now.

[1 : 01] I think you will appreciate that. So maybe in a way that is a little bit introductory to that, we will continue a theme that we began last week.

But before I do, I want to mention that an issue was brought up in, I think it was our last study of Ephesians. And if I'm not mistaken, I think it was Marty that brought it up.

And it dealt with the question, with the issue of exercising faith and believing God as opposed to presuming upon God.

And there may be a fine line to be drawn here. And I am satisfied that there are a lot of ministries and a lot of individuals that have been absolutely devastated, particularly financially, because they did not make a distinction between exercising faith, moving out on faith, and being presumptuous in their thinking and in their feeling.

And to just give you a brief example that I'm sure many of you can identify with, it sometimes comes from positions of spiritual leadership.

[2 : 24] And it's not particularly flattering to talk about this, but sometimes we pastors can be the most guilty of this. And that is, a pastor may get a vision, a dream, a wish, something that he's been praying for for a long time, and he springs it on his congregation, and he sells it to them on the basis of, that we need to launch out on faith, we need to take a step of faith and really trust the Lord.

And I know you can't see any conceivable way how we could repay a \$750,000 loan, but we're going to trust God for it. Okay? And everybody rallies and gets behind it.

And two years down the pike, disaster strikes, and it becomes an embarrassment to the pastor, an embarrassment to the congregation, an embarrassment to the community.

Because what so often happens is that we get a concept or an idea in mind, and we are convinced that God put it there.

And you may not have had anything at all to do with it. It can just be a fleshly activity of something that we want to accomplish, and leadership sometimes that can be persuasive and convincing can sell it to people, and they get behind it, and then there's a huge letdown, you know?

[3 : 55] People get discouraged and despondent, and where was God, and why didn't he bail us out, and why didn't he come through with all of this money and all of the growth and whatnot? And, fellas, I cannot tell you how many times that kind of scene has been replicated across the United States, and maybe even across the world and other places.

And it almost invariably comes about because somebody is acting out of presumption. We get this idea, and then we expect God to bless it and get on board with it.

And God is not interested in dancing to our tunes. He wants us to dance to his. And that can be a fine line sometimes to draw, but it's an important one.

And so I wanted you to know that we haven't forgotten that, Marty. And nobody abuses this concept more or is capable of abusing it more than Christian ministries, churches, and parachurch organizations, you know?

And, well, we were really believing God. We were trusting God. And where's your faith? And launch out on faith. And, hey, there's something to be said for that, too. Absolutely. I don't want to sell faith or God short in this, but we'll try to look at some principles when we get to that.

[5 : 12] But meanwhile, we're engaging something else. Yes, Dana? Along that line, I believe God speaks to me. And obviously the ministries you're talking about believe that God's speaking to them.

It's easy to tell in hindsight, but is there a way that we can tell beforehand whether it's our ego or if it's really God?

Yeah, well, your question is core to this whole issue. And without trying to go into it now, which would be rather time-consuming, put that on hold.

And it will be key. That very thought will be key to what we'll be talking about when we do get into it. Okay? So I just wanted you to know that that's upcoming. But for now, I want to continue something that we began last week.

And I want to do so because I personally have found it so incredibly illuminating and gave me a whole new perspective on the issue that I must confess I did not have at all for probably the first 10 or 12, I don't know, maybe even 15 years of my Christian life came to know the Lord in 1956.

[6 : 41] And it probably wasn't until 1970 that this concept I'm going to be sharing with you this morning really came home to roost in my own heart and mind.

And when it did, my first response was to reject it. And I didn't have any trouble rejecting it. It took me about 10 minutes to consider it and reject it.

And the reason that I rejected it as I look back on it now is simply because it did not comport with what I had always believed and always taught.

Therefore, it has to be wrong. That's a very natural way of thinking because we do tend to get set in our ways. We do get to the place of where we kind of consider some things as carved in stone. And it assures me and convinces me more and more that there is something that is a lot harder than embracing new truth.

[7 : 53] And that is discarding old truth. And I would put old truth in quotation marks because if it needs to be discarded, it isn't true at all.

But it can be believed and accepted as true. And we have a natural penchant within us to embrace what we've always believed as being gospel.

And the reason we know it's gospel is because we've always believed it. That gives it credibility. But it doesn't.

Because if something is true, it is true whether or not you believe it. And if it isn't true, even though you believe it is, that doesn't make it true.

So this whole concept of truth is such a critical thing. And the whole nation is dealing with it right now. We're in the midst of this thing. And I talked about it in the past and I will be in the future.

[8 : 59] And it has to do with the distinction between absolute truth and relative truth and moral absolutes as opposed to moral relativity because that determines the attitude, the position, the conviction that a lot of people take about a lot of things.

And we are a nation right now that is swimming in moral relativity. And the first thing, the first thing that has to go when moral relativity comes in is any concept of the absolute.

You have to deny that there is an overarching belief truth. I call it a moral north star from which all directions are determined.

And once there is no moral north star, once there is no set standard as to what is true and what is right, Katie, bar the door.

Because anything goes. And that's what moral relativism is. Once moral relativism is in place, why not abortion?

[10 : 25] If morality is relative, why not same-sex marriage? If morality is relative, why not whatever you want to do?

Because each person becomes their own authority. That's where our nation is right now. And in no place is it so dominant with such dire consequences as in Washington, D.C.

And it is spread throughout the whole country. And of course, it absolutely consumes academia. In our colleges and universities, it is flooded with this stuff.

And it comes from the professorial PhDs that impact these young minds that are under their tutelage. And the nation is paying a horrible price for it.

So all of that is on the burner, and I want you to keep it in mind. But what I want to talk about now, by way of continuing last week, and I'd like to make this more of a discussion, Q&A; thing rather than a lecture, because sometimes in asking and answering questions, there's more to be learned than there is in just a straight lecture.

[11 : 43] And we talked a little bit about this last week, just kind of introduced it. When we talked, we mentioned about the new covenant in Jeremiah 31, where Jeremiah prophesies and says, The days are coming, saith the Lord, that I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

Not like the covenant which I made before, which they broke. And there, of course, he's referring to the Mosaic covenant, the law that God gave through Moses.

And the question that I want to ask you and have you to think about, which is, this is as gut level, basic as you can get when you're talking about the scriptures and Bible study.

And that is this. Here's a question. Where, where did the concept Old Testament and New Testament come from?

How did those terms develop? And on what basis? What makes the Old Testament old and what makes the New Testament new?

[12 : 56] And who says either of them are that? Now you think about that.

Any bright ideas? I'm turning, I'm turning now to the very first page in my Bible and it says the New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ translated out of the original Greek and with the former translations diligently compared and revised by His Majesty's special command.

Which of course indicates that this is the King James Version that we're talking about and His Majesty is King James II after whom the Bible was named. So, my question now is this.

This says the New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And you might have a similar label in your Bible, whatever it is. And as I turn back to the beginning of what is commonly referred to as the beginning here, the Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments.

And then all of the honor is given to King James at the time. and I don't know that this actually says the beginning of the Old Testament.

[14 : 47] It just says Genesis, the beginning of Genesis. Okay? So, did I see a hand raised? Did somebody have something to say?

Yeah. Dana? The division to me is the division that Christ's gospel and the division between Judaism and Christianity or completed Jews and old Judaism.

Okay. But there's definitely a wall there where Christ sacrificed himself and replaced all the sacrifices Jews had to do on a regular basis.

They're two different two completely different camps and they need different names. And I can see new and old being chosen. Okay. Okay.

Any other thoughts? Yeah. Larry? I think about the old is the new. I think about the old applies to the place and the new applies to the spirit.

[16 : 00] Okay. Well, the old applies to the flesh, the new applies to the spirit. Well, I would agree with that in part. There's no question that what we commonly refer to as the Old Testament places far more emphasis on the material and the physical.

I don't think there's any question about that. Everything in the Old, well not everything, but most things in the Old Testament are very concrete. God is very much up front and forward in the lives of those with whom he has to do as opposed to in the New Testament.

In other words, he spoke face to face with Abraham and with Moses and with Joshua, and yet we don't find that in the New Testament apart from the revelation that he gave to Paul.

But there's a lot more physicality in the Old Testament, a lot more emphasis on the land, on the sacrifices, the temple, all of those things, whereas when you come into the New, the emphasis does shift from the material and the physical to the spiritual.

Roger? I think in the 400 years between the end of the Old Testament and the New, the beginning of the vision there?

[17 : 33] Well, I don't know that man decided, but, excuse me, these are commonly referred to as the four silent centuries.

And as Rogers indicated, the reason they are the silent centuries is between the end of what we call the Old Testament and the beginning of what we call the New Testament, there was a lapse of 400 years where no revelation was being given by God that was inspired whereby man was supposed to record it so that we've got a written record called the Bible.

So there's a lapse, there's a gap of 400 years between the old and the new. And that in and of itself, that in and of itself kind of tends to put in our minds the idea that something has concluded and something different has begun.

So that would be a common kind of concept to develop I think. Yes? I don't know, I don't know, you look at the Old Testament as more of a study of the people and in the break and in the New Testament the new concept brought on Christianity coming to the Gentiles.

Okay. Basically. Okay. But, in the New Testament, now here's something that is really important and I would urge you to give this some very serious thought.

[19 : 25] Talk about the New Testament being for the Gentiles. But, when you read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the Gentiles count for next to nothing.

I mean, next to nothing. Remember the Syrophenician woman that came to the Lord asking for healing help for her daughter? And Jesus said, it is not appropriate for me to take the food that is intended for the children and give it to the dogs.

Well, who were the children? The Israelites! Who were the dogs? The Gentiles. And she did not dispute that because she knew that was the way Gentiles regarded.

And one of the reasons that Gentiles were called dogs by the Jews is because Gentiles would eat anything, like a dog would, you know, they would eat anything. And, of course, the Jews didn't. They had a restricted diet. Any other thoughts about this? Yes, Marty? Okay, River Study Bible.

[20 : 39] Okay, River Study Bible. During the 400 years when the closed of the Old Testament in the Middle East, several important events occurred. The Greeks under other families and the Greeks and the second rule of the world.

Under Maccathene, Jews revolted and attempted to break away from the rule of the Greek. The Roman Empire, the Greek, and ruled the known world when Christ was born.

The Jewish synagogue and the sects such as the Pharisees and the Psalms and the all those events and the world of the birth and the Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit.

Yeah, okay, thank you. That kind of fills in the space in between those testaments. Now, these 400 silent years, of course, it doesn't mean nothing was happening.

There was a lot that was happening, but there was nothing that God was revealing for man to record as scripture. With the disagreement that would come from the Roman Catholic constituency, who believes that those 400 silent years ought to be occupied by what is called the Apocrypha, 14 additional books, Maccabees, Esdras, and the rest of Esther, and so on, they do recount much of the history that occurred during those 400 silent years, but the consensus of opinion among Jews and Christians, with the exception of the Roman Catholics, is that those books are not canonical, they do not have the authority of scripture, and therefore they are not included in our Bible.

[22 : 28] But if you have a Roman Catholic Bible, a Reins Dewey version, or something like that, you will find those books are included because they accept them as canonical, or as authoritative from God.

Traditional Protestantism does not. That's a different issue, however, but any other thoughts about this? Old and New Testament? Yes, Pat? In the Old Testament, man was separated from God, and then after the resurrection in the New Testament, God was with man.

Okay. Okay, very important distinction. The buyback through redemption had been accomplished, yeah, through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Dan? Another question on the 400 years. Before 400 B.C., how long gap is there in the Bible?

I'm sorry, I don't understand the question. Well, between the Old and New Testament, there's a gap of 400 years. Right. If you go to the Old Testament, after Genesis, let's say, but it's a huge amount of time.

[23 : 41] But after Genesis, how big of a gap is there without the word from God? I, you mean, when was Genesis?

No, no, no, no. After Genesis, between the end of Genesis and 400 B.C., how big of a gap is there that's missing from the Bible?

What's the next biggest gap? Tell him, Brian. I wouldn't say too much. If we accept the 66 folks in the 1500 year timeframe, we do much of a gap for the 1100 years.

In the Old Testament, we've been written over that period of time. So I don't think there's much of a gap where God is speaking to the mission of Israel, to the people.

Okay. Now, while we're talking about this, let me throw in this to muddy the water a little further, we commonly refer to the Old Testament, which, by the way, is a term that I think misleads, and I would much prefer if we carried that over with a more direct translation from both the Hebrew and the Greek, and completely eliminated the word testament, and replaced it with covenant, it would be a lot better.

[25 : 15] So, when do we ordinarily think the Old Covenant as beginning? Is it not with Genesis 1-1? Categorically speaking.

But in reality, the Old Covenant never began until Exodus chapter 20. because what makes this covenant is the fact that God revealed himself and his plan and his program to his people on Mount Sinai, and that's where the beginning of the law was actually given through Moses.

It starts in Exodus chapter 20. And prior to that time, in fact, I think we can safely say for all practical purposes that this is also very close to when the nation of Israel was born or was birthed as a nation.

In essence, it was when God visited them through Moses in Egypt and called them out of Israel and everything actually began, was when Joseph was there and sent back to the land of Israel for his whole family to come down after he'd revealed himself and everything, and aged Jacob came, remember, and all of the sons and grandchildren, and in fact, there were 70, 7-0 people constituted that first increment of what we would call the Jewish nation.

and then they were there in Israel for 400 years, and those 70 people became a couple of million. You do the math and eliminate the possibility of abortion, although the Egyptians tried to introduce that to get rid of the male babies and so on, but you do the math and you end up with a couple of million people and that's the birthing of the nation when they came out of Israel or came out of Egypt to Sinai and God gave them the law.

[27 : 56] Yes, Don? We played around this term, Old Testament, New Testament, a man's concept. When did this concept first enter into our language that we use that term to break the two?

I don't know. I don't know. And that's questioned right now because what I am suggesting is that it is legitimate to challenge this age old concept that everybody knows.

The Old Testament begins with Genesis 1-1 and ends with Malachi. Everybody knows the New Testament begins with Matthew 1-1 and ends with Revelation 22. Everybody knows that except I don't think that's true at all.

And I'm going to suggest a paradigm that when I first heard, this is what I'm telling you, when I first heard this, I rejected it. And the reason I did was because it was foreign to me.

It did not comport with what I had always believed and what I had always been taught. So I didn't have any problem rejecting it. And here is the concept. Rather than think of the Bible in terms of Old Testament and New Testament, it is far more accurate to think of it in terms of prophecy and mystery.

[29 : 28] Now, right away, that doesn't sit too well with a lot of people because they say, what in the world is he talking about? Prophecy and mystery. And what I am suggesting is that everything in the Bible that refers to Israel as a nation, as that special covenant people, has a connection to prophecy and everything else has a connection to mystery as opposed to prophecy, then who or what is the mystery?

mystery. We are not Jews. We are members of the body of Christ, the spiritual body of Christ, of which he is the head.

And you do not find that concept prophesied or predicted anywhere.

you just don't find it. It isn't there in the Bible anywhere. It is a concept that is seemingly sprung out of nowhere, just boom, there it is, on the scene, not promised, not prophesied, not predicted, just came out of nowhere.

And although we have been there before, let's go there again. Ephesians chapter 3. Because this is exactly what we're talking about. Ephesians chapter 3.

[31 : 14] It's been, I don't know how many months since we've studied this, but this is such a key passage, and I tell you, fellas, I am embarrassed. I mean, I am just flat out embarrassed to have to admit how many times I have read Ephesians 3 and never picked up on this.

It just did not register. I just went right over my head. And along with that is an additional embarrassment that I mentioned earlier about choosing Ephesians 6.19 as my life's verse. And I didn't even understand the verse. That utterance may be given unto me that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of Christ for which I am an ambassador in bonds and so on.

And I never understood that mystery, for years I didn't understand. And here I chose it as my life verse. Let's look at Ephesians 3 and this really puts it together as far as I'm concerned.

For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for you Gentiles. Boy, you need to underline that.

[32 : 27] For you Gentiles. This is the man who was raised up of God to be the apostle to the Gentiles. What apostles did the Gentiles have before?

None. Zero. The Jews had twelve apostles. Gentiles didn't have any. And in chapter 2, Paul makes it very clear what the status of the Gentiles was.

Remember that before you were alienated from God, without God, without hope, in this present world. That was the plight and the position of the Gentiles before this new concept called the mystery is developed.

And it was never revealed. This thing wasn't even hinted at before. And that's one reason why when it came on the scene, it hit like a bombshell, and it was automatically rejected particularly by the Jews.

Particularly by the Jews. Let's read on here. Ephesians 3. Prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if you have heard of the dispensation and what did anybody remember a word that I suggested as being a much clearer word?

[33 : 51] Yeah. Yeah. If we just forget about the dispensation, that scares people. It scares people. They don't understand that word. Why is this dispensationalism anyway? A dispensation is an administration.

An administration. It means a way, a method of doing business, of conducting a household, or conducting a government. It has the idea of individuals in positions of authority to administer law and justice and everything else.

So, this is the new administration, the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me, Paul said, it was given me, Paul, to you-word.

And who is the you-word? It's the Gentiles that's mentioned in verse 1. How's that? by revelation, he, God, made known unto me, Paul, the mystery.

As I wrote afore, in few words, and that's back in chapter 1, whereby when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which, and boy, I want you to get a handle on this, verse 5, which in other ages, what other ages, all the past ages, all the previous ages, was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

[35 : 38] And here it is, here it is, verse 6, that the Gentiles, that the non-Jews should be fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.

That's the mystery. That's the secret. That's the secret. Now, Paul is saying, the essence of this mystery is no longer a demarcation between Jew and Gentile.

And, fellas, if there was anything that distinguished the Jew all throughout the Old Testament, that the Jew took more pride in than anything else, it was his separateness.

It was his being a peculiar, special people, different from all the rest of the nations of the world. And there were several things that distinguished them, but one was their idea of they're just one God, monotheism, and the sacrificial system, and the law of Moses and everything.

All of these things were peculiarly Jewish. And the Gentiles had zero to do with it. I mean zero. You just don't find hardly any Gentiles at all in the Old Testament.

[37 : 00] And those you do find are idolaters and pagans. guys like Naaman, who probably became a believer in the one true God of Israel as a result of Elijah's ministry and the episode in the Jordan River, you know all of that.

But you don't find any real consideration given at all to speak of for the Old Testament believers. They are Jews and the Jew prided himself on that distinctiveness they were separate in every way from the Gentiles.

And now, Paul is coming on the scene and saying, a concept that was never before delivered has put Jew and Gentile on the same plane and made no distinction between them.

For there is no difference for all of sin comes short of the glory of God. This is an amazing concept.

Now it's one that you and I are familiar with. We say, well, of course, who doesn't know that?

But, this transition from exclusively Jewish, which we find in the Old Testament, to now something that includes the Gentiles and makes them equal.

[38 : 20] This is what Paul meant when he said that God has broken down the middle wall of partition that separated Jew from Gentile. this is a whole brand new thing.

Pat? Wouldn't the Spirit be the mystery? The Spirit is the one who revealed all this to man. Without the Spirit, we would have never known the Bible. That's true. The Spirit is the one who inspires the writer to write as he writes.

The Holy Spirit is the one who administers the inspiration of the Scriptures. So, obviously, he's key to it. And we have been given the earnest of the Spirit, too, by the way, as part of our salvation or as our down payment, if you will, the first fruits of the Spirit.

So, well, we just, we haven't scratched the surface, but we have scratched the scratch on the surface. And we'll continue this next week.

And I'll tell you what, I would like to think that you are in for some real enlightenment. And I just trust that you will get from it what I did with the impact that I did, because it completely changed my perspective of how I see things.

[39 : 41] And it had, the end result is, in a way, in a way that never happened before, I have been able to see how so many things in the Bible now fit.

And I couldn't make them fit before. But they fit now. And that's what I want for you. Say, thanks for your input and being here.

We'll continue this next week. Enjoy your breakfast and the day ahead.