

Doctrine Open Forum - Q&A;

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 0 0] A few months ago, a new series, and we introduced it by revealing to you a book that has been published, I think, just about every year for the last 40 or 50 years, something like that.

And it's called A Handbook of Denominations in the United States. And in that particular book, there is a listing of some 250 different denominations, groups, congregations, assemblies, synods, and you name it.

And most of them have been of rather recent origin. And I recall how surprised some of you folks were when we pointed out to you something that is rather historically available information.

And that is just a scant 300 years ago, there were no Methodists. It didn't exist.

There were no Church of God. There were no assemblies of God. There were no Nazarenes. A mere 500 years ago, there were no Lutherans.

[1 : 1 5] There was no Church of England, no Episcopalian. None of those even existed. While it is true, there were small groups of believers, particularly scattered throughout Europe, but most of them were very small in number and relatively insignificant insofar as their influence was concerned.

And principally, for all practical purposes, what there was was the Roman Catholic Church. And those groups that I have just mentioned have all come out of that one parent body that existed centuries before.

The observation was also made that because of all of these different groups, different denominations, etc., It produces a predictable kind of division and lack of cohesion among those groups.

Because each group is convinced that their particular doctrinal positions are correct, and it's all the other folks that are wrong. And what this does, in addition to a number of other things, is that it greatly divides and dilutes the spiritual, emotional impact that Christianity could have and should have if it were united as it is intended to be.

Because all who are truly believers in Jesus Christ, it doesn't make any difference what their background, what their church affiliation or lack thereof, it doesn't make any difference what language they speak, what color they are, what their ethnic background is.

[3 : 0 0] If they are a believer in Jesus Christ, they are already one in Him. They are already members of the spiritual body of Christ, which is the church.

And yet, we are so diverse and so scattered and so protective of our own little bailiwick that the world just kind of stands back and looks at us and wonders, what is it with these people called Christians that they can't get along and they can't agree on their doctrines?

There are so many different groups out there that it's confusing to a world that looks on. What we are supposed to be all about, really, is a unity in Christ.

And we're anything but. So how did all of these differences arise? And I posited at the time, and I still think that it's probably the best answer, is that so many doctrinal positions that divide us were based upon faulty assumptions.

People with good intent, honorable individuals, read the scriptures, arrived at interpretations, often based on a faulty assumption that they made regarding the passage that led to erroneous doctrine.

[4 : 35] But those who came to those erroneous doctrinal conclusions were people of position, influence, well-educated, well-looked up to.

And they took these positions, embraced them, and the common people got on board, adopted them, wrote them into their statements of faith, and they've been there for hundreds of years.

And the division continues. There was some attempt a number of years ago called Evangelicals and Catholics Together, where they tried to get these factions, Protestantism in general and Catholicism together, to discuss the things that they could unite on.

And I remember that Chuck Colson was one of the prime movers behind that, as were a number of other noted evangelicals. But eventually it just kind of petered out and didn't go anywhere because the basic disagreements, and the basic disagreement had to do with the Roman Catholic position versus the Protestant position, as to how justification by faith was obtained.

And there remains a great divide, and it continues on. It has not been resolved, and I suspect it will not be in our lifetime.

[5 : 57] So what we have been attempting to do is to investigate these faulty assumptions and try to select them from Scripture and show you how they were misinterpreted, misunderstood, misapplied, and then adopted by different groups throughout the country.

And we have recently put some of these on a CD back there. I think it's CD volume 41 and 42 that are available now, and they've got a number of the faulty assumptions on them.

If you want to pick up on that, you're welcome to. And by the way, any and all of the CDs that are back there, they're all available free of charge. Anything that's of interest to you, pick them up and take them with our best wishes.

So having said what I did, I'm just going to open it now for Q&A; and you feel free to ask any question or make any comment that you want to make, and we will be glad to entertain that.

And this is your time, so I want you to just have at it. I've got a pair of young legs there with a roving microphone, so let's go. Nathan, you're going to start us off here.

[7 : 22] Hello. Somebody's got to start, all right? As you were making comments, it kind of triggered an experience that I had. I'm sure a lot of us have had Jehovah's Witnesses come to the door.

And years ago, we had some, and we invited them inside and had a discussion. But one of the things that I remember so clearly is I asked, I said, do you Jehovah's Witnesses, do you guys have doctrinal debates that you have within your church?

And very, very seriously, they said, no. We all adhere to the exact same doctrine and everything and the exact same interpretation of the Bible across the board.

And I was a bit shocked. I didn't expect that. But I just want to get your thoughts on this. I think denominationalism, you know, we see as kind of a negative thing. But in some sense, I wonder, you know, at least it shows a positive thing that, you know, unlike maybe how it used to be in the Roman Catholic Church, where you were required to believe a certain thing because the church told you so, rather than going to the Bible yourself and coming to the truth yourself.

Even though we are splintered in so many different ways, at least I think it's a positive thing that the church gives people the freedom to read the Bible for themselves and come to the conclusions.

[8 : 45] Not everybody comes to the right conclusions, obviously. Otherwise, we'd all be in agreement. But I just wanted to get your thoughts on that. Yeah, well, actually, this part of what you're talking about, too, also stems from a faulty assumption.

And that is the assumption or the understanding, the belief that the Word of God is verbally, plenarily inspired by the Spirit of God, and it is therefore without error.

It is inerrant and it is infallible. And that has not been disputed for the most part from the first century on.

But where the faulty assumption comes in is that there were those in positions of religious authority in the first, second, and third centuries in particular, who reasoned this way with what I think was a faulty assumption, that because that is true of the Bible, that's the way we got it.

It also means that, therefore, there is required of necessity an infallible interpretation.

[10 : 05] Well, what does that portend? Well, if you're going to have an infallible interpretation of the Scriptures that were infallibly provided by God, who is the person or persons that's going to have that infallibility so as to be able to interpret it and be absolutely certain that that is the proper and the only interpretation?

Voila! Voila! His Holiness. The Roman Catholic Pope, the councils, the bishops that meet together, that convene, that discuss things like this, then when they reach their conclusion, the conclusion is considered infallible likewise.

This is why, traditionally speaking, why Roman Catholics have never really been encouraged to read the Bible.

In fact, there have been cases, and this lasted sometimes for a long period of time, where the Roman Catholic faithful were even forbidden to read the Bible by the hierarchy.

And I don't know if you are aware of it or not, but William Tyndale was executed by the Roman Catholic Church for having smuggled Bibles in the English language into England in barrels of flour.

[11 : 41] And the faithful were absolutely forbidden to have a copy of the Bible or to read a copy of the Bible. And one of Tyndale's famous comments when he was criticized by one of the cardinals was that, if God wills it, I shall make the plow boy more available to the Word of God than you are.

And, of course, Tyndale succeeded in doing that. So, really what this all boils down to is who has the authority to interpret the Scriptures. And the traditional position taken, actually, by Luther and by others of his ilk around that same time, is that the interpretation of the Scripture is the responsibility and the privilege of the individual.

And that is the principal reason why it became so critical that people have copies of the Word of God and the language that they could read and understand.

So, we each are individually responsible for interpreting the Scriptures. And I know the typical, the layperson feels incompetent, inadequate, untrained, etc., to arrive at any interpretation.

And that is stuff and nonsense. Stuff and nonsense. The average person with the average intelligence is far more capable of reading and understanding the Bible than they think they are.

[13 : 11] But so many are intimidated by it because they know of its source, which makes it kind of overwhelming. And they look at the sheer size of it.

It's, after all, it's a pretty good-sized book. And they can't even pronounce a lot of the names that are in it. And so they just become kind of discouraged and intimidated from the outset and just think themselves incapable of really understanding it.

So they just let it collect dust on the coffee table, much to their hurt. So I do want to make this observation, and I think this is very important to note.

I think for the most part, in the vast majority of instances, those individuals who had these faulty assumptions that led to erroneous doctrine were people of honest intent.

They were people of a right mindset. They were well-intentioned. They were not desirous of corrupting anybody's faith.

[14 : 21] They approached the Scriptures as best they could. And they arrived at some, what we think are very unfortunate conclusions. And I want to add this also.

And I've made this observation that had we, or had I, been living back there when they did, subject to the limitations that they had and the deficiencies that they had to deal with, I probably would not have reached any better conclusions than they did.

They worked under an enormous handicap. But today, we have the benefit. We can stand on the shoulders of thousands of godly individuals who have gone on before, who have shed light on various passages of Scripture that allows us to compare Scripture with Scripture and their findings, etc., and see what squares with what.

And we've got an enormous advantage that they did not have. So I don't judge them too harshly. I think that, like I said, that they labored under a lot of handicaps that we have.

I mean, you can get on your computer, and with a couple of clicks, you can bring up 30 different translations of the Scriptures in the English language. And it's just amazing what's available to us. And these people labored under severe conditions, most of them by daylight or by candlelight.

[15 : 43] And writing materials were expensive and difficult to come by. But anyway, I'm just convinced that we would have fared no better than they.

But we don't... They had some excuses for their handicaps. We don't have any excuses. We don't have any excuses.

We've got the Word of God in so many different translations and renditions, and it's available to us. And you can, crying out loud, you can go to Walmart and buy a Bible for 99 cents.

And so we're without excuse. We're without excuse. Other comments or questions? Up here in the front. Go ahead, Dave, in the back. This is just a comment.

But Miles Coverdale's Rules of Bible Interpretation has really, I think, helped an awful lot. Oh, my. At least, you know, with my Bible reading. I don't think that there is anything that is more valuable.

[16 : 47] And I've often stated, as I do so without equivocation, that next to the Bible itself, next to the Bible itself, I think the most important writing that has ever been given, is, It shall greatly help you to understand Scripture, if thou mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goes before and what follows after.

Miles Coverdale 1535. He gave us the first complete printed English Bible, along with these guidelines for interpreting it.

And as I've often said, if there were only some way that we could get American Christendom, Roman Catholic and Protestant, to look at the Scriptures and interpret the Scriptures in light of this very simple formula, You would be amazed at what could happen overnight.

The Bible, as I've often said, The Bible is its own best interpreter. No mere human being, certainly not this one, is capable of really interpreting Scripture.

This is why we insist on Scripture interpreting Scripture. You compare Scripture with Scripture. It is amazing the connectivity between Revelation and Genesis.

[18 : 30] It's amazing how these things are connected. Everything in the Bible is connected to everything in the Bible. We often don't see the connection, but it doesn't mean that there isn't one.

It's the most marvelous possession that the planet has. There's no question about it. And no mere mortal is capable of interpreting it aright.

And that's why if you just apply Miles Coverdale's rules, beautiful thing. Other comments or questions? Dolly up front here, up this way. He's bringing a microphone.

Matthew 6, the Lord's Prayer. The Catholics stop at the end of that, which is verse 13.

But we Protestants add, For thine is the power and the glory and the kingdom forever. Why do you think we added that? Was it just to differentiate us from Catholics?

[19 : 34] Or what was behind that? I really can't answer that. I don't really know. I do think that it is, and Ms. Newham, by the way, when we're talking about faulty assumptions, there is one right there, I think.

This is commonly labeled all throughout Christendom and Catholicism. It is referred to as the Lord's Prayer. And I don't want to belabor the point, and I know this is ho-hum stuff to grace people, but it is not the Lord's Prayer.

The Lord's Prayer, if you want to know where and what the Lord's Prayer is, the Lord's Prayer is John's Gospel, Chapter 17. Read it. That's the Lord's Prayer.

What we have in Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 6, and there are a lot of churches, by the way, that would not consider themselves as having had a worship service if they don't at least once quote what they refer to as the Lord's Prayer.

And what it is is it is a model prayer for the disciples. And they came to Jesus asking, teach us to pray.

[20 : 43] And Jesus gave them a kind of formula, a pattern that recognized the authority of God and His kingdom and so on. And it included in it a prayer for the coming of the kingdom.

That has been the number one item. ever since the fall took place. Genesis 3 is the fall.

And the number one item following the fall is the restitution of all things, the rectifying of the fall, the healing of the earth, the broken earth, and that is the kingdom of heaven come to earth.

That's the prayer that was included in that model prayer that Jesus gave to His disciples. And which, by the way, has never yet been fulfilled because the kingdom still has not come.

So I can't give you a better answer than that. It's just I think that it is a faulty assumption that has led people to just repeat it ad infinitum without any real scriptural basis for it.

[22 : 00] You'd be surprised how many things in Protestantism and Catholicism that are done just out of tradition. We've always done it this way.

And that's a guiding principle for a lot of Roman Catholics. Of course, they're very big on tradition anyway. But we Protestants, we have our own traditions too. So we shouldn't fault the Catholics too much.

Other comments or questions? Okay, George has one up here. Continuing on with interpretation, I had a friend who we were talking about doctrine and interpretation and specifically the reformers.

And he made the comment that I was less likely to have the right interpretation than this particular reformer because God had used him more. God had obviously used him in a great way.

And so I was wondering, I've been thinking about that since then. We tend to give the benefit of the doubt to the sources that we trust most. And of course, we trust different people.

[23 : 15] So we tend to just default to the trusted source, if you will. And in this case, he trusted the reformer and I did not. So I was wondering, how much should we as Christians, how much should we consider the source at some things that have been believed in Christendom for hundreds or even thousand years, should we take that more seriously before we depart from that?

Because it's easy to be, well, this is what I think, and then I just change on a dime, and maybe we should consider that a little bit more. So I'm just wondering what your thoughts on that as far as when we're convinced something is true, should we consider at all the people that have come before us?

And how do we kind of sort that through? Yeah, well, that's a very good question. The first thing that I would point out by way of observation is that the reformers are very often appealed to as their authority.

And by the way, when the general term, the reformers, is used, it refers almost exclusively to Roman Catholics. We're talking about Luther and Wycliffe and Tyndale.

All of these individuals were priests in the Roman Catholic Church. And why they were called reformers was because they wanted to reform their church, the Catholic Church.

[24 : 40] But because the Roman Catholic Church had always claimed for itself a kind of infallibility, which meant that directions and doctrine that comes down from the top is perfect and cannot be improved upon, then what is it that you're going to reform?

You open yourself to an admission that you've been wrong about something if you're subject to being reformed. And, of course, the Roman Catholic Church had no interest in reforming because they liked things just the way they were.

Thank you. But eventually it became unbearable for those who were going to be labeled as the reformers. And those that did not withdraw from the church were excommunicated or kicked out, and in some cases put to death by the Roman Catholic hierarchy for the heretical positions that they believed them to have held.

So I do not think that doctrinal positions should be changed quickly nor easily. It should be something that is given very careful forethought.

It should be very prayerfully entered into because there are implications from doctrinal positions. The reason, listen, the reason why doctrine is so important is because duty is derived from doctrine.

[26 : 15] People tend to act in accordance with what they believe. Your belief system determines your norms and standards, your agenda and everything else.

That's why it's so very important. And it really irritates me to hear people say things like, doctrine just divides people. I don't have any use for doctrine.

Well, good grief. What a terrible statement. Don't I have any use for doctrine? What are you going to do with the substitutionary death of Christ?

Do you realize that's a doctrine? Doctrine simply means teaching. Teaching. And to say I have no use for doctrine is like saying I put a real premium on ignorance.

That's exactly what they're saying, whether they recognize it or not. So I would agree. Doctrine should not be changed quickly nor easily. And I think we've got a perfect case in point right here.

[27 : 20] When yours truly came into some distinctions that were different from what I had always believed and held.

And actually I didn't even believe and hold until I was 21. But I told some folks that my background is Baptist.

I was saved in a little Baptist church, Main Street Baptist Church in Ellensburg, Washington, December 8, 1956.

And shortly thereafter enrolled in a Baptist institution, Cedarville College. It wasn't a university then.

It was a college. And I was baptized in a Baptist church and joined a Baptist church and became a deacon in a Baptist church. Married in a Baptist church. And if anybody knew the party line for the Baptist church, it was yours truly.

[28 : 19] And I remember when I first started hearing some things that conflicted with that doctrine, I thought, well, that's the craziest thing I ever heard of. That can't be true because the reason I know that that can't be true is because that's not what I've always believed.

How's that for a piece of logic? And, you know, the man that led me to Christ, Harold Sweetland, he's with the Lord now.

He was a church planning missionary from Grand Rapids, Michigan. And he led me to the Lord. And I shall forever be indebted to that man who had the gumption to tell me that he couldn't marry us because I wasn't a believer and Barbara was.

And subsequently he led me to faith in Christ. And when I get to heaven, the first person I'm going to look for is our Lord Jesus Christ.

And the second person I'm going to look for is my beloved wife, Barbara. And the third person I'm going to look for is my little retarded daughter, Dawn Elizabeth.

[29 : 34] And then where is Pastor Sweetland? And you know, when I, for all, well, call it this, I guess you would say, but I made the break, if you will, from the Baptist church when Grace Bible Church started.

It was not an easy thing for me to do because this man was my mentor. I had an emotional attachment to Pastor Sweetland.

And he was my mentor. And he was the one that led me to Christ. And I was concerned that my adopting this new position, if you will, is going to almost look like a betrayal to him.

And is that going to be showing disrespect for him? But I'll tell you what, and I still love the man dearly.

But listen, truth, truth is the most priceless commodity on the planet.

[30 : 43] And the pursuit of it is man's most noble endeavor. And it doesn't make any difference what area of truth you're talking about.

And it's understandable why Jesus Christ referred to himself as the way, the truth, and the life.

And once you come to a position that you are convinced is true, you just go at it full bore.

You just adopt it. You contend for it. You defend it. You propagate it. When you are convinced that what you have is the truth, just because it is true, it deserves propagation.

And that's what the gospel is all about. So, did not reach these conclusions quickly nor easily. And many of you are aware that the baptism issue is just one of many.

[31 : 52] Are you aware that there are 12 baptisms in the Bible? 12 different baptisms in the Bible? And about half of them refer to water.

And the other half have nothing to do with water at all. But it is amazing how many times whenever somebody sees the word baptize, they always think one and the same thing.

And you just get locked into that, you know. Someone else? Maybe more of a comment than anything.

But in many times maybe sitting in conversation with good Christian people and you get into conversation about doctrine of their church.

And many of them don't know what the doctrine of their church is that they attend and they go to every Sunday. Yeah. And it's a strange thing to keep thinking that doctrine is probably the most important thing you ought to know about the church you're going to.

[32 : 57] Absolutely. It does take me back to, I remember when we first started here, so that's back in the day, there was an idiosyncrasies pamphlet. And it gave me a really good idea of what was going on to start with.

And it gave me something to know about what this church is all about. I really enjoyed that. I appreciate that. Thank you. I thought about resurrecting that. And then I thought, I probably shouldn't do that after all.

And I'm not going to be here that much longer. And whoever the new pastor is, he'll have his own ideas. And I shouldn't saddle him with something like that. But I hear what you're saying. You know, most, you're absolutely right.

A lot of Christians that attend a given church know precious little about the doctrine of the church. And for many of them, they don't even care.

They just kind of like the people. They like the socializing. They like the drapes. They like the decor, you know. They like the music or whatnot.

[34 : 01] And it is just amazing how the very most important element of the Christian faith is doctrine.

And yet, for so many, that is so far down the list, it doesn't even make the list. And it's just, it's sad. It is really sad.

Because it is true that doctrine does divide. But doctrine also unites. And doctrine liberates. And doctrine frees us.

You shall know the truth. And the truth shall make you free. Wow. Okay.

Who else has something to say or something to ask? Anyone? The progress of revelation.

[35 : 01] Progressive revelation, I think you call it. Probably was the thing that helped me most. And, you know, the Old Testament, in my mind, is pretty gory stuff in places, you know.

And it just thinks, that don't sound like a loving God to me. But once you get into the Gospels, and then when the risen Lord Jesus Christ got a hold of the Apostle Paul and explained to him a program that had been hidden.

And that mystery is what really cleared things up for me, you know. It's always been about faith. And Abraham, you know, that's what God declared about Abraham.

He believed God, and it was, you know, imputed to him righteousness, a covering, sort of. But when the cross happened, that just changed everything for me. And I also wanted to know, the Apostle Paul, it seems like his message must have died out pretty quick after his death, wouldn't you say?

Oh, no. No, I don't think so. Well, did he get lost with the Catholics and all that? Well, there's no question that it has certainly got submerged.

[36 : 18] And you bring up a very telling point that does need to be addressed a little bit further. And that is, let's see, how shall I couch this?

Well, I'll just give you a quote that I heard a Jewish rabbi make. And I think it was Rabbi Botiach, as he was debating with Raymond Brown.

And Raymond Brown was Jewish also, but he was a believer who had come to faith in Christ. And Rabbi Botiach made the statement, we Jews really don't have that much of a problem at all with Jesus.

What we really have a problem with is the Apostle Paul. And I thought that Michael Brown was going to take off on that as far as I'm concerned.

He missed his golden opportunity because he really, Botiach really has a problem with both. And I can easily understand how a lot of people are turned off by the Apostle Paul because they see him as a kind of competitor with Jesus.

[38 : 00] And I've even heard some say, Well, you can have your Paul. Just give me Jesus. Doesn't that really sound good? Well, absolutely.

If you're talking about the relative value of these individuals, I mean, after all, one of them is deity, is God in the flesh. And the other is a human being like us.

And there is absolutely no contest at all between these two. They are separated by infinity. But what is so often not understood is that when Jesus gave those famous marching orders, at the end of each of the Gospels, and also in Acts chapter 1, about their being endued with power, and there will be witnesses, Judea, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost parts of the earth, etc.

Go ye therefore into all the world and make disciples. This is generally, across the board, looked upon as our Lord's final marching orders.

And this is what most of the church sets about to try to accomplish. And we call that the Great Commission. The Bible never calls it that.

[39 : 26] That's a label that we have put on it. The Great Commission. And the statement that I've made in the past is that any and every commission that Jesus Christ ever gave is a great commission.

Just because He gave it. That makes it great. But that was not our Lord's final word. And for the like of me, I just can't understand, I just can't understand why more Christians don't see this.

And then I was reminded, well, Marv, you didn't see it either. Don't fault them for their blindness. You were blind too.

You didn't see it either. You were in Christ a full 12 to 14 years before you ever came to understand this precious truth. And let's go, well, I don't want to cut off your questions, but I do want you to look at this.

2 Corinthians chapter 5. This is a very, very key passage. And frankly, this passage contains what I call an updated commission.

[40 : 40] This is a later commission than what was given at the close of the Gospels and in the book of Acts. This is the most recent commission and it was given to Paul to give to us.

And this is the commission that is still in force today. Now, by the way, it should be noted that this commission is also going to become passe because there will be a new message that will be delivered during the 70th week of Daniel when this Gospel of the Grace of God will be set aside as we know it today.

It will be superseded by another message in the same way that the grace message superseded the kingdom message. And if you will look at 2 Corinthians chapter 5, let's just jump in with verse 16.

Therefore, from now on, now wait a minute, from when on? When does this now start?

Well, if you look at the context, like Miles Coverdale suggests, verse 15 talks about Christ having died for all.

[41 : 54] And what he is doing here, what Paul is doing, is using the death of Christ as a reference point for this new information that is going to be given.

Because here is the contrast that he is going to establish. There is the Jesus Christ before the cross, and there is Jesus Christ after the cross.

And what you need to understand is this. Jesus Christ before the cross never saved anybody. He never redeemed anybody.

It was the cross that was the focal point. What Paul is saying here is that it was the cross that changed everything.

There was a Jesus that men knew before the cross. And this is what he is saying here. Verse 16, Therefore, from now on, we recognize no man, not just Jesus, but no man, that is, everybody is seen with different eyes because of the difference that Christ makes.

[43 : 14] We recognize no man according to the flesh, even though we have known Christ according to the flesh. That's when he lived among us for those three, three and a half years as one of us.

God incarnated. But prior to the cross and prior to redemption, he was just viewed as a human being who walked among men.

And that's what he means when he says, we've known Christ according to the flesh. Yet now, we know him thus no longer. What does that mean? It means he's in a different role now, altogether.

And the difference is crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, glorification. Those are the big ticket items.

It is knowing Christ after the cross. It is the ascended Christ. And when he ascended and called the apostle Paul by his grace, called Saul of Tarsus, by his grace, he gave him a new commission.

[44 : 32] Brand new commission. It was never given before. What was the essence of it? The essence of it was Jew and Gentile together, one body.

what? Are you kidding me? That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. If you limit yourself to the four gospels, the four gospels are as Jewish as they can be.

And the only time you find any non-Jews involved, it's strictly incidental, beside the point, they're just there.

They just surface and pop up, but there is no real consideration given to them at all. But now, this risen Christ, ascended Christ, has got an updated version to give, and he gives it to the apostle Paul, whom he has raised up to be the apostle to the Gentiles, and he's also going to preach to the Jews, and he's going to preach to royalty.

In other words, what is going to be the apostle Paul's parish? The world! Everybody! Jew, Gentile, everyone!

[45 : 59] Well, that wasn't the case with the twelve. Go not into the way of the Gentiles, neither go to the Samaritans, confine your ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Don't you see something different there? Isn't there some kind of a radical update? Those of you who are computer buffs, and I'm certainly not one of them, but I do know what an update is, and every now and then you get a message from Microsoft or whatever saying, we have provided a new update for you for thus and so.

And I say, oh, okay, you know, that's fine with me. But what it is, it's supposed to be new information and improvement as opposed to what went before.

Now, here's the thing. This is why people sometimes miss the boat on this. Instead of seeing there being two different legitimate messages, both legitimate for its time, some insist on putting them at loggerheads and seeing a contradiction.

There isn't any contradiction. There's a complementation there. There is an update. The gospel of the kingdom that was limited exclusively to the Jewish people, and I can't go into the reasons for that, but we've dealt with it before, that was limited to the Jewish people was the appropriate right gospel for that time.

[47 : 37] But it was through the unbelief and perpetual rejection of the nation of Israel to the message of Jesus being the king, the Messiah, who was prepared to bring the kingdom.

It was, that message was the message at the time. That was the legitimate message. But it was because of the rejection of Israel that took place over a period of time because the offer continued to be made.

It was made by Peter in Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost. He was telling the Jewish people in an exclusively Jewish audience in the Jewish temple that you crucified the Messiah, but God is still holding out the opportunity for you if you will repent, God will get this program underway.

And there were 3,000 who did repent. And that, by the way, is confusing because people think that that's the beginning of the church and it's off and running.

No, no, no, no, no. That was the beginning. That was a minority of the Jews who were present that embraced Peter's message and the religious establishment continued in a rejection mode.

[49 : 06] And in chapter 4, after Peter has delivered that message again, in chapter 3, the persecution begins. And it is Jew persecuting Jew.

and this kingdom that Christ came to provide is being rejected by Israel along with the king. And that rejection became Israel's final answer and then God did something that nobody could ever have imagined because the Old Testament doesn't prophesy it, doesn't predict it, doesn't promise it, nothing about it, not even a hint.

and it is God as much as says, okay, Israel, you've rejected the message, now what I'm going to do is I'm going to take Jews and Gentiles together who believe and put them together in one brand new entity called the church which is the body of Christ.

And it's made up of Jews who believe and Gentiles who believe. And this is a whole new thing. You and I have no idea how unheard of this concept is because the Jew had distinguished himself primarily through separation from the Gentiles for centuries and now God is putting them together, one new man, so that there is no longer Jew nor Gentile and he broke down the gender barrier, male and female, and he broke down the ethnic barrier, Jew and Gentile.

It's just an amazing thing. And this is the message. But what is so unnerving today and what keeps the church of Christ so divided is that people want to take their message and their preaching and their teaching from the Gospels because that's where Jesus is.

[51 : 15] Listen, there isn't any place in this book where Jesus isn't. We do a disservice to the cause of Christ when we insist on dealing with the Jesus before the cross because it was the cross that changed everything.

You've got to get on this side of the cross. And when you do, you have a glorified risen Christ with a new commission for Jew and Gentile.

And the emphasis is away from the purely physical into the spiritual. Whereby physical circumcision, I mean, how important was that to the Jew?

Well, if you were a male Jew and you weren't circumcised, you were not a Jew. That's how important it was. And yet, when Paul writes to the Colossians, he talks about a circumcision made without hands.

What is that? That's a spiritual circumcision. That's the circumcision of the heart. And it doesn't have anything to do with a scalpel cutting away anything like you'd cut away the foreskin of the male penis.

[52 : 33] this is a spiritual thing. And then he's talking about a spiritual baptism. When the apostle Paul said, Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.

And the interpretation that so many of my Baptist friends that I gave myself, you know, this was my defense back in the days when I was a staunch Baptist. Well, when Paul said that he wasn't sent to baptize, he was just sent to preach the gospel, he was just emphasizing that the wine is the really important thing and that the baptism is not that important.

But now wait a minute, wait a minute. When Jesus sent the twelve forth to go to Israel, could they say, well, Jesus didn't send us to baptize, he just sent us to preach the gospel?

No, no. Listen, when Jesus sent the twelve forth, water baptism was part of the message. And they dare not deny that message.

They included it. But when Paul says, Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel. And then in 1 Corinthians 12, he says, for by one spirit.

[53 : 54] Now, here's the spirit thing again, as opposed to the physical. H₂O is as physical as you can get. But by one spirit, are we all baptized into one body?

There's not a drop of H₂O in that. Whether we be bond or free, male or female, we are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

So, the physical circumcision gives way to spiritual circumcision. The physical water baptism gives way to spirit baptism. And the emphasis is not on walking by sight.

That's what Israel did for their whole history. They walked by sight. This is why Paul said, the Jews require a sign.

And the reason they did was because God conditioned them to respond to signs. He gave them one sign after another, starting with coming out of Egypt and the plagues and everything, all of that stuff.

[55 : 00] But when he writes to the Corinthians, he's saying, we walk by faith, not by sight. We don't have to have signs.

We don't have to have miracles. All we need is to know what God has said and act on that. That's it. That's it. That's walking by faith as opposed by sight. You just take God at his word.

You don't need a miracle. You don't need a physical demonstration of this and that. When Jesus confronted doubting Thomas, remember, and he said, Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed.

Blessed are they who having not seen, yet shall believe. That's you. That's me. I haven't seen Jesus, but I believe, and we take it by faith, not by sight.

So, well, I'm not finished, but I quit. thank you for all of your contributions, and there is so very much more that I would like to say.

[56 : 12] And we'll be talking more about this in the future. And avail yourself of the CDs back there if you are at all interested. said, and by the way, on your way out in the literature rack, there's some new items there for literature, but there is one there written by a pastor, Don Fromer.

I remember meeting this gentleman once in Tip City probably 20, 25 years ago. He's with the Lord now, but he has written an outstanding, outstanding brief article that addresses the issue that we grace people are often accused of.

And the article is entitled, Do We Exalt Paul? I hope you'll get a copy of that. Send the tract rack back there and take it and give it serious consideration because, no, we don't exalt Paul, but I'll tell you what we do.

We exalt Paul's message, the risen glorified Christ, imparting life to all who will believe on the basis of grace through faith plus nothing.

Paul more carefully, definitively describes Jesus Christ and his work of redemption than anyone else in the Bible.

[57 : 32] And the reason he does is because he was given an abundance of revelations that enabled him to do that. And this thing just goes on and on. What we're talking about has no bottom to it, but we've got to get out of here.

So would you stand please? Father, we recognize that we've just barely touched on so many important things and yet in such a superficial way.

And it just overwhelms us to understand that there is such a vast, vast body of truth that is available to us and how little we have penetrated it.

And we simply trust that what we have learned this morning will spur us on to further and more serious investigation. Thank you most of all for the wonderful grace that you extend toward us and we recognize that it has all come about because of that blessed one who hung on that cross, that he who knew no sin was made to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Can't begin to fathom that love but we revel in it, we rejoice in it, we thank you for it in Christ's name. Amen.