

The Jewish Final Solution to the World's Problem - The Book of Acts II

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[0 : 00] I appreciate you opening your Bible to Ephesians chapter 3, but before we engage the text, I have some preliminary observations or propositions to share with you, and I trust that the content will be as enlightening to you as it has been to me over the years.

We continue tracking the critical transition in the book of Acts. There are those, I'm sure, who would say, well, who cares about a transition in the book of Acts?

This is ancient history, and we're a lot more concerned about living today. So what's the big deal about a transition in the book of Acts? Well, for starters, it is important because herein lies the chief reason for doctrinal and denominational differences that exist among Christians today.

The pattern for what a church is to be and practice begins to emerge here in the book of Acts. And the pattern at what an individual Christian is to believe and practice begins to emerge here in the book of Acts.

And we say begins to emerge because the greater truths for both the church and the individual believer are much more fully explained and developed in what follows the book of Acts.

[1 : 36] Namely, the letters inspired by the Apostle Paul to the various churches, as well as his letters to individual believers such as Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

Here in the Acts of the Apostles, there is historical and undeniable movement from things Jewish pertaining to the physical kingdom of God and heaven that is the subject of the Old Testament and the four gospels prophesying to things pertaining to the nation of Israel as opposed to the spiritual body of Christ, which was never the subject of prophecy, not in the Old Testament or in the four gospels nor in the earlier chapters of the book of Acts.

And here we want to make a very important distinction that I think is lost on a great many Christians. And that is, while some seek to divide the scriptures, at least those of us of a dispensational persuasion, and that's just a big term that we'll explain later on down the road for those of you who don't already know, there is a tendency to follow the outline that is given by C.I. Schofield in his reference Bible indicating the seven different dispensations and the progression of doctrine through those.

And while they are somewhat beneficial, and I just don't flat out repudiate them, nonetheless, I do think that it is far more understandable to see that all of Scripture is really divided into just two segments.

And the first is what we refer to as prophecy. It has to do exclusively with the nation of Israel.

[3 : 34] Well, let me put it this way. In so far as the Old Testament is concerned, it has to do exclusively with the nation of Israel. We do find the church involved in prophecy, once you get into the Pauline epistles, in a way that does not involve Israel.

So there are these two major distinctions. God's plan and program for Israel, that is related primarily to prophecy. The Old Testament is just packed with this.

And then God's plan and program for the church, which is referred to as a mystery. And what we mean by that is that a biblical definition of the mystery involves something that is akin to the idea of a secret.

It means something that cannot and would not be known unless someone who is privy to that mystery revealed it to others.

Otherwise, you would have never thought of it, never even known that it existed. That's how the body of Christ is regarded in Scripture. It belongs to the mystery segment, not the prophecy segment.

[4 : 51] And a failure to recognize those two distinct identities leads to an attempt to blend the two together and make them fit.

And they won't, because they aren't supposed to fit. One is for God's chosen covenant people. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And those promises and prophecy is limited exclusively to them because of the promises God made to them. The other has to do with us. We are referred to as the spiritual body of Christ.

Everyone who is a believer, everyone who has embraced Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, has been baptized without water.

Baptized into the spiritual organism or the spiritual body of Christ and has been placed in union with Christ.

[5 : 55] That is entirely different than the prophecy portion that so dominates the Old Testament and, for that matter, the Gospels as well.

So the mystery is something, the mystery which is the body of Christ is something you will look for in vain in the Old Testament. We aren't there.

It's an entirely new thing. Now, it wasn't new to him, but it's certainly new to us. And it was certainly new to the Jew. So let me go on with my propositions and we will see if we can clarify this further.

Under the dispensation of Israel, and the word dispensation simply means administration. It means a dispensing, a doling out, a way something is conducted.

It's akin to the idea of administration. And we're all somewhat familiar with an administration in Columbus, Ohio, in the governor's office, and in Washington, D.C., with the present administration.

[7 : 44] And the thing that I would urge you to keep in mind is that when there is a difference in administrations, the initial result is always somewhat chaotic.

For instance, when a new president comes to the Oval Office, we talk about it being the beginning of a new administration.

And everything is going to be different. Now, if you've had a Republican president in the past and a Republican president is elected to take the place of the outgoing president, you're still going to have a change in administrations because the administrator is different.

You've got two different men with two different agendas. But if you've got an outgoing president of one party and an incoming president of another party, then the distinction is going to be a lot larger, going to be a lot more significant changes made because there's usually a real difference in thinking between the parties that these men represent.

So the result of that is going to be considerable confusion. And they even try to have transition teams. Someone come in from the outgoing party and someone comes in from the incoming party, and they try to work together to create a smooth transition so there will be as little disruption as possible.

[9 : 18] And it probably helps to some degree. But a certain amount of confusion and chaos is inevitable just because the change is so great.

Now, what we experience here in our presidential politics and the change of administration is nothing compared to the change that has taken place in the book of Acts between Jew and Gentile.

Now, this is cataclysmic stuff. This is upheaval. The confusion is incredible. And it's going to be confusion on both sides. And do you know what?

It still exists. There is still massive confusion among Christians today regarding these things we're talking about in the Bible. And the confusion plays itself out by the multiple denominations that we have, all based upon their particular interpretation, largely of the book of Acts and of certain other portions of Scripture.

Do you realize, for instance, 500 years ago, there were no Lutherans? There just weren't any. They didn't exist. Just 500 years ago.

[10 : 39] 500 years ago, there were no Methodists. There were no Baptists. There were no Presbyterians. There were no Church of God. There were no Brethren. There were no Episcopalians.

They simply didn't exist. They had no being. They'd never come into being. All there was was what is commonly referred to as the Roman Catholic Church.

And it had a tremendously dominating and powerful influence, particularly all over Europe. And that was what was classified as the Christian Church.

Now, within that Roman Catholic Church that was headed by a pope that goes back all the way to the second or third century, there were many who were true born-again believers.

And there were also a great many who were not. They were just religionists. They were just ritualists. They were just going through the motions. They were just in a system.

[11 : 40] But they were not true born-again believers. So you've got both kinds. And by the way, in the Roman Catholic Church today, you still have the same thing. You have those who are truly regenerate people and those who are not.

And in the Protestant Church, all of those that I mentioned, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, non-denominational like Grace Bible, you have people who are genuine believers.

They are really in Christ. And there are those who are just going along for the religious ride. And they have not had an experience of regeneration at all. So how did all of these different denominations surface?

How did they come into being? And why did they come into being? And to someone who said, why is it that we just can't get together? Why can't we all get together? Why can't we agree on these things? Well, and the answer is this.

Good people with good intentions read the scriptures and they come to different conclusions.

[12 : 38] And they hold positions that they honestly, sincerely arrived at. And they stand behind those positions with firm conviction. And they will not deviate from that.

And they tend to gather to themselves other people who agree with their interpretation and their approach to the scriptures. And the next thing you know, you have a considerable number of people.

And somebody says something like, you know what we ought to do? We ought to organize. So they organize. And frankly, this is the way. This is exactly the way these various denominations have come into existence.

And it's all predicated upon the various differences they hold in interpreting not only the Bible in general, but the book of Acts in particular.

However, this book is the book that is responsible for more divisions and more splits and splinters and sects and cults and you name it than probably any other book in the Bible.

[13 : 47] It's how they approach and interpret the content of the book of Acts. And I want to make this clear. I suspect that virtually all of these people are sincere.

Good people. Honest people. And I suspect that the vast majority of them, if all of them, aren't really trying to seek the truth and want the truth.

So I'm not impugning the motives of any. I'm just saying that people see things differently and they arrive at different conclusions. So let me try to set forth something that I hope will shed a little more light on this.

Under the dispensation of Israel. What does that mean? That means under the administration of Israel. Under the Old Testament fabric that also extended into and included Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Because those books, even though they are found in our New Testament, they belong to the Old Testament. What do I mean by that?

[14 : 54] I mean that when Christ came on the scene, as is recorded in the four Gospels, he was born under the Mosaic economy that was in full force in the nation of Israel at the time he arrived on the earth.

This is why he was circumcised. He was a Jewish baby boy. This is why he kept the law of Moses. This is why he observed the Sabbath.

This is why he said, I did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill the law. Jesus Christ was a full-fledged, observant Jew in every regard.

And he respected and lived under the law of Moses that God gave to him on Mount Sinai. Now, it's really important to note that.

What we refer to as the New Covenant did not even come into being until, and I'm not as clear on this as I would like to be, until Christ's death on the cross.

[16 : 03] And, of course, that's at the end of all of the Gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John occupies the last chapters of each of those Gospels. And up until that time, he functioned under the Mosaic Law.

And you'll recall the night that he got together with his apostles, the night that he was betrayed, he made this incredibly significant statement.

He took a cup, a cup of wine, and he held up the cup, and he said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood.

And there wasn't an apostle that sat around that table that had any idea what he was talking about. He was talking about dying, crucifixion, shedding his blood on that cross.

And these men, Thomas and Peter and James and John, must have looked at each other with a quizzical expression on their face. What's he talking about?

[17 : 10] This cup is the new covenant in my blood? What does that mean? Well, it wouldn't be long until they would understand exactly what that meant.

But they couldn't conceive of it at the time. So it is clear at the end of the Gospels, after Jesus lived as an observant Jew under the Law of Moses, all the way through those Gospels, that he announced the beginning of the new covenant.

And, of course, the new covenant was going to displace the old covenant. What was the old covenant? That was the Law of Moses, under which Christ had been operating. And all the rest of Israel had been operating.

It included the Sabbath. It included the ceremonial purifications. It included the kosher diet. It included everything that went with it that made Judaism what it was. So it is all going to pass off the scene.

So, under the dispensation of Israel, or the administration of Israel, or when Israel was in the spotlight, when Israel was the point of function, the program of God for the Jew, the prophetic emphasis was upon things physical.

[18 : 28] These were manifested in the physical land of Israel promised to the Jew. And I'm not sure if you are aware how big a deal the Jew makes of the land.

And the reason they do is because God makes a big deal of the land. Do you realize that that tiny little strip, no bigger than the state of New Jersey, is the only place in all of the Bible, and is the only geography in all of the Bible, that God calls my land?

Now, it's true that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and the whole globe is His land, as well as all the rest of the universe.

But there is something really special about this place called Israel, the only place God refers to as His land.

These physical things were manifested in the land of Israel promised to the Jew, with physical animal sacrifices instituted in the Mosaic covenant, with a physical tabernacle, and later a physical temple, and physical circumcision of the male Jew, and physical water baptism.

[19 : 51] Materiality was very much a part of the Jewish dispensation or administration, in the plan and program of God. All these physical realities were capped off and reinforced with an ongoing manifestation of physical miracles performed by men and angels in the Old Testament, and by Christ and His apostles in the four Gospels, plus the earlier chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.

These were all physical, visible demonstrations of power and wonders that people could look at and see and be convinced of, and there was no denying them.

This was standard fare for Israel. And this is why Paul wrote to the Corinthians and says, the Jews require a sign. That means a miracle. And the reason they required a sign is because God taught them to.

He birthed them with signs. He sustained them with signs. One physical miracle after another. That was standard operating procedure for the nation of Israel in the Old Testament.

It is standard operating procedure for Jesus in the Gospels, because His miracles were His badge of authentication or authority. If you say that you are the Messiah of Israel and that God has sent you to represent Him on earth, you better have something to back it up.

[21 : 20] And He did. And He performed one miracle after another in every facet that you could imagine. These all occurred under the motif of the original covenant that God established with Israel called the Mosaic Law.

Under this law, the nation of Israel conducted all its affairs in relating to God and their fellow man. It is fully in force in the four Gospels, and Christ operated under this law as a faithful, observant Jew who came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it.

He fulfilled it by being obedient to the law and then paying the penalty as if He had disobeyed the law. He allowed the law to extract from Himself the penalty due to all lawbreakers, which was death.

So He who knew no sin, Christ, was made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

In Christ's death, the righteous demands of the law were fully satisfied. In His resurrection, the satisfaction that justice demanded was verified, because Christ was delivered for our offenses and raised because our justification with God had been secured.

[22 : 52] After His resurrection, Christ continued to be offered to Israel, still under the promise of God fulfilling to Israel all He had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

If only they, as the covenant nation, would now embrace the crucified and resurrected Messiah as their own. And I cannot tell you how important this is to understand this.

This is absolutely critical. Here is a common misconception that is held by probably vast majority of Christians today, and it is this.

commonly believed by people who sincerely believe it, that when the Jewish hierarchy and establishment, through their kangaroo court, railroaded Christ and handed Him over to Pontius Pilate and demanded that Pilate crucify Him, resulting in His issuing an order of execution and the Roman soldiers carrying out that order, it is commonly believed by most that that was it for Israel.

That was Israel's final answer, and that God was then and there having nothing to do with Israel because they crucified their Messiah. And now, God is going to start something new, and it starts in the book of Acts, chapter 2, on the day of Pentecost, and it is the birthday of the Christian church.

[24 : 35] Wrong, wrong, wrong, double wrong, triple wrong, quadruple wrong, quintuple wrong, and however many, it is wrong as it can be. And I say that because prior to the time that Jesus died on that cross, the kingdom was never actually offered to Israel for their acceptance.

That was never the message. What did John the Baptist preach? He preached, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

What's that mean? That means it's near. It's close by. He didn't say, repent, for this is the kingdom of heaven. No, no, no, no, no.

He said, it is nearby. It is at hand. And Jesus and the twelve actually preached the same thing. The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

It is nearby. Well, what was it that was going to actually make it available so it could be said to Israel, here it is.

[25 : 48] Will you take it? The Messiah had to die. There was no way around that. There otherwise would be no offering for sin.

There otherwise would be no human redemption. Some ask the question, well, what would have happened if Israel had accepted Jesus as their Messiah? Well, it's a hypothetical that we can't answer, but in the first place, Jesus knew full well that they were not going to accept him.

He even predicted that. And it was predicted in the Old Testament. Isaiah talks about him being smitten, a man of sorrows, bearing our griefs and our transgressions, and we did esteem him stricken and smitten of God and afflicted.

So it was all prophesied that they were going to reject him. So, this kingdom at hand thing could not and would not be available for Israel's acceptance until the Messiah paid the ultimate price for the sins of the world.

And that required his crucifixion, death, and burial. Now, follow me. This is really important. What is the message then?

[27 : 06] After the death, burial, and resurrection, Peter is preaching on the day of Pentecost in chapter 2 of Acts, and he follows it up in chapter 3, and his message is as much as this.

Israel, you men of Israel, here it is. This is it. Will you accept it? The price has been paid for the establishment of the kingdom of heaven come to earth and all that is needed is for Israel as a nation to embrace this concept as the spearhead nation and the kingdom of heaven will come to earth.

And Israel, after the death, burial, and resurrection, said, thanks, but no thanks. They continued in the mode of rejection.

We sometimes are misled by the fact that there were 3,000 who believed, and I've often pointed out to you, there may have very well have been 50,000 who didn't believe. Don't get the impression that everyone that Peter preached to believed the message because this was an enormous place where this message was delivered that would accommodate multiple thousands of people, and 3,000 believed.

And the very next day in Acts chapter 3, Peter is preaching the same message to some of the same people but a different audience, and many of them believed.

[28 : 25] But as you read on through Acts 4 and 5 and 6, persecution intensifies against these Jews, and by the way, they are all Jews.

Day of Pentecost, they are all Jews. Acts chapter 3, they are all Jews because this promise was for the Jewish nation and them exclusively.

And when the Jewish nation got on board, then they would be able to extend it to all of the other nations. But it never really began with them because rejection and persecution continued.

And Peter makes it very clear that it is Israel's rejection that is going to bring the judgment of God upon that nation.

And Christ had already prophesied that. And we know what is going to happen in 70 A.D. when the Romans come in and they decimate the temple, ruin the city, reduce everything to rubble, and that will be under Titus, the Roman general, and Israel will be scattered throughout all the Mediterranean world.

[29 : 42] It does not matter, throughout all the rest of the world. So, after repeated refusals to do so, to embrace the Messiah as their own, after his death, burial, and resurrection, the offer of God's kingdom coming to earth via Israel was temporarily placed on hold until Israel does come to repentance.

and that's still where it is. That's where it is to this day. This is not the kingdom of heaven. It is an abeyance.

It is postponed. Because this kingdom of heaven cannot become a reality until Israel, the nation, becomes the spearhead for that movement. That, too, is the subject of prophecy.

Next, a most startling thing never imagined by Israel began to take place. An entirely new program or dispensation or administration began to unfold.

This was something never before thought of nor mentioned nor prophesied in the Old Testament. And it is something that is so far removed from the average Jew's thinking you couldn't even consider it.

[30 : 59] Wouldn't consider it. Out of the question. Impossible. But here it was. And it was breaking forth upon the scene. It will be known as the dispensation or administration of grace.

It will be a dramatic move from the physical emphasis, always known by Israel, to the non-physical or spiritual. Rather than the promise of a physical land as for Israel, we have a citizenship in heaven.

Well, how's that for a startling difference? Actually, it's as different as heaven and earth. Our citizenship is in heaven. The Jew isn't promised heaven in the Old Testament.

Read through it. As far as you'll go is Sheol or the grave or paradise but not heaven. But in the New Testament it's entirely different under this new program.

This is a radical change. Something that the Jew couldn't even contemplate. Rather than physical animal sacrifices as with Israel, the believer himself becomes a living sacrifice via Romans chapter 12.

[32 : 26] Rather than the physical temple as the place for meeting with God as Israel did, we meet with God spiritually anywhere, anytime, and instead of physical circumcision as for the Jew, we are circumcised in our hearts with the circumcision not made with hands.

And Paul talks about this spiritual circumcision. What is that? Spiritual circumcision? It is circumcision that doesn't involve the flesh and it doesn't involve human instrumentality in hands as the Jewish individual would circumcise the Jewish baby boy on the eighth day.

We are circumcised in the heart. And it is for men and women upon believing. It is a spiritual circumcision. That which sets us apart from God.

And instead of water baptism as was required for Israel as was employed by John the baptizer and by Christ's own disciples, disciples, we are spiritually baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ.

2 Corinthians 12 and verse 13, For by one spirit are we all baptized or identified or placed in union with Christ and have been all made to drink of one spirit.

[33 : 51] So there is neither Jew nor Gentile bond or free. You are all children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. This concept is absolutely, totally, completely unheard of by the Jew.

And you will not find even an inkling of this in the Old Testament under what is commonly referred to as prophecy. This is called mystery.

It's completely different. It is a secret. Instead of physical miracles provided by God under the age or dispensation of Israel that allowed Israel to walk by sight, we are called upon to walk by faith, not by sight.

We are called upon to believe God without requiring authenticating physical miracles, but simply believing God as He's revealed Himself in His Word.

all these things represented an upheaval for the generation involved in this monumental transition.

[34 : 59] This generation was completely unique because no other had ever needed to function under two different programs at the same time.

And that's where all the confusion comes in. So, we take our Pentecostal friends who embrace chapter 2 of Acts, after which they name their denomination the Pentecostal denomination.

It is based upon chapter 2. And the emphasis there that is found in speaking in languages that you had not learned, otherwise referred to as speaking in tongues.

And this is very critical to the Pentecostal denomination. And Acts 2 is where they get their authentication. So, they believe that this is the beginning of the church. And by the way, probably 95% of Protestants believe that Pentecost is the birthday of the church.

But nowhere does the Bible say that. I mean, nowhere. And yet, we hear repeatedly, everybody knows that Pentecost is the birthday of the church.

[36 : 07] No, it isn't. It is the fulfillment of a promise, just like Peter said. This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel. It's not at all the birthday of the church.

When did the church which is the body of Christ begin? I don't know. I don't know. All I know is it exists now. And it came into being sometime around the first century. And grace believers plug it in somewhere in the middle of Acts.

Other grace believers think it's at the end of Acts. I don't know where it is. All I know is this is a phenomenal thing that has come into being in God's timetable.

And he began it whenever it was in his good pleasure to do so. This generation that we're talking about here in the Acts were living under two parallel programs running side by side.

One in which the Jewish people had been so deeply steeped for centuries and the other a completely new thing that the Jew dismissed out of hand.

[37 : 20] Wouldn't consider it at all. In fact, when Paul began preaching the truths that accompanied this new dispensation, they said Paul was teaching against the law.

of Moses. When in fact, the law of Moses had already come to fruition and it was over with. For Christ is the end of the law for everyone who believes.

So the law is effectively set aside. Christ has brought in a whole new thing. And this man, this single individual called Paul the Apostle, was raised up by God to be the apostle to the Gentiles.

the Jews already had twelve apostles and they rejected them, just like they rejected John the Baptist. And they also are going to reject Saul of Tarsus, who was to become Paul the Apostle.

And on numerous occasions, they sought to take his life because they considered him teaching against the law of Moses. they saw Paul, who formerly was Saul of Tarsus, they saw him the same way he saw Christians when he was persecuting them.

[38 : 41] So now, the shoe is on the other foot. Now, I want you to turn to Ephesians chapter 3 in light of what we've been talking about. Ephesians chapter 3, beginning with verse 1.

For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, for the sake of you Gentiles.

Did you get that? For the sake of you Gentiles. These people to whom he's writing this letter of Ephesians are like those at Colossae and Philippi and Rome.

They were former pagans. They never were Jews. They were former pagans. idolatrous into all kinds of religion. For the sake of you Gentiles, if indeed you have heard of the stewardship, what is stewardship?

But it's a care for and an administration of. If someone is a steward, he's like a manager of someone else's assets. And he has the responsibility for doling out.

[39 : 49] That ties in with the word dispensing or dispensation. it means the doling out or the giving out or the administering. For the stewardship of God's grace, which was given to me for you, that is for you Gentiles, that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before, before, in brief.

And I think that Paul is talking about verse 9 of chapter 1, so let's go back there for just a moment. Just a moment, verse 9 of chapter 1, where the apostle is speaking, and he says that God made known to us the mystery of his will according to his kind intention, which he purposed in him with a view to the administration or the dispensation, suitable to the fullness of times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in heaven, things in earth, in him.

That's what I think he's referring to here in chapter 3, when he says he referred to this in brief. And now verse 4 of chapter 3, and by referring to this, when you read, you can understand my insight, into the mystery of Christ.

Well, where did Paul get that insight? It wasn't that he was especially smart and figured it out. No, no. This insight was given him by revelation.

He didn't know it any more than anyone else didn't know it. It was a special revelation communicated by God to the apostle Paul. Otherwise, he wouldn't have had it either.

[41 : 49] which in other generations, verse 5. Now, this is really critical, folks. Just look at what the words are saying. You know, words mean things. Let's let them mean what they seem to mean.

Which in other generations, what other generations would those be? Past generations, Old Testament generations, generations hundreds of years ago, generations thousands of years ago.

This that Paul was talking about here was never made known before. This is brand new stuff. Nobody knew this before. Nobody. It was not made known to the sons of men as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the spirit.

And here's what I'm talking about. Verse 6. To be specific, what I'm getting at is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given to me according to the working of his power.

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles. Just another word for non-Jews.

[43 : 30] Everyone who lived during Paul's day was in one category or another. Everyone who is alive today is in one category or another. No one is accepted.

If you are not a Jew, you are a Gentile. It doesn't make any difference what you call yourself, it doesn't make any difference what country you're born in, it doesn't make any difference what your color is or what language you speak.

If you are not a Jew, you are a Gentile. Those are the only two distinctions. Preach the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery, which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things.

So this mystery, this unfolding of this new revelation is something that of course rested, reposed in the plan and mind of God from time immemorial.

But he didn't reveal it. He didn't make it known. He didn't let us in on it until this Johnny come lately by the name of Paul the apostle or Saul of Tarsus came along and God saved him miraculously and called him to preach the very same thing that he had earlier tried to destroy.

[44 : 55] Wow! So which of these dispensations did Paul live in? He lived in both of them. He bridged them. He was part and parcel of the Mosaic law.

He functioned under it. Listen, this man was a Pharisee. You want to read his credentials? Look at Philippians chapter 3. If anybody's got any reason to boast, I think I've got just as much reason to boast as anybody.

I was born a Jew. My mother was a Jew. My father was a Jew. And not only was I a Jew, but I was a tribe of Benjamin. Top that, if you will.

A tribe of Benjamin was the smallest of all the tribes. And it was the tribe of Benjamin constituted the Green Beret of the Jewish Army in this day.

And they were the crack troops. We're told that they had thousands of men who were left handed. A bunch of southpaws in the tribe of Benjamin. And they could hurl a stone from a sling within a hair's breadth.

[46 : 01] These guys were sharpshooters of their day. Marksmen. Paul says, yeah, that's the tribe I'm from, Benjamin. Circumcised the eighth day, the tribe of Benjamin.

Pharisee. Hebrew of the Hebrews. Had all this stuff going for me. All these credentials going for me. Man, would they ever look good on a resume. And you know what?

All of those things are nothing. Counts for nothing compared to the knowledge of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. And this was a gospel that he was raised up to proclaim.

And he is specifically designated as the apostle to the Gentiles. It's a totally new thing.

Where is Israel? Set aside. They're on a siding waiting for the plan and program of God to develop so that the church, which is the body of Christ, is removed, taken out of here.

[47 : 06] A la 1 Thessalonians 4. That's the rapture. We're gone. And then Israel comes back on the front burner and God has unfinished business to conduct with Israel.

And the time of Jacob's trouble will begin. And Israel will be in the spotlight and they will also be under intense persecution because then the Jew will be made the scapegoat for the entire world.

And open season will be held on the Jew. It's going to be something. It's going to be. Well, this transition is so often overlooked.

And I'll tell you why it is. The principal reason why it is. It's because most of our preachers, most of our pastors, and I realize I sound critical in saying this.

I don't intend to be critical, but I want to be truthful. Most of our pastors and most of our churches today pretty much limit their preaching and teaching to favorite, familiar texts, things that people want to hear, common themes, dealing with the current issues of the day and what's happening and so on.

[48 : 35] Of course, there is a striving to be what they call relevant. and they just either ignore or refuse to deliver the scriptures like they were given.

I've been asked over the last 45 years, they tell me that you teach the Bible verse by verse. Why do you do that? That's the way it was written.

I don't know how else to do it. That's the way it was written. It just seems to me to make sense to teach it the way it was written. And you know what? When you do, you can't skip the hard stuff.

You have to plow through it. You have to study and try to find out. It says this here, but it says this over here. How do you reconcile those? They seem to be contradictory. And there are a lot of places in the Bible that really do seem to be contradictory.

But when you understand what is involved, and you see the difference in these dispensations that we're talking about, there is a coming together a cohesiveness and understanding that is just breathtaking.

[49 : 45] And I have found that to be the case. Nothing lights up the scriptures more than understanding the distinction between prophecy and mystery and seeing those two great things.

things. I'm not finished, but I'm quitting because I want to allow you a little time for Q&A;, and we've got about ten minutes left. Is there a roving mic out there? Somebody have a question or comment that you would like to add?

We would appreciate it. And by the way, I don't care whether you agree with me or not. Feel free. If you say, hey Marv, you're all wet and I can shoot you down. Hey, fire away.

Shoot me down because I'm looking for truth and I will not be offended. I might be embarrassed, but I won't be angry and I won't be offended. Okay, Joe? Testing.

In the Old Testament, there is prophecy in the Old Testament that God is eventually going to deal with Gentiles. Isn't there? He says that that's going to happen.

[50 : 44] So, in that sense, why is it a total mystery that the church then, he uses the administration type, the dispensation of the church, then in the New Testament, but it doesn't seem to me that it's completely a secret or a mystery, but what he does mention in prophecy in the Old Testament that he's going to set that aside.

That's true, and I appreciate you mentioning that. What the Old Testament says, and as far as I can recall, it's pretty much limited to this, where God says that he will use Israel to be a light to the Gentiles.

Israel really wasn't interested in being a light to the Gentiles, and that is demonstrated very vividly in the ministry of Jonah, when he was called to go to Nineveh, and Jonah says, nothing to him, I'm not going to those pagans, those heathens, and he turned and went the other way.

So, Israel was not interested in being a light to the Gentiles, and in fact, they refused that commission. But the thing that I think that Paul is emphasizing in Ephesians, that is the real mystery, that is just absolutely unheard of, was that God was going to take Jew and Gentile and put them together in one body, and to the Jew, that was unthinkable.

Because the principal thing that had always characterized the Jew from the outset was their distinction, their difference, their solitariness, their peculiarities, and I will make you a peculiar people.

[52 : 21] That meant different, distinct. Well, how are they going to be different and distinct if you pack the game with a bunch of Gentiles, a bunch of uncircumcised goyim that the Jews referred to as dogs?

And many was a Jew who would arise in the morning with his morning prayer, saying, God, I thank Thee that Thou hast not made me a woman, a slave, or a Gentile.

That was a common Jewish prayer. And the real essence of the mystery is that Jew and Gentile are going to be equals. Oy vey, are you kidding me?

That can't be. That's impossible, Tevye would say. Impossible. Unthinkable. And a whole bunch of other things. But that's what Paul meant when he wrote to the Ephesians, and he says, that God has broken down the middle wall of partition that divided us, making of Twain, making of the two, Jew and Gentile, one new man.

Wow. Now, when a Jew believes on the Lord Jesus Christ and becomes saved, he doesn't stop being a Jew. He's still a Jew. He is a believing Jew.

[53 : 45] Jews that I know and have met today who have come to faith in Jesus as their Messiah, they don't refer to themselves even as converted Jews. They refer to themselves as completed Jews.

Completed Jews. That's pretty neat. And that's exactly what they are. But there is no distinction between them and Gentiles. You are all children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Neither Jew nor Gentile, bond or free, male nor female, you're all on the same level.

That was absolutely unthinkable. Because the one thing that characterized the Jew more than anything else was separation, separation, separation. They are different. They are separate.

They are apart from the goyim. And now, God is saying, no, you're not. I'm going to put you all together and make one new body out of you. Wow. You know something?

The Jews today still have not bought into that concept at all. Not at all. Except for the handful who have believed.

[54 : 45] They have. Other comments or questions? Up here in the front. Hi.

Yeah. I, um, well, earlier you said you didn't know when the church really began. I, you know, as far as being on the right track, I don't know.

But, uh, I believe in, uh, John 10, 16, when Jesus said, I will call my sheep from another fold.

I believe he was referring to, you know, his church. And then here in, uh, Acts 2, 47, it says the Lord added to the church daily.

Mm-hmm. So, yeah. Well, if you'll look, if you'll look at the different translations, in Acts 2, 47, in the King James, it says that the Lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved.

[55 : 53] The word church is not there at all in, in the Greek. It's, it's just not there. And other good translations, like the New American Standard, I think, renders it, and the Lord added to their number daily, such as should be saved.

Uh, and if you want to call this a church, a messianic church, you see, what, what the word church means is ekklesia in the Greek, and it means a called out assembly.

Called out for what? Called out for anything. Didn't make any difference. In fact, in, in Acts 19, when the Apostle Paul was in the city of Ephesus, they had a riot, and they were in the stadium, and Paul was going to proclaim the gospel of the grace of God to these Gentiles in this stadium there in Ephesus, and, and, and, and he and his cohorts got shouted down.

They start, the crowd started screaming and chanting, great is Diana of the Ephesians. Ephesians, great is Diana of the Ephesians. And they did that because they wanted to drown out the speakers and wouldn't let them talk.

This is Acts 19. And that crowd that came together there and packed that stadium in Ephesus, guess what they're called? They're called an ekklesia.

[57 : 25] They're called a church. What? You call that motley crew a church? Well, they were a called out assembly. That's all the word church means. Israel is referred to as the church in the wilderness.

They were a called out assembly. Called out of what? They were called out of Egypt. Called out of Egypt by God. And they had a common purpose in fleeing Egypt and going to the land of Israel.

And they are referred to as the church in the wilderness. It simply means a called out assembly. So in the context, you have to take it into consideration what is being talked about in the context.

Other comments or questions? Marie? I think another big facet that falls under the mystery that was not revealed in the Old Testament until the Apostle Paul was a rapture.

Oh, yeah. Nothing's ever been said about that. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. When Paul said, behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.

[58 : 27] What? What are you talking about? Where do you find that in the Old Testament? You don't. It's not in the Old Testament because the mystery involves the body of Christ.

And that's not in the Old Testament either. You see, folks, what I'm saying is this thing called the church, which is the body of Christ. And it needs to be distinguished because there was a messianic church, too.

There was a messianic assembly that was called out. But the church, which is the body of Christ, the thing that really makes the Christian church what it is, is Jew and Gentile together.

That's what was really different. That is a mixture that simply did not exist up to this time. And when Paul came on the scene and began preaching this, they said he was preaching a different gospel.

And you know what? In a way, he was. Because what do you think would have happened? When Paul would go in and preach the gospel to a group of Gentiles, what would he tell them?

[59 : 38] He would tell them, you need to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ who died for your sins in order to be saved, in order to be justified and made right before God, you need to believe the gospel of Christ.

And what if one of those Gentiles would have stood up and said, but you're a Jew, aren't you? Well, yes, I'm a Jew. Don't you Jews believe in circumcision?

Wouldn't we have to be circumcised too? Paul said, no, no. You don't have to be circumcised. What do you think would happen when word got back to the Jewish people that Paul told these Gentiles?

They didn't need to be circumcised. How's that going to set with that? What? He told them, well, he's teaching against the law of Moses because circumcision for all who are believers in God.

You've got to be circumcised and you've got to keep the Sabbath and you've got to eat clean food and you've got to offer animal sacrifice. And Paul is saying to the Gentiles, no, no, you don't have to do any of those things because they all belonged to the past dispensation.

[60 : 42] That was all under the law of Moses. That's gone now. It's a whole new thing that's come in. Can you not see why there was such an enormous upheaval and confusion?

Along the whole Mediterranean basin regarding this? And why Paul was consistently charged by his fellow Jews as teaching against the law of Moses.

And they ended up, they had to have a big conference. You can read all about it in Acts 15. And the conference was held to decide whether or not Gentiles who came to faith in Jesus as their Messiah, whether they had to be circumcised.

Because there were Jews who said, except you be circumcised after the manner of Moses, you cannot be saved. Entirely different thing. So this transition involved confusion that wouldn't quit.

And it continued for decades. And as you read through the book of Acts, be advised that there's 30 years of history crammed into those 28 chapters. 30 years in those 28 chapters.

[61 : 49] And what was taking place in just about every chapter was another upheaval of some kind and all kinds of confusion. Because you've got both programs simultaneously operating.

One is phasing in ever so slightly. And the other is phasing out ever so slightly. And in the middle, they are both in force crossing paths together.

It is amazing. It's the only time that has ever existed in human history like that. And it is tremendously important to understand it. Would you stand with me, please?

Father, we recognize that with all we've said, there's still so very much that we don't understand and don't see as fully as we would like. But we do trust that you will use this material to stimulate hearts and minds to further study and investigation.

And for any who can provide a refutation for this and show us where we're wrong, we would be grateful because we really do seek the truth.

[63 : 01] And we trust that's the case of each and every one here. Thank you for being pleased to reveal to us some small aspect of this incredible mystery that you have defined.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen.