

# The Epistles: Paul's Revelation of the Mystery

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] And in an effort to tie together any loose ends, and I know there are some, we will entertain in our next session the questions that you have already submitted in writing, and if you have any that you would like to submit from the floor next Sunday, that will be in order as well.

I do want to say, if you want a better answer that is better thought out, I would suggest that you submit it in writing and give me some time to think about it. If you wish to do so, today will be your last opportunity.

Just leave it in the offering box back there, and they will see to it that I get it, and then we'll be able to devote some attention to it next Lord's Day. For today it seemed fitting to deal with the revelation of the mystery to Paul the Apostle.

This is surely the capstone of revelation for our particular dispensation, that is, the church age, or the dispensation of the grace of God, as the New Testament refers to it.

When we talk about a mystery, I suspect that everybody is somewhat interested in that which is mysterious. We are all familiar with mysteries by way of novels, murder mysteries, and so on.

[ 1 : 1 0 ] Some of you are Agatha Christie fans, and you've read her mysteries, famous whodunits, but that's really not the kind of mystery that the Bible is talking about when it uses the word a number of times.

Actually, it involves two ideas. And I would like you to keep these two ideas in mind as we discuss the whole subject of the mystery and the revelation of the mystery throughout this particular hour.

A biblical mystery involves two ideas. First of all, it refers to that which is hidden or unrevealed. Hidden or unrevealed.

Secondly, it relates to that which is thus understood only by those who are the initiated. That is, there is no understanding this mystery unless you are on the inside track.

The term mystery and the revelation of a mystery is not something that Paul the Apostle coined. It was a concept that was in vogue long before Paul even came on the scene.

[ 2 : 1 5 ] In fact, history tells us that there were cults that involved mystery religions. Ancient Babylon had its mystery religions.

There were mystery religions in the first century when the Apostle Paul labored. And these simply involved people, or initiates, if you will, who had been taken into this particular cult and they were indoctrinated.

They were given secret keys, secret words, secret symbols, secret signs, secret emblems, all of which meant absolutely nothing to anyone who was not initiated and indoctrinated.

It was kind of like a code. And if you knew the key to the code, then you could break it and you could understand all of the mystery and everything that was involved. But to someone who was on the outside looking in and uninitiated, to them it was a complete puzzle.

They had no idea at all what was even taking place. In many respects, there are a lot of similarities to that kind of a mystery and the biblical mystery that we are talking about.

[ 3 : 30 ] It does not mean something that is difficult but hard to figure out. A biblical mystery is not a riddle. A riddle is the kind of thing that you can give to someone and if they are maybe an especially clever person, a very sharp person, you know, a little on the brilliant side, they can figure out the riddle.

You'd never figure out a mystery. Not ever. Unless someone specifically revealed it to you, you would never know it. It would stay hidden forever.

However, perhaps a good synonym for the biblical idea of mystery is a secret. A secret is something that will never be known unless somebody tells you that secret.

That's the only way you're going to know it. A biblical mystery, then, is a truth or secret that is known only because the one who originated it has chosen to reveal it.

Biblically speaking, God is the originator of the secret that we're going to discuss. And unless he chose to reveal this special secret, no one, regardless of how brilliant they were, no one would ever figure it out.

[ 4 : 46 ] Let's go first of all to Romans chapter 16. Now, we're dealing principally with the epistles. We've spent a considerable amount of time in the gospels and in the acts. Now, we're zeroing in on progressive revelation, the capstone of which is found in Paul's great epistles.

Romans chapter 16. And we'll begin with verse 25. The apostle is closing out this letter to these people whom he has never met but have become very dear to him.

Notice the way he closes it. Verse 25, Romans chapter 16. Now to him who is able to establish you according to my gospel.

That, by the way, is an expression that we've seen Paul use before. And it is significant that nobody else ever uses it.

Peter does not talk about my gospel. James and John do not talk about my gospel. But Paul does. And we have pointed out to you that it is not Paul's gospel because Paul devised it, because Paul thought it up.

[ 6 : 09 ] It was Paul's gospel because it was a gospel, good news, that was specifically committed unto him, through him.

He became the channel of revelation of this mystery and this gospel. We saw that in Galatians 1, where he says the gospel that he received was not received from men, neither was he taught it, but by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.

Now, to him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which has been kept secret for long ages past.

Now, I do not know. Now, I do not know. I absolutely do not know what to do with that, other than to just let it say what it says. Paul says his gospel, the preaching of Jesus Christ, in accordance with the revelation of the mystery, has been kept secret for long ages past.

That means they didn't know about it in long ages past. He is not saying that these people in long ages past, for instance, the Old Testament and the prophets, he is not saying they were wrong.

[ 7 : 37 ] No, no. Please don't misunderstand me. He isn't saying they were wrong. They should have figured it out. He is simply saying it was kept secret. They were not wrong for not knowing it.

There is absolutely no way they could have known it, because it was not revealed to them. Now, we have noted in times past that Isaiah, Moses, David, Jeremiah, most of the prophets speak of the Messiah who is to come.

They speak in rather precise terms, that he will be the seed of David, that he will be through the line of Judah, that he will experience shame and ignominy, that he will be involved in a glorious coming again.

All of these things are pretty much spelled out in the Old Testament. But Paul is saying there is something about the person of Christ that has been kept secret for long ages past.

They didn't know about it. They knew a lot. They didn't know this. But now, by way of contrast, verse 26, but now is manifested.

[ 8 : 57 ] That means what wasn't known earlier, what was the secret before, is manifested now. It's declared openly. Now, it's declared openly, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all nations, leading to obedience of faith.

All right, let's come to another epistle. Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2. I'd like to begin reading with verse 11.

I'll try to refrain from comment as much as I'm able, but some of these things just, I find absolutely irresistible. Ephesians 2 and verse 11.

The apostle is speaking, and he says, Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh. Now, there can be no mistake as to who is being addressed here.

The Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by the so-called circumcision. They are Jews, which is performed in the flesh by human hands.

[ 10 : 16 ] Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, separate from the Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

But now, in Christ Jesus, you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

That is an amazing concept. You were estranged, alienated, divorced, separated from God, but you have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

Now, we have dealt with this term in the past, the blood of Christ, and we have noted that it has deep theological significance, and it does not speak merely of the physical, literal blood of Christ, but it encompasses the totality of the redemptive work of Christ.

It involves the whole substitutionary death concept of Christ for sin. And many times the term is simply reduced to the blood of Christ. It is the same thing that we would, the same kind of analogy that we would use in reference to the shedding of blood.

[ 11 : 39 ] And it is used a number of times, particularly in the Old Testament. And it doesn't literally mean simply the shedding of blood. It means death. That's what's so horrible about shedding someone's blood.

It isn't that you pinprick them in the finger and they bleed a little bit. But the idea behind the term bloodshed means death.

And that's simply a term that is used to describe it. They have been brought nigh by the blood of Christ, for he himself is our peace, who made both groups into one.

Now here he is talking about the circumcised and the uncircumcised. And broke down the barrier of the dividing wall. That was that which separated Jew from Gentile. Here's how he did it.

By abolishing in his flesh the enmity, which is the law of commandments, contained in ordinances, that in himself he might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace.

[ 12 : 47 ] Now let me point out something. This is all new stuff. Paul is proclaiming this here to these people at Ephesus. They didn't know it before, and neither did anybody else before Paul revealed it.

Someone says, oh, what about Peter? Peter knew this. He most certainly did not. If Peter knew it, he never preached it. If Peter knew this, he didn't act like it.

And this is borne out, as we've told you time and again, when he went to Cornelius. And he didn't want to go to Cornelius, because Cornelius was a Gentile. And Peter had absolutely no insight at all into this concept, and he wasn't supposed to have.

Because it hadn't been revealed to him. We made much of the fact, and I think this bears repeating, that when Jesus Christ was dying on the cross, while he was being made sin for us, while he was being smitten and afflicted of God, hanging there on that cross, there wasn't anybody who had any idea what was happening.

No, not really. Peter and John, and even the mother of Jesus, who stood there at the foot of the cross, they did not understand what was transpiring.

[ 14 : 15 ] All they could think of is it was horrible. It was agonizing. It was terrible. It was unspeakably shameful. It was cruel. It was barbaric. And it was all those things.

But they did not know that Jesus Christ was accomplishing the transaction of the universe, that he was being made sin for them and for everyone else.

They didn't know that. And this is further evidenced by the fact that neither did they have even the slightest idea that he was going to come back from the dead three days later.

They were the very first ones to deny it. And when Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, do you know what his message was to the Jews? I'll tell you what I always thought it was.

I'll tell you what I always thought it was. Folks, you read Peter's message.

[ 15 : 30 ] You won't find that there. It isn't there. Peter did not preach glorious deliverance from man's sin because Jesus Christ paid the price for sin.

That's not what Peter preached. I'll tell you what he preached. He preached to the Jews. You people should be ashamed of yourselves. You crucified the Messiah. Peter called them to account.

And do you know the difference between how Peter viewed the cross and how Paul viewed the cross? I'm talking about Acts now. Peter is more than well clued in by the time he's written his epistles.

But in Acts chapter 2, when it was not revealed, Peter saw the cross, in one word, shameful. Shameful.

That's all he could say. That's all anybody saw then. It was shameful. Despicable. For the Messiah to die on the cross.

[ 16 : 34 ] But do you know what Paul saw on the cross? God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Jesus Christ my Lord, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.

The cross was a glorious thing. Peter saw it as shame. It's a terrible thing. And Paul saw it as a glorious triumph.

Glorious victory. It is through that cross that our redemption was accomplished. That's why he says what he does in verse 15, by abolishing in his flesh the enmity, which is the law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in himself he might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both into one body to God, through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

And he came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have our access in one spirit to the Father.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

[ 18 : 09 ] And for this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, for the sake of you Gentiles. Now note here, note verse 2. This is really on target. If indeed you have heard of the stewardship.

The stewardship means that which has been entrusted to me, that which was commissioned to me, to manage, to dispense.

This is one reason why in the King James, I believe it is, it is referred to as the dispensation of God's grace. That means the dispensing of it.

You know, when someone in a factory or a school or whatever, I remember in the military when you were ill, you went to the dispensary. And the dispensary was where they dispensed things.

They distributed things. That's what Paul's talking about here. He was a human dispensary. And that which he was given to dispense was the gospel of the grace of God.

[ 19 : 13 ] It was commissioned unto Paul for the express purpose that he reveal it and give it out to others. Now, for someone who has the question, and you may well have, well, why Paul?

Why Paul? What makes him so special? Well, what indeed. I'll tell you why Paul. Are you ready for this?

Why Paul? Let me answer your question with a question. Why Moses? Why Peter?

Why Noah? Why Abraham? The answer to any and all of those whys is the grace of God. That's all. He chose them because he chose them.

He chose them because it was his good pleasure to do so. He chose Saul of Tarsus because he chose Saul of Tarsus. He didn't tell us why. He just said he did. Paul makes it very clear that he is what he is by the grace of God.

[ 20 : 19 ] He has no delusions of grandeur. He has no inflated overestimation of himself. Paul never walked around saying, well, yes, of course, you understand why God revealed this to me.

It's because I'm really the only one who's competent and capable enough to handle it. I'm the only one who's deserving and worthy of the job. That's why he dispensed this mystery to me.

There isn't a smidgen of pride in this man as regards his position. He realizes that he is what he is by the grace of God.

I who am less than the least of all saints, to me is this grace given. Paul never got over the grace of God. Anyone who ever understands the grace of God never will get over it.

If indeed you have heard, 3.2, of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me.

[ 21 : 30 ] Why was it given to me? It was given to me for you. It was given to me that I might give it to others.

That by revelation... Ah, there's that concept again. You know what I did was, Paul says, I sat down one day with a lot of old, musty theological books and a lot of the writings of the rabbis and of the fathers who have gone on and I figured this whole thing out.

No, no, none of that. None of that. He says, by revelation, by revelation, it's the only reason I have it, there was given unto me an abundance of revelations.

By revelation, there was made known to me the mystery. That's why I know it. I didn't figure it out either.

It was revealed to me, the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. And by referring to this, when you read, you can understand my insight into the mystery of Messiah.

[ 22 : 36 ] Mystery of Messiah. What is the mystery of Messiah? What is the mystery of Messiah? That about the Messiah, which you cannot know unless it is revealed.

What was that mystery? Well, let's see who else knew about it. Verse 5. Oh my, we've got to repeat here from Romans 16.

Which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men. As it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the spirit.

To be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Remember Peter's vision, the great sheet let down from heaven wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things, clean and unclean, all mixed together in this vision.

[ 23 : 45 ] And Peter was hungry. And the Lord said, rise Peter, kill and eat. And Peter says, no way. They're unclean animals. They don't have anything to do with them.

And in the vision it was said to him, that which I have cleansed, that call thou not common or unclean. And what was that all about anyway?

God was preparing Peter to go to the household of Cornelius who was a Gentile because he was going to blend Jew and Gentile together in one body and Peter didn't have a clue that that's what God was going to do.

And he still didn't want to go. And then when he did go, he got into trouble for going with the other Jews. None of them had any appreciation at all of Jew and Gentile in one body.

Paul said, 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.

[ 24 : 52 ] And let me tell you folks, this is a humbling thing to realize. I have nothing to boast about. The very least of all saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ and to bring to light what is the administration or the dispensing of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things.

Let's take one more. Ephesians, while we're in Ephesians, 6 and verse 19. He is closing out this epistle much in the same way that he is the Roman epistle by saying in verse 19.

Prayer request he leaves with him. Pray on my behalf, says Paul, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel.

What is that? He's just words. Is he just filling space? The mystery of the gospel.

Well, we know what a gospel is and there are lots of gospels in the Bible. There is the gospel of the grace of God and the gospel of the kingdom, the gospel of the everlasting kingdom and so on. We know the word gospel means good news.

[ 26 : 36 ] So what Paul is saying is that I might make known with boldness the mystery of the good news. The mystery of the good news.

Now he isn't saying or if we wanted to render this secret, he isn't saying that I might make known with boldness the gospel which is a secret.

He isn't saying that. But he's saying the secret of the gospel. It is not the good news of a secret but the secret of good news.

That is the key or the kernel of the good news. What is that? Well, whatever it is, Paul says, it is for this that I am an ambassador in chains that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly as I ought to speak.

The question is, how is it possible, and in Paul's continual use of the term gospel and good news, how is it possible that a holy and a righteous God who must punish sin can offer good news to sinners?

[ 27 : 59 ] That's the question. How is it possible that that can be done? What about the thunderings of the law of God? What about the soul that sinneth it shall surely die?

Thou wilt not hold him blameless. What about that? The answer is in Colossians 1. Let's go there. In part reiterated from Ephesians Colossians 1 verse 13 For he delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

And he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been created by him and for him.

And he is before all things. And in him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church, and he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he himself might come to have first place in everything.

For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in him. And through him to reconcile all things to himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross, I challenge you to find any place in the book of Acts where it is apparent that those before Paul the apostle knew that.

[ 29 : 41 ] I have searched the acts, I have gone backwards and forwards, and it isn't there. It isn't there. And the reason it isn't there is because it wasn't revealed.

There's no way it could have been there. God revealed this to Paul. And through him to reconcile all things to himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross, through him I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven, and although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet he has now reconciled you in his fleshly body through death, in order to present you before him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.

If indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which Paul was made a minister.

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of his body, which is the church, in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

Now note, here he comes, verse 25, of this church I was made a minister, according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God.

[ 31 : 19 ] that is, the mystery, which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to his saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery, or this secret, among the Gentiles, which is the Messiah in you, the absolute confidence of ultimate glory.

New truth, new concept, new idea, not new to God, but new via Paul, and new so that no one else knew it. Peter did not preach this message.

the idea of the Messiah, the Messiah indwelling people, or let's go further, the Messiah, the one promised by Moses and the prophets, the Messiah indwelling Gentiles.

Absolutely unthinkable. the spirit of Messiah in Gentiles? Not only was that new to them, the spirit of Messiah in Jews was new to them.

And when Peter preached it, it was a concept that was absolutely foreign. Peter didn't preach it until you come to his epistles and he refers to what transpired on the cross.

- [ 33 : 05 ] but he didn't know it before Paul knew it, and he wasn't supposed to know it before Paul knew it. Unless someone misunderstand me, and something I tried to care for with real diligence in our last session, and this is important, we are not elevating Paul to some kind of exalted position beyond Peter or James or any of the other apostles.

We are not saying that Paul was worthier. Paul was, of course, the superior apostle. Nobody's saying that. That's ridiculous. What we are saying is that Paul was, by God's design, the recipient of a later revelation than what the others had.

Paul's revelation concerned itself with the one body. God's God's gospel of the grace of God consisted of the fact that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not assigning, not imputing their sins unto them, but they are assigned or imputed to Jesus Christ.

Peter preached the death of Christ as a terrible thing. And it was. And it was. That was Peter's message.

You have, by wicked and cruel hands, slain the Lord of glory. You terrible, stiff-necked, rebellious people.

- [ 34 : 52 ] All day long God's hands are stretched out to you, a disobedient and a gainsaying people. And he sent his glorious Messiah, and what did you do with him?

You crucified him. It's terrible. The apostle Paul says, yes, it is terrible, but it's glorious. It's glorious. How so?

Because in that crucifixion, God was accomplishing a work that nobody else knew anything about. There were just, I think there were just slight hints as to what was really transpiring on the cross.

And I think Peter and James and the others, looking back on it, could attest to the fact that, you know, it really did appear as though something was taking place there, but we didn't know what.

But, darkness descending over the whole land for the space of three hours. Earthquakes, rumbling, some real phenomena taking place, but they couldn't interpret it.

- [ 36 : 06 ] They didn't know exactly what was happening. happening. And God revealed to Paul and said, I'll tell you exactly what was happening. I made him who knew no sin to be sin for you, that you might become the righteousness of God in him.

It's a concept that Peter did not know. It was revealed to Paul. That's our gospel. That's what we are to be preaching today. That's our message.

That's the grace message. That's the grace gospel. That's the gospel of our salvation. It is what God accomplished in the person of Jesus Christ.

You know, I have some verses that I want to read, and I'm not going to ask you to turn to them because they're just too numerous, but I'll read them and identify them quickly. No one, apart from the Apostle Paul, has so much to say about the death of Jesus Christ and the significance of it.

No one. He becomes the ultimate definer of what really transpired on the cross. Listen to these verses. When we were yet without strength in due time, Christ died for the ungodly.

- [ 37 : 26 ] Romans 5, 6. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5, 8. When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.

Romans 5, 10. Folks, there is grace oozing from every one of these verses. We are saved through faith in His blood. Romans 3, 25. We have redemption through His blood.



Ephesians 1, 7. We are justified by His blood. Romans 5, 9. We are reconciled to God in the body of His flesh through death. Colossians 1, 21. We have peace through the blood of His cross.

Colossians 1, 20. We are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Ephesians 2, 13. We are baptized into His death. Romans 6, 3. We are joined into one body by the cross.

Ephesians 2, 16. The covenant of the law was nailed to the cross. Colossians 2, 14. Through death, our Lord destroyed Him that had the power of death.

[ 38 : 22 ] Hebrews 2, 14. He died that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again. 2 Corinthians 5, 15.

He died that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. 1 Thessalonians 5, 10. Christ crucified is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

1 Corinthians 1, 23. We are to boast in the cross alone. Galatians 6, 14. We are to show forth the Lord's death at His table till He come.

1 Corinthians 11, 26. Do you see now why Paul said, For I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

That was Paul's message. the glory of the cross. What was accomplished in the death of our Lord. Any church or any fellowship that does not have this message as its central focal point is out of focus.

[ 39 : 41 ] this is the latest revelation we have. This is the most recent update. This is what we are supposed to be proclaiming.

This is the message that Paul was given by God to proclaim. And this message that is so essential, so critical, so utterly glorious, so full of grace, is the message that is so often lost sight of in the midst of a whole lot of other religious faulty role.

And today the talk about building the kingdom and bringing back the king and all of this completely be clouds the whole message. No wonder people are so confused.

This is it. Listen to the uniqueness of Paul's message. And again, there are too many for me to ask you to turn to them.

And if you have a problem concentrating, I suggest you just close your eyes and listen. Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead.

[ 40 : 55 ] I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man, for I neither received it of men, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. If Paul's message was the same as Peter's message and the twelve, why did he need special revelations?

Why didn't he just preach the same thing that they preached? I think he did. I think he did at the first. Look, if you will, at Acts chapter 9. This is very significant to me.

This is before Paul received any of these revelations. And I'm not sure exactly when he received all of the revelations he did. I know that he didn't get them all at the same time. Probably most of them were received for that time period that he was in Arabia.

But in Acts chapter 9, after his conversion, in verse 18, there fell from his eyes something like scales.

He regained his sight. He arose and was baptized. Now he is still in the city of Damascus. And he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus.

[ 42 : 08 ] And immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, here's his message, that Jesus is the Son of God.

You mean that was it? That's right. Well, didn't he preach to these people that the Son of God was crucified for the sins of the world and didn't he teach them the principles of substitution?

No, he didn't. No. He didn't know it. He didn't understand it. Continue reading, if you will. Well, verse 21, all those hearing him continued to be amazed and were saying, is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?

But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Messiah.

That was it, folks. That was his message. That was Peter's message. At this point in time, that's all the message there was.

[ 43 : 28 ] Now, our problem is, with our advanced understanding and with our radically updated information with the totality of the New Testament, we tend to come to Acts chapter 9 and we read our understanding back into that.

And we say, well, we know all about this. We know that Christ was made sin for us and we know this great transaction was taking place. And if we know it, surely Paul knew it.

Well, eventually he did, but he didn't know it here. And the whole heartbeat of his message was this. Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the one promised by Moses and the prophets in the Old Testament.

And believe me, folks, that was radical enough. For then, that was really radical. And God just revealed more and more and more.

And by the time you get to these tremendous epistles that have no bottom, Ephesians, the church which is his body.

[ 44 : 34 ] Colossians, Christ who is the head. Ephesians, the head and the body working together. Incredible concepts. They represent the most advanced, latest update of information from heaven that is found in the New Testament.

And that's what Paul preached. That's the progression of Revelation. I went up by revelation and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles.

And we pointed out to you how that in Galatians chapter 2, Paul was not preaching the same thing that Peter and the twelve were preaching. And that's why he went up to compare notes with them.

He had an advanced word from them. And they agreed and understood. And they said, well, that's great. That's right. And what you've got is more directly applicable to the Gentiles.

And what we've got is more directly applicable to the Jews. And they concluded that we will go to the circumcision and you go to the Gentiles.

[ 45 : 42 ] And Paul said, you've got a deal. And that's exactly what they did. I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort as putting you in mind because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.

Romans 15.15. Romans 11.13. For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle.

I speak the truth in Christ and lie not, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. 1 Timothy 2.5.7. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.

Not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. Paul gloried in the cross. He saw the cross and what transpired on the cross as being God's solution to man's dilemma.

[ 47 : 05 ] That was it. That was everything. It is all summed up in the cross. And anybody, whoever they may be, of whatever church body or religious organization, if you miss the cross, you've missed it all.

You've missed everything. It doesn't make any difference what you have right. If you have this wrong, nothing else matters.

The cross is what it's all about. Paul gloried in that cross. In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began, but hath in due times manifested his word through preaching which is committed unto me, according to the commandment of God our Savior.

Titus 1, 2, and 3. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

How be it for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first, I don't know what that means if it doesn't mean what it says, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

[ 48 : 29 ] It is the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust. 1 Timothy 1, 11. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

Did any other apostle besides Paul claim to have been entrusted with the gospel of the grace of God? Most people say, oh sure, all of them.

My response is, find one, just one, other than Paul. To whom was committed the good news of the grace of God.

Whereof I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power unto me who am blessed than the least of all saints is this grace given.

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, 1 Corinthians 11, 23. For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, 1 Corinthians 15, 3.

[ 49 : 53 ] Behold, I show you a mystery, as I tell you a secret. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Where else do you find that? Other than in the ministry of Paul. Who else revealed that? Who else talked about the glorious secret of the rapture?

Nobody. It wasn't revealed. It wasn't known. Except through the abundance of the revelations that were given to Paul.

Now, by way of conclusion, do you see why it is so important that we pay particularly close attention to what has been revealed through Paul?

Of course that doesn't mean you ignore what was revealed through others. Of course not. But it means this is the sum and substance of New Testament Christianity.

[ 51 : 08 ] This is for the church age. It ought not to come as any surprise that the basic thrust of theology and doctrine and practice for the church ought to be found in the epistles that are directed to the church.

That's not too complex. I was talking with a fellow one day, a fellow pastor who was not too sympathetic to some of the things that I was saying, and he was really having some problems with the progressive revelation of Scripture.

He was willing to go so far as to say that there was a difference between the Old Testament and the New, and he knew that because we weren't offering animal sacrifices anymore. So he could handle the progressive revelation there.

But with the rest of it, he wasn't so sure. And I said, well, tell me, if you were convinced that the Lord was leading you to begin a New Testament church, you're going to establish a church, how do you know what a church is supposed to be and what a church is supposed to do and what a church is supposed to teach?

What's the business of a church anyway? Well, of course, I'd go to the Bible and find out. I said, fine, right. Where in the Bible would you go? Book of Esther? Well, no, you wouldn't go to the Book of Esther.

[ 52 : 37 ] How about Leviticus? Lots of religious stuff in Leviticus. Oh, boy. Well, of course not. That's Old Testament. You go to the New Testament. Where in the New Testament?

Well, I said, yeah, well, if you're going to start and operate a church, what about concentrating on the letters that are written to churches?

Yeah, sure. That's even logical, isn't it? Sure is.

That's where we find our marching orders as a church. And whereas we believe in the validity and the veracity and the inspiration of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and Acts just as much as we do in anything else, all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

We don't look to the Gospels to see what a church is supposed to be. There are valuable principles, valuable standards, valuable concepts, valuable teachings that are found in the Gospels as are found in the Book of Genesis.

[ 53 : 59 ] But the *modus operandi* is to be developed from the New Testament epistles. And the reason is because they represent through what was committed to Paul the latest revelation that we have, the Gospel of the grace of God.

And therein, we find all of the principles laid out or what a church is supposed to be doing and teaching and believing and practicing and so on in Paul's epistles. I do not know that this is nearly so complicated as some would claim.

But I must confess in all honesty, and I've told you this before, and I do not say it as a source of pride. God knows there's nothing to be proud of. As valuable and as simple as these concepts seem to be, they utterly escaped me for the first 15 years that I was a Christian.

I mean, I just didn't see it. Just didn't see it. And I suspect that apart from a methodical study of the Word of God verse by verse and book by book that no one would be able to come to these conclusions.

This makes me more committed than ever to the principle of studying the Bible and teaching the Bible the same way that it was given.

[ 55 : 39 ] And when you do, you can't avoid these things. You can't detour around them. You have to go through them. And when the tough questions surface, you have to deal with them. And there are some pretty tough questions here.

That Acts chapter 10 passage with Cornelius represents one of the most significant breakthroughs in interpretation in all of the New Testament. And boy, the flood of lights that come on.

I would suggest that if anyone has difficulty with what I've said, and you may well, I would suggest that you read the first four chapters of the book of Acts, which will incorporate Peter's Pentecostal message and the message wherein he offered the kingdom to Israel in chapter 3.

Read them carefully and see exactly what Peter said and note what he omitted. There is not a clue there of the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ.

Not a clue. And his message is still on target to the Jew and it is still kingdom oriented as a possibility. And when Peter comes on the scene, when Paul comes on the scene rather, he is given a whole new message that is not a message for the Jew.

[ 56 : 57 ] It is a message for the Jew and the Gentile and they are both welded together into one body. He becomes the apostle of the one body and the recipient of the mystery of the grace of God.

And that's what he begins preaching. Interesting thing and sad thing that what Paul describes as the mystery of the gospel is still a mystery to most people.

It's still a mystery. that which secures your salvation is substitution.

Christ died for our sins. Christ died in our place. You know what the problem is? Christ died for the sins of the world.

Oh yes, in a nice vague general way. But what they don't understand is, what they don't understand is, and this is so important, why should it be necessary that Christ die for anybody that seems so unfair, so unjust?

[ 58 : 29 ] You mean, when you say, Christ died in my place, what do you mean, in my place? What does that mean, in my place? That means, he died in the place where you should have been.

where you deserve to be. You deserve to die for your sins. And immediately, they rebelled that, and they say, wait a minute, what do you mean?

I'm not that bad. The reason Jesus Christ does not mean everything to them is because they do not understand the sad plight in which their sins find them.

They don't understand that. He is not a glorious Savior because they are not such a bad person. They are not such a bad person. And you take someone who knows what he is, wretched, sinful, undeserving, separated, alienated, rebellious, willful, stiff-necked.

When you recognize yourself to be that, and you look at yourself introspectively, and you say, woe is me, I am undone. I'm a man of unclean lips, dwelling in the midst of a generation of unclean people.

[ 59 : 52 ] I have nothing to commend me to God. I deserve death and judgment and hell. I deserve those things. That's what I've got coming. I deserve it all.

When you see yourself like that, then the cross becomes unspeakably glorious.

Then you can see the Savior in a new light. He was dying there for me. He died for me. Not just for the world in a vague, general way, but he died for me.

He took my place. Why should he do that? I don't deserve that. I know you don't deserve it. That's why it's called the gospel of the grace of God.

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Someone has said, it's so hard to get people saved today because you can't get them lost.

[ 61 : 06 ] Everybody is tripped off on this, I'm okay, you're okay, we're all okay, aren't we all wonderful?