

Mystery2

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[0 : 00] If you happen to have looked in the bulletin, the message this morning is mystery and its content.

For scripture, I would like you to turn to Paul's letter to the Colossians. And in Colossians, we'll be taking a look at chapter 1, verses 1 through 12.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God and Timothy, our brother.

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae. Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you. Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints.

[1 : 19] Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel.

Which has come to you, just as in all the world, also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing.

Even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth.

Just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bondservant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf.

And he also informed us of your love in the Spirit. For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you.

[2 : 22] And to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. So that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Amen. Strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience.

Joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Amen. Well, this passage certainly brings back a lot of memories in light of where we have been as a church for the last 50 years.

Because I well remember having read and looking over this particular passage, as well as a related passage in Ephesians chapter 3.

[3 : 45] And thinking at least to some degree, that I understood them. Only to discover to my embarrassment that I did not.

And ever since I have discovered my lack of understanding of these truths that we are considering, called the prophecy and the mystery. I have labored in one way or another to try and accomplish to the best of my ability, which I'm sure at times was flagging.

That admonition that Paul gave that his desire was to make all men see and understand the mystery. And when you talk to most folks about the mystery, the only response that you get from them is, yeah, it sure is a mystery to me.

Now, the Bible talks about a lot of different mysteries, about a dozen, in fact. But we want to focus in and zero in on just one particular that has to do with the vital concerns of the church today.

Looking back over this, as Marie and I often have over the past few years, especially in the years that we've been married.

[5 : 15] We remember how it was in the beginning and how we had a number of decisions to make as to what kind of a church Grace Bible Church was going to be.

Because we had met for approximately a year at Roosevelt Junior High School, which is no longer there. It's been replaced by new and modern buildings and businesses and so on.

But we had about a hundred people, something like that. And we decided that we did not know whether or not we were actually supposed to become a church.

We didn't want to run ahead of God and send out the signals and, yes, we're going to be a church and all the rest of it. And just assume that that's what God wanted. And as we looked over the yellow pages of the telephone book, which was, by the way, even that was a lot more understandable 50 years ago.

We noted that there were something like 120 churches plus in the Springfield area. Are we really justified in just making it 121?

[6 : 34] If we are not going to offer something different that other churches are not going to offer, can we really justify our existence? And is it a wise thing for us to begin another church?

Maybe we ought to just all kind of break up, peel off, and everybody just join something else, existing churches that are out there.

And we discussed that, but it did seemingly did not appeal to anyone. And we were convinced that if we were going to be a church, in all truth and honesty, we really ought to be able to offer the community something that they can't get somewhere else.

What will that be? Well, most of us, although not all of us, but most of us had our background in the Baptist church, in the Baptist denomination.

And as I've related to you here before, I shall forever be indebted to the Baptist brethren. Because I was led to Christ in a little Baptist church by a Baptist preacher.

[7 : 48] And after I see the Lord, and after I see Barbara, my first wife, I'm going to look for the man who led me to faith in Christ.

And that completely changed everything. December 8, 1956.

So when my wife and I, Barbara at the time, decided to come back to Springfield, Ohio, we were going to, or I was going to attend college at Wittenberg University.

I'd already made plans and had been accepted. And I was going to spend two years at Wittenberg and then transfer to Case Western Reserve in Cleveland and major in criminology.

I just had a real deep interest in that. But when Christ comes in and takes control of the life, a lot of things are changed, as we'll see in the life of the Apostle Paul.

[9 : 05] So to make a long story short, I crammed my four years at Cedarville into five years. Being married and having a couple of children at the time kind of made it a little longer.

But they were wonderful years. And as I mentioned, I am deeply, deeply indebted to the Baptist Brethren for my foundation and for Cedarville College, which at the time was just a small, small percentage of what it is now.

So I have some very fond memories there. But when Grace Bible Church started, we decided that we were going to organize. We had come, like I said, we had come from a Baptist church where I had been a deacon for a number of years and was ordained a Baptist minister.

And I think a lot of people just kind of assumed that we were going to be another Baptist church. Well, there are already several Baptist churches in Springfield.

Do we need another Baptist church? And at the time, Joe Stoll, who later was the president of Moody Bible Institute for several years, was the first pastor of Southgate Baptist Church.

[10 : 23] And he and I had become good friends and we visited and fellowshiped a number of times. And as things progressed at our beginning, we decided that we had to settle an issue that not everybody was really settled on and it was quite controversial and it had to do with water baptism.

Well, being indoctrinated as the Baptist that I was, I had no problem at the time with the party line.

That baptism was not for salvation, but it certainly was necessary to express your obedience to the Lord. And the implication was, if you were not water baptized, and not just anyway, but it had to be immersion all the way backwards.

If you were not immersed, then you were really not obedient to the Lord. But I had some problems with that because I knew some very godly men who were Presbyterians.

And they sprinkled. So were these men disobedient to the Lord? Because some of them had great ministries and lots of results.

[11 : 40] And other things like that were plaguing us. So we decided that what we need to do is to really settle this issue because we can't organize as a church and we can't draw up a statement of faith if we don't know what our faith is.

So we've got to settle this. And we decided that we were going to hold a symposium. We didn't want to call it a debate.

We wanted to call it a symposium where we would have people present their view regarding baptism. And then after we had heard all of this input, the congregation would meet and vote on what we were going to do.

And it seemed like a pretty good thing to do at the time. So we scheduled a time. And this was in 1971. Wasn't it?

Yeah. Thank you, Marie. 1971. And we rented the facility and we set aside three hours in the morning, three hours in the afternoon, and three hours in the evening.

[12 : 50] And we called those whom we believe could represent their particular view. And we called Dr. James T. Jeremiah, who at the time was the president.

He's David Jeremiah's father. And at the time, he was the president of Cedarville. And I wanted somebody who could present the very best possible case for the Baptist position and baptism by immersion.

And I said, we would like to invite you to come up to Springfield and present and take this day and present the case, the Baptist case for water baptism. He said, well, thank you for the invitation, but I wouldn't be interested in doing that.

And I said, oh, really? Why not? And he said, well, I just I just wouldn't want to get involved. And I said, well, OK, OK, that's that's that's fine.

Would you recommend then someone on the faculty, maybe preferably from the Greek department, someone who could really present a good, solid case for water baptism?

[13 : 57] Because at the time, I wasn't all that certain myself. And he said, well, I wouldn't be able to come and I would not give permission to anyone else to come. And I said, really?

He said, no, we just don't want the school involved at all. I said, well, OK, good. Could you could you give me the names then of some Baptist ministers who are not connected with the school that you feel would do the best job presenting the case for the Baptist position, water baptism?

And he said, yes, I can do that. I can give you some names. And he gave me he gave me, I think, seven or eight names, different names of pastors. And the first one that was on the list was Warren Wiersbe.

And Dr. Wiersbe had been at the time he was the pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Covington, Kentucky at the time.

And great expositor of the word has written a lot of books. I benefited a lot from his ministry and I really enjoyed his teaching. And I told him what we wanted to do.

[15 : 17] And he said, well, who else is going to be there? And I'd already made a couple of other calls. I was frankly, I was having trouble lining up some Baptists. But I wasn't having any problem in getting Art Crawford to come over.

And Art Crawford pastored a church, Riverside Bible Church in Columbus, Ohio. And he was he was what we call an optional guy.

If you want to be water baptized, I'll baptize you. And if you don't want to be, then that's OK. As long as you do not connect salvation with the water baptism, I'd be OK with that.

So he was going to present the optional position. It's up to the individual. If you want to be water baptized, fine. If you don't, that's fine, too. And then we called Mr. C.R. Stamm in Chicago, who took the position that water baptism was not for this age anymore than circumcision was not for this age.

They both belong to the Jewish economy. And when I first heard that, that was one of the strangest things I'd ever heard. But anyway, he was going to come and present that position.

[16 : 33] And when I talked to Dr. Wiersbe, he said, who else is coming? I told him about Art Crawford. I told him about Cornelius Stamm. And there was a long pause on the other end of the line. And I said, do you know Cornelius Stamm?

Oh, yes. I know Neil Stamm. And I'm afraid I wouldn't be able to make it. I said, well, OK.

Well, I called seven or eight Baptist pastors before I could find one who was willing to come.

And I said, this is going to be a very friendly thing. You know, we'll pay all your expenses, give you an honorarium. I think it would be very stimulating spiritually and very interesting.

We finally found one who would come. And his name was Pastor Glenn Davis. He was a missionary church planter. And he agreed to come. So we held the symposium.

[17 : 33] And all three of the men made their positions known. And the people were able to ask questions of all of them. And it was a fantastic day. Wonderful spirit prevailed.

Nobody was angry with anybody. There wasn't any name calling. It was just very, it was just, I'm sure it was pleasing to the Lord because of the atmosphere and the collegiality and just the general tenor and atmosphere and everything was just great.

But there was just one problem. And that is Mr. Stamm completely decimated the arguments of the others.

But he did so very kindly, very nicely, very gentlemanly. But he just left them without a leg to stand on.

And when it came time for the church to decide which way we were going to go, it was pretty much no contest. There were a couple of people who were dissatisfied with the position that we took.

[18 : 40] And they left our fellowship and they went, understandably, which was their freedom to do, went and joined a local Baptist church, which was all well and good.

I did notice that even though I had been invited as a chapel speaker at Cedarville on different occasions, when we announced that Grace was going to be a Bible church and not a Baptist church, there were no more invitations to chapel.

That was the end of that. And I still could go down to the bookstore and browse around, talk to the brethren, and everybody said, hi, hello, how you doing? But it wasn't the same. It wasn't the same.

Because I had kicked over the traces and, you know, well, anyway. So, what does this have to do with what we're talking about today?

Just everything. Everything. Because as a result of that investigation, and as a result of looking further into the issue, and a lot of independent study, and a lot of insight provided by Marie's first husband, Dave, whom most of you probably know, Dave Weinbrenner, a salt-of-the-earth guy, if ever there was one, we just came to the conclusion that what I had been teaching and believing for a long time just did not hold water.

[20 : 18] No pun intended. But it didn't hold water. And I'll never forget my first wife, Barb, saying, I don't know about all this change.

And I said, what do you mean? She said, well, I was born into a Roman Catholic family and baptized as a baby. Then my mom later came to know the Lord and joined the local Presbyterian church there in town.

And I was sprinkled as a Presbyterian. We went to Blessed Hope Baptist Church and I was immersed as a Baptist. Now I come to Grace Bible Church and I'm dry-cleaned.

I said, well, that's just the way it is. So anyway, what I've been sharing with you is just one of many of the kind of consequences that come just from one thing.

And that is the interpretation that you put upon the Word of God. And one of the things I've been pursuing in the series of Christianity Clarified is the fact that, and the reason I call it Christianity Clarified is because there are so many voices out there claiming to be Christianity Clarified, claiming to be the truth.

[21 : 46] And then that reality almost made me despair of it and I thought, so who are you to say that your Christianity Clarified is going to be the real one?

Isn't that what they all believe? And I thought, yeah, that's true. That is what they all believe. But you know, what else can I do? So that's what we call it, Christianity Clarified.

People can listen to it. They can believe it or not believe it. And that's the way it is. But the reason that I'm doing this is I am convinced, and I remain even more convinced now, that the adversary, and I know this may sound really far-fetched to you, and it may sound, has Barb gone off the deep end or what, but I am absolutely persuaded, 100%, make that 120%, that the adversary, Satan himself, is deeply involved in the affairs of men and nations, and make no mistake about it, when the Apostle Paul said that Satan is a deceiver, that he has blinded the minds, the thinking processes of people.

He has blinded the minds of those who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, which is the image of God, should shine unto them. And Satan's methodology, among others, is divide and conquer.

And he has got the body of Christ, true believers in Jesus Christ, some of whom are Baptists, some of whom are Methodists, some of whom are Presbyterians, some of whom are Nazareth.

[23 : 33] Well, you get the point. They're all over the place. Because being in a certain denomination doesn't make you a believer in Jesus Christ. You understand. I think you've been here long enough to understand that.

But nonetheless, there is division. And there is another really larger division, and that is a division between Catholic and Protestant, both of which claim to be Christian.

The world looks at these so-called Christians and sees everything but unity, sees all kinds of division, sees all kinds of wranglings and arguing and disputing and whatnot among them.

But frankly, they're not impressed. And I can't say that I would blame them. So Satan does deceive. He does divide. He does conquer. He is about this 24-7 in ways that we don't even understand.

And I'm convinced that one of them is to get people confused and misunderstand the Word of God so that they reach wrong conclusions. But the thing is actually enhanced as to its seriousness because almost all of the wrong conclusions that people reach about these things, they reach them in good faith.

[25 : 03] They really believe what they believe. Now, that's important. But it's no guarantee for truth. And when you take all of the denominations that are out there, not just in the Protestant circles that came out of the Reformation, but including Roman Catholic, what makes Roman Catholics different from Protestants?

And the answer is very simple. It's all in how they interpret the Scriptures as opposed to how Protestants interpret the Scriptures. And there became a big row between them, as you realize, in the 1500s with Martin Luther and what began as the Reformation.

So how did all of these things come about? How did Roman Catholics become Roman Catholics? And they claim to be justified by faith.

Well, what's wrong with that? We claim that we are justified by faith as well. And they say, so are we. And when you examine things a little more deeply, what you discover is how do you come to faith?

How do you come to justification? If we are justified, if we are saved by grace, exactly how does that work? And if you are a Roman Catholic, they will be very quick to tell you, at least they should, that they believe you are saved by grace.

[26 : 32] Well, that sounds like we're on the same page. Then you ask them, what do you mean by grace? And they will tell you that grace is administered through the sacraments.

Through baptism, through communion, through holy orders, through confession. The way you receive God's grace is by partaking of those sacraments.

If you do not partake of the sacraments, you do not receive grace. You are lost. Well, then, where do you get those sacraments?

You get them in the church, which is the only place that has them. And they are administered by the priest, who is the only one who can administer them. And I just want to inject something here for your consideration, because this will be brought out later, but there is a very distinct and obvious carryover from Judaism into Roman Catholicism with the establishment of the priests, with the sacrificial system, where they do not sacrifice animals, but they have what they call the sacrifice of the mass, which is the unbloody sacrifice of Christ.

And a number of things are brought right over from Judaism into Romanism. And many of those things, Luther in the 1500s left behind, but he also brought many of them with him, one of which was infant baptism.

[28 : 18] Are you aware that many of the Roman Catholics and many others who are of that persuasion or close to it believe that the baptism of the baby in the Roman Catholic Church takes the place of circumcision of the baby?

Now, that was news to me until I just researched that, but that's what some of them adhere to. And they do so in absolute good faith because their concern is for that precious little baby who might remain forever in eternity in limbo, unable to go to heaven because was not baptized as a baby in the church.

So these are things that divide believers in the body of Christ. And in the Roman Catholic Church, in the Roman Catholic Church today, there are a great many people who are firm, solid believers in Jesus Christ, and you're going to see them in heaven.

And as I've often said, when we get to heaven, we're all going to get straightened out. And all of us need straightening out. Some of us need more straightening out than others, but we all need some straightening.

Nobody, everybody has flaws in their theology. We all have kinks in our doctrine. And we're supposed to be looking for them so we can get rid of them. So there are multitudes of people in the Roman Catholic Church who are solid believers in Jesus Christ despite the teachings of their church.

[29 : 59] But it is a kind of emotional loyalty that holds them there in many cases. And of course, we know that there are multitudes of people in Protestant churches whose name is on the roll who do not have a relationship with Christ at all.

They just have a relationship with the church. And all you can call it is churchianity. There are Methodists and Presbyterians and Baptists and congregations are divided.

And we don't know. We don't have any way of knowing which one is a true believer and which one is not, but I can assure you the Lord knows. So nobody is a believer because they're a Baptist or a Presbyterian or Catholic or whatever.

We are a believer based on our personal relationship with Jesus Christ who died for our sins. And it doesn't make any difference what other handle you put on it. That's the bottom line.

That's the thing that unites us into this one body. And you can be wrong about a whole lot of things. But if you are wrong about Jesus Christ, who He is, why He came, what He did, and why it matters, if you're wrong about that, you're in deep, deep trouble.

[31 : 12] So this issue that we are talking about now is one that we began just recently, the first of the year. We just had our second session this morning at the nine o'clock hour.

And it is devoted to the subject of prophecy. And what we mean by prophecy, and this subject is going to be devoted to mystery.

That is the counterpart. There are these two great themes that are found in Scripture, and they are absolutely distinct. They are separate one from the other.

But the tendency of most Christians, including myself, for the first 12 or 14 years after I became a believer, was to somehow make these things fit.

And in order to make them fit, well, forget that, because they never do fit. But in order to make them, to try to make them fit, you've got to fudge here and squeeze there, push here and pull there, overlook this and overlook that.

[32 : 27] Because if you don't, you're going to have all kind of contradictions. And that's very uncomfortable. So it is only in my estimation, and you will have to decide whether you agree or not once we go through this, and it's going to take a while, we're not going to be through this by March.

Maybe not March of next year. But my burden is, my burden is for what the Apostle Paul said, meant when he said that his goal, his objective was to make all men see and understand this thing called the mystery.

And at the nine o'clock hour, I made some distinctions, and I'm going to do the same, and you're going to get some repetition in this, and I am not apologizing for the repetition, and I'll tell you why.

Because the importance of the material not only requires repetition, it demands it. And not only that, but repetition is the mother of learning.

So I'm going to be repetitive, but not by lack of design, because that is by design. And I want you to see how these things will not square with each other, because they are not supposed to square.

[33 : 59] They are different, which is exactly what I think Paul was talking about when he wrote to young Timothy. And by the way, he wrote this to Timothy, imploring him to exercise diligence.

The word in King James is study. And that's not a good translation, really, study. Think of one thing. But what he's saying is exercise diligence, care.

Really apply yourself seriously to being a workman for God that does not need to be ashamed or embarrassed by what you teach.

Rightly dividing the word of truth. Now, the word of truth is the Bible. But when he talks about dividing it, what does that mean?

Some say, well, it just means you've got an Old Testament and you've got a New Testament, and they are divided, and you've got to keep the old and the old and the new and the new. Well, partly, partly.

[35 : 11] But here's the problem. Here's the problem. That. Now, what I'm going to say, when you hear it, you're going to say, I know Marv didn't mean to say that because that's not right.

So let me give you a heads up. Yes, I did mean to say that. And that is, the four Gospels, the four Gospels belong to the Old Testament.

Amen. What? Yeah. They belong to the Old Testament. Then the next question is, well, why aren't they there then?

And the reason they aren't there, the reason that they're not where they belong is because when the Old Testament was completed, there was no further word from God for 400 years.

Four centuries past. 400 years since Malachi laid down his pen and closed out the Old Testament.

[36 : 30] Now, to buttress what I've said, let me ask you this. When you open your Bible and see that Matthew is supposedly clearly printed on the page, the New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ begins with Matthew, ends with Revelation.

Old Testament begins with Genesis and ends with Malachi. And if what I am saying is true, why is it the way it is?

And the answer is, when you go for 400 years without receiving anything new added to that, you kind of get the impression, and I think the Jews, understandably, got the impression that that was it.

That was the end of the revelation of God. And do you think that that was reached in good faith?

Of course it was. Do you think they really believed that? Sure they did. Did they have any valid reason for believing it? Of course they did. No further word for 400 years, it would just seem that that's the end of it.

[37 : 49] That's the whole of the revelation. And you know, to this day, to this day, our Jewish friends accept only the Old Testament as the Word of God.

And we try to tell them, but don't you understand the New Testament is also the Word of God? No, they just do not accept that. They don't believe that.

They believe that the Old Testament consists of the law the writings and the prophets. Those three categories comprise the Old Testament and that that is the entirety of the Bible.

Our New Testament, which Christians embrace, they do not consider to be the Word of God at all. You cannot take it as truth like you tend to the Old Testament.

So, we try to reason with them. We say, but don't you understand that when you make Malachi, the Old Testament, to be the end of the whole Bible, you don't have any closure, you don't have any end game, you don't have any finality.

[39 : 09] Malachi just leaves everything dangling in thin air. There's no resolution. And somehow, they are able to get beyond that and that does not move them.

So, after 400 years, John the Baptist showed up in the wilderness preaching, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand and every Jew got so excited he couldn't hardly stand it because that was the indication that God was going to finish what he began and that John is announcing Israel's Messiah.

So, when he came on the scene and John introduced Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, Jesus began functioning and the question now that needs to be addressed is this, did Jesus function and operate under the Old Testament or the New?

And most would say, quite simply, well, that's a ridiculous question. He was living in and operating under the New Testament and right here it says that Matthew is the beginning of the New Testament and this is where Jesus is in the Gospels and Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and especially in the red letters that's where Jesus is and that's the New Testament.

We know that for sure. Well, I don't know who it is but some philosopher said one time I'd rather know a few things for certain than a whole lot of things that aren't so and sometimes we tend to put our emphasis on some things that aren't so.

[40 : 43] Jesus kept the Sabbath. Now, let me qualify something. Jesus violated the Pharisees' interpretation of the Sabbath a number of times but he never kept the Sabbath in the way that they wanted him to.

He kept the Sabbath in accordance with the spirit with which it was given. Remember when he healed the man with the palsied arm and Jesus said stretch forth your hand and Jesus healed his hand and they said you shouldn't be doing that on the Sabbath.

and Jesus said let me ask you a question. Which one of you has a poor dumb animal that falls into a ditch on the Sabbath?

And wouldn't you go and do everything you could to get that animal out and to enlist your friends to help you to get that poor animal out of that ditch on the Sabbath day? And yet you fault me for ministering to this one with the withered arm on the Sabbath.

He put everything in perspective and of course that's one reason they hated him is because he just spoke the truth and he showed them up at every turn of events. Jesus lived and functioned and operated under the old covenant not the new.

[42 : 08] And it wasn't until the end of the Gospels right before Jesus was betrayed and crucified that he made the statement at the last supper or the Lord's supper when he took the cup and said this cup is the new covenant in my blood.

The disciples didn't have a clue as to what he was really talking about. He was going to initiate the new covenant on the cross.

It would be his death on the cross that would be the basis for initiating that new covenant because it was with the blood of animals that Moses solidified or sanctified or ratified the old covenant when he came down from the mount.

He took the blood of animals and he sprinkled it on the tablets of the law and he sprinkled the animal blood on the people of Israel and that was the binding element of the covenant.

That was God and the people both signing on to the covenant and agreeing to its terms. That stabilized everything.

[43 : 37] Today we don't do anything like that of course. What we do is we draw a line on the bottom and then we put our signature and we sign it in ink or whatever and you put your name on it and that's how we sign contracts today.

We don't use animal blood. We just use a ballpoint pen and we write our name and that ratifies the thing. But this is the way they did it back then. So when Jesus said this cup represents or will be the new covenant covenant in my blood.

And the writer of Hebrews reminds us that it is not by the blood of bulls and goats that take away sin but this man by his own blood after he entered into the holy place once for all.

That was Jesus on the cross. He was providing his blood, his death, to be the basis for ratifying that new covenant. Now, here's the problem and there is a problem.

The covenant needs to be ratified by the other party. Who was the other party? That was Israel.

[44 : 49] Who was the party in the first covenant? Israel. And they signed on to it. But they didn't keep it. Remember? Jeremiah 31, 31.

Jeremiah tells the people that the days are coming when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with them, which they broke.

That was the old covenant. That was the old covenant that Moses ratified with the animal blood. But this new covenant needs to be ratified also.

who is going to sign on? That will be Israel. What do you think Peter was preaching about and what was he doing on the day of Pentecost when he told the people that they needed to repent and believe on Jesus and his resurrection from the dead?

And God would forgive them and they would be baptized by the Holy Spirit and their response was thanks but no thanks.

[46 : 04] Now some say, well now wait a minute, wait a minute. There were 3,000. 3,000 who signed on. Yep, and we're grateful for every one of them. But my contention is those 3,000 were nothing but a mere minority of those who needed to sign on.

And who were the ones who needed to sign on? This was the same crowd that conducted the execution of Stephen just a couple of years later in Acts chapter 7.

Rather than signing on to the covenant, they opted out of the covenant and the persecution began and the new covenant was never implemented.

Now Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, addresses the issue in 2nd Corinthians saying that God had made them, and he's talking about himself and his colleagues, that he had made them ministers, able ministers of the new covenant.

What does that mean? That means that from God's standpoint, covenant, from the provision, from the basis for originating the covenant, that had been cared for in the death of Christ.

[47 : 33] He shed his own blood. That provided the basis for offering the results of that to Israel for them to sign on, and they were given that opportunity by Peter in Acts chapter 2, and again in Acts chapter 3, and they turned down the offer both times, and that's when the persecution began, and it was Jew persecuting Jew.

Gentiles had nothing to do with this. This is all Jewish thing. So now we've got a situation where the offer has been made to Israel, and the offer was declined, and where is Israel now?

They are still in a state of declension. Matter of fact, when Jesus Christ died on that cross, and the veil in the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom, that was the effective end of the religion of Judaism.

That was it. It was over. Israel is without portfolio with God. They have no status and no standing. They are set aside in their unbelief, and they remain there to this day.

And the prophets predicted that if they continued in their disobedience and rejection of God's provision, God was going to scatter them all throughout the earth.

[49 : 03] And where is the Jew today? Scattered all throughout the earth. Now, thankfully, for the first time, for the first time in thousands of years, there are more Jews living in Israel today than there are Jews living in the United States of America.

Because there is a return that is taking place, the Aliyah, that they call it, and Israel is coming back to the land.

And what this is in preparation for, it's in preparation for the last days when the time that Israel will be brought back on track. You see, Israel as a nation now have been taken off the center stage and put in the wings.

And who's in the center stage now? You are. This is the church, the body of Christ. We are the focus of God's effort today.

Israel is set aside in unbelief. But Paul makes it very clear that Israel is set aside until, until the fullness of the Gentiles become in.

[50 : 21] When God is finished with the Gentiles, then Israel will be put back on the stage again. So, what's happened with Israel in the past?

Where are they? Well, they were ruled over by Babylon and by the Medes and the Persians and by the Greeks and by the Romans and the Romans dispersed them and they're scattered throughout the whole earth just as it was prophesied.

So, that's all the subject of prophecy. And I'd want to just close with these, with these, what I think are rather obvious contrasts.

and I'm going to avoid the repetition of these that we had for the morning because, for the nine o'clock hour, for time's sake, but the very first one is, under prophecy, the consideration is all about a kingdom, a political organization.

And the contrast of that is with the mystery, which is not about a kingdom and not about a political organization at all, but it concerns a body, a living organism.

[51 : 33] And whereas the kingdom is focused upon this earth and the promise is for the earth and the promise to the Jew is for this earth, for the kingdom of God to come so that God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven, the focus for the church is not earthly at all.

We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. And Paul says, our citizenship, our place of permanent residence is not on this earth. Our citizenship is in heaven.

Well, that's completely different from what has been provided for Israel. These are two different entities altogether. Try as you will to make them mesh and they won't mesh, they will clash.

They won't mesh. They're not supposed to mesh. So is one wrong and one right? No, no, no, no. They're both right. But they're both for different people at different times.

And when you break down that distinction or ignore that distinction and try to bring them together and make everything fit, you have nothing but absolute chaos. Nothing works.

[52 : 41] And it can't work because you're talking about two different entities for two different purposes at two different times. Why should they work? But Christendom, as a rule, is content on trying to make all of this into one grand theme and see the congruity of it all, and it is an impossibility.

Besides, and with this I want to close, and I want you to leave this with something to think about. We talked about this a little bit at the nine o'clock hour. We are told that we need to rightly divide the word of truth.

Anytime you divide anything, you do so for the purpose of separating it. Now, that's not really rocket science. But you do it for the purpose of making two out of one.

You separate them. You cut them. And this is precisely what Paul was talking about when he relates to rightly dividing, separating, cutting the word of truth.

It's the word in the Greek, it is orthomontos. Doesn't say much to us. Orthomontos. But if you've got a kid in braces, you know that the orthodontist bill is considerable.

[54 : 10] And what does an orthodontist do? He straightens teeth. Doesn't he? So you cut a path.

You cut a straight path. It means to rightly divide with the idea of an adequate separation so that one thing is distinct from another.

And what the scriptures, I think, make so very, very clear is that that which is involving mystery that has to do with all of the things that were prophesied and predicted in the Old Testament belong to mystery.

And those things that were never predicted, never prophesied, never even dreamed of, belong to mystery. I want to close with this passage in Ephesians chapter 3 because nothing makes it clearer than this.

We won't have time to go to the Colossian passage, but with this background, I want you to appreciate this. Ephesians chapter 3, Paul says, For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, for the sake of you Gentiles.

[55 : 21] And what he's saying here is that the reason I'm in prison today is because of you people. He'd been delivering this message to the Gentiles and it got him in a lot of trouble. And by the way, when Paul delivered his message to the Gentiles, who was the people that gave him most of the difficulty?

It wasn't the Gentiles. It was the Jews. Interesting, isn't it? We'll keep that in mind too. For the sake of you Gentiles, if indeed you have heard of the stewardship, and I have suggested that, I think the King James says, the dispensation of God's grace, which just does not communicate with most people at all.

Stewardship is a little better, but there's another word that I think conveys a sense even better than that, and it is the word administration. What Paul is saying here is that God approached me and he gave me the responsibility of bringing in to the earth a whole new administration, something that is completely different from what had been enforced.

What had been enforced before? The law of Moses. Yeah, the law of Moses. Now he's saying that there is a whole new dispensation, stewardship, administration, which was given to me for you that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief.

And referring to this, when you read, you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ. What was that? What was the mystery of Christ?

- [57 : 05] It wasn't simply his coming, wasn't simply his incarnation. It is, of all things, the most unthinkable thing that anybody could imagine. The mystery of Christ involved Christ.
- The substitutionary death of the Messiah promised to Israel. Are you kidding me?
- The substitutionary death of Christ, the Messiah? You know, as far as the Jew was concerned, Jesus being on that cross, was proof positive.
- He was not the Messiah. He couldn't be the Messiah. That's crazy. You think God is going to allow his chosen Messiah to end up on a Roman cross?
- That's crazy. And the Apostle Paul says, you know what? That's exactly what people are going to say when they hear it. That's what he meant when he said to the Greeks, Christ crucified is moronic.
- [58 : 20] You have to be a moron to believe that. That someone dying the death of a criminal in an ignominious way, exposed to the world, hanging on that cross, crying out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
- And that that's supposed to be the Savior of the world? Get serious. And do you know something? That's exactly the response many people have today.
- It is foolishness to them. And to the Jew, to the Jew, it's an insult. You are suggesting that the beloved Messiah, the one for whom we have waited 4,000 years, God's chosen one, that God is going to let his Messiah suffer on a Roman cross.
- And that's supposed to be the one who would deliver Israel. And when the Jews saw what Pilate had written over that, it was just a dig.
- It was just, it was just a twist of the knife when he said, this is Jesus, the King of the Jews. What an insult. And this is why the word in the Greek is skandalon, from which we get the word scandal.
- [59 : 50] Scandal. The Jew was embarrassed and scandalized to think that his Messiah, his Savior of the world, is going to die on a Roman cross.
- And that's the best that Judaism has to offer, this one on the cross. What a scandal. What an embarrassment. They rejected it. And the point that I want you to understand right now is people still respond to it the same way.
- To some, it's foolishness. What in the world does some Galilean peasant who died on a cross 3,000 years ago have to do with me? I didn't ask him to die for me.
- That's precisely the response that many people have today. And the Jews look upon our claiming that Jesus was the Messiah and he was the Savior of Israel is a national embarrassment and they want nothing to do with it.
- So Paul, as I mentioned before, Paul had a hard sell. And you know something? Because Paul had such a hard sell, Paul had a hard way to go himself.
- [61 : 11] He was going up against it much like Jeremiah was in the Old Testament. And God told Jeremiah he wanted him to go to Israel and preach this message to Judah and to Israel. And then he told Jeremiah, oh, by the way, Jeremiah, there's one thing that you need to know.
- They're not going to believe you. Well, thanks a lot. What am I preaching this for? If they're not going to believe me, why don't we just leave them that way? And the reason is because Jeremiah preaching them and telling them the truth of what was coming made them culpable, responsible, accountable because they could not say they had not been warned.
- And precisely, this is the same thing that we are saying regarding Jesus of Nazareth and his being the Savior. He is proclaimed in different ways, especially at Christmas, albeit rather inadequately in many respects.

Same way with Easter, has to compete not only with Santa Claus at Christmastime, he has to compete with the Easter Bunny at Easter. And you know what all of this is? This is all part of the scheme of the adversary to confuse, commingle, upset, derail, any way he can the truth of the gospel.

He did it to Paul and he's doing it to us today. We need to wake up and get wise to this. When Jesus said three different times in John's gospel that Satan is the prince of this world, we need to start believing that.

[62 : 45] And we've got some information we'll be sharing with the Bible class group on Tuesday morning that I think will solidify this in ways that we cannot take the time to do so now. Well, you've had a real hodgepodge of stuff this morning.

I don't know how many dots you've been able to connect, but I hope a few. And this is just a small sampling of what is coming because this issue of the body of Christ as opposed to what is proclaimed today as Christian truth is going to be something that we really need to take a good, long, hard look at.

And we need to remind ourselves that those who disagree with us and those who would even castigate us for what we are teaching, we need to keep in mind they are not the enemy.

They are captives of the enemy just like we were before we came to understand these truths as well. So pray with me, please. Our Father, Father, we recognize that much that we have discussed here may have fallen upon some ears that have never heard these things before.

And if they are reluctant to accept them, we certainly understand that because we shared in that reluctance when we first heard these truths as well. But our prayer for each and every one of these dear folks is as this material continues to unfold, that lights will come on.

[64 : 18] Understanding and appreciation will be gained. A new sense and a new revival of understanding in the scriptures and how things really are connected that often seem to be disconnected, that our understanding of that will not only involve our intellect but will involve our will and our emotions as well.

We trust that as a result of all of this, we will come to a greater appreciation of who Jesus Christ really is, what he's done for us, and a greater appreciation for the brethren with whom we worship.

Thank you for this time to share together this morning and for what you have been pleased to reveal to us in Christ's name. Amen. And I am confident I can say the best is yet to come.

You are dismissed.