

Ephesians

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[0 : 0 0] On your sheet 3B, we are discussing the uniqueness of the ministry of the Apostle Paul. And as I pointed out to you in the past, so say I now again, I am persuaded that it is largely through the ignoring or the dismissing of the special calling that the Apostle Paul has had that has resulted in so many differences and divisions that exist in the Christian church today.

And the point that I really want to emphasize, and if I sound like a broken record, it is by intention. Because we learn through repetition probably more than anything else.

And this is such a tremendously important concept, I don't want anybody to miss it. And that is, the Bible is a book of progressive revelation. It starts out in Genesis, and as you move on through the Bible, God is revealing more and more and more about Himself and His relationship to mankind as the centuries on the calendar are ticked off.

It is an update that is continually happening. And when you get to the New Testament, as it opens with John the Baptist after 400 years of no revelation from God from the time the Old Testament closed, now we've got John the Baptist on the scene, and as the Gospels open, he is proclaiming the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

This is dramatic stuff, and it represents a quantum leap from where the Old Testament closed with the book of Malachi. Now he's saying, this Messiah, the one of whom Moses and the prophets did speak, is now on the scene, and God has raised me up that I might introduce Him to the nation of Israel as our long-awaited Messiah, the one whom God promised 4,000 years ago.

[2 : 0 6] And now God is making good on that promise. Here is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. This represented an enormous update from what people knew prior to that time.

And the coming of the Messiah and His death, burial, and resurrection is the signal event that just changed everything. And as you move on into the book of Acts, what is commonly believed is that with the crucifixion of Christ, the death knell for Israel has sounded, and that God has set Israel aside permanently because they crucified their Messiah.

But fellas, when you open the book of Acts, it becomes very, very clear that even though they were responsible for the death, for the crucifixion of Christ, the offer to the nation of Israel was not withdrawn.

And our contention is that's what Peter was telling the Jewish people in Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost. He is reminding them that God has made good on His word.

You crucified the Messiah. God raised Him from the dead. But listen, all hope is not gone. There is still opportunity for Israel extended.

[3 : 3 3] If you as a nation, if the leadership that rejected Jesus before His crucifixion, if now after His resurrection you will embrace Him as the Messiah, God will send Him back and He will complete that which He has begun.

And that is the establishment of that kingdom. And Peter will be found to continue that message that he began in Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. He continues it in chapter 3.

And he says two things are essential for the coming of that kingdom. The first is the Messiah had to die for the sins of the world. He did. That's God's part.

And He's accomplished that. Now your part is to respond to God's part. And you respond with repentance and faith toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that was the continuing message of Pentecost that Peter delivered. And fellas, it has absolutely nothing to do with the beginning of the church.

[4 : 43] It is the continuation of a promise. It is an olive leaf, if you will, that continues to be extended from God to the nation of Israel. That it isn't too late.

All is not lost. Israel can still repent and God will fulfill all that He's promised. But it was contingent upon Israel's repentance. And this is the message of chapter 3.

When you get into chapter 4, actually, even before you get out of 3, Israel starts providing their answer.

And they came upon the apostles physically, arrested them, made them subject to questioning, and the persecution began.

And it is as much as saying that was their answer. And that has been their answer to this day. So, when Israel continues in their mode of rejection, they are actually guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

[5 : 54] And remember, Christ said that all manner of sin will be forgiven man, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, neither now or in the age to come.

And that was very, very significant. Because, you see, when Jesus arrived on the scene, and John the Baptist introduced Him, the spiritual state of the nation of Israel then was deplorable.

It was terrible. It was corrupt. And John the Baptist preached against that corruption. And he called the leadership of Israel a brood of vipers. That's sons of snakes.

And the temple was called the Bazaar of Annas. And they had corrupted everything. And this is why Jesus cleansed the temple and turned over the money changers and all the rest of it. Is that they, as the people of God, were in a state of rebellion and denial of the true God of Israel.

They were already in a blasphemous mode against God the Father when Jesus arrived on the scene. And then how did they treat the Lord?

[7 : 03] The same way. They blasphemed Jesus. So, there's two members of the Godhead. And when they stoned Stephen in Acts chapter 7, Stephen delivered this message.

And he said, you are stiff-necked people. You've always rejected the Lord. And you rejected the Spirit of God. And when they gave their counsel, the Sanhedrin.

This is the official leadership of this. This is the equivalent of the Senate and the House of Representatives together. In that body of Jews called the Sanhedrin.

Called the Council. They were the ones who physically, literally, drew Stephen out of the city and stoned him to death. And it is as if that was their final answer.

And Stephen said, you have always resisted the Holy Spirit. So, here what we've got is the three-fold rejection on the part of Israel.

[8 : 10] They were in a rejection mode when Christ arrived on the scene against the Father. They were in a rejection mode against Jesus the Son when they crucified him and said, we'll not have this man to rule over us.

And now, with the stoning of Stephen, they are in a rejection mode of the Spirit of God. And here is Israel's answer to the Sacred Trinity. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And it is as if God is saying, that's the last straw. And they are set aside in temporary blindness. Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles become in.

So, there is their rejection of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit of God. So, those who are guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which is not to be forgiven, are those in that leadership council of Israel and the unbelieving Jews who provided their final rejection and their final answer to Christ.

And that is not to be forgiven. So, for people who think that they have committed the unpardonable sin, they needn't worry because that was it. And it could only be committed by that then generation.

[9 : 21] So, that is a past thing. And it is gone. Now, what we are looking at with the arrival of the Apostle Paul on the scene, and here's where we're going because this is really important.

Now, after the rejection of Israel, God is raising up an alternative. And through the rejection and setting aside of Israel, He is going to constitute a whole new thing, and this represents another great big update.

So, we've got the closing of the Old Testament, an update with John the Baptist, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ considered another update, and the stoning of Stephen and the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is another update.

Now, you've got Paul the Apostle arriving on the scene. And this man is not one of the twelve, because he's not supposed to be one of the twelve.

He has something completely unique and different from the twelve. His ministry is going to be directed primarily as the Apostle to the Gentiles.

[10 : 36] The twelve were apostles to Israel. In fact, they were told to confine their ministry to Israel. And it ought to be obvious to us when Paul makes a statement that he makes when he addresses the Corinthians and he says, Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.

And the typical way that that's usually translated is people say, well, that's because the most important thing is not baptism, but it's preaching the gospel and people believing and being saved.

And you're not saved by baptism. So, Paul is talking about the most important thing. Christ didn't send anybody to baptize. But you know, when you ask this question, and this is a very sobering, honest question to ask, were the twelve apostles, were they able to say, Christ did not send us to baptize, but to preach the gospel?

Could they have made a statement like that? Absolutely not. Because baptism, water baptism, was part of the commission that was given to the twelve.

And it was made very, very clear that they were to receive, to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, and to be baptized with John's baptism, however that was performed, in the name of Jesus as the Messiah.

[12 : 08] And that was the formula. That's what they were to preach when he sent the twelve out. And later when the seventy were sent out, that's what they preached. And that's what they were supposed to preach.

And then Paul comes on the scene and says, he didn't send me to baptize, he just sent me to preach the gospel. And the reason is, when Paul preached this gospel of the grace of God, that was extended not only to Jews, but to Gentiles as well, when one believed that gospel, they were, whether they knew it or not, whether they felt it or not, whether they even believed it or not, they were baptized without water by the Spirit of God into the spiritual body of Christ.

And they were placed in union with the spiritual body of Christ. And in the same way that spirit baptism, I'm sorry, in the same way that spirit, that physical circumcision was replaced with spiritual circumcision, now physical baptism is being replaced with spirit baptism.

This is the baptism that regenerates. This is the baptism whereby God reaches inside the life of the individual and makes them a new person on the inside.

This is regeneration. That is the baptism by the Spirit of God into the body of Christ. That's completely new. Completely different.

[13 : 51] Because there's a new order and a new message and a new apostle and everything is changed. But let me tell you something. Change does not come easily. Didn't come easy for those 2,000 years ago.

Doesn't come easy today either. Because that's not what I've always believed. Therefore, that can't be right. Because what I've always believed has to be what's right.

And we're all infected with that bug. None of us is any different. This is why I've always said there is something that is a lot harder than learning something new.

And that's unlearning something that's old. Trust me. Been there. Done that. And when I first heard what I'm telling you, my first response was, that can't be.

Well, why can't it be? Well, that can't be because that's not what I've always believed. That's why it can't be. End of argument. So, anyway, it took the Lord quite a while to get me to see the light.

[14 : 55] But now that I have, all I want to do is try to get others to see the same light. Because truth, truth for its own sake, deserves an audience.

And there will be varying responses to it. But everybody deserves a hearing. And that's all we're trying to do. So, when Paul says in verse 4, the top of 3b, whereby when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men.

I don't know how anything could be clear. What's the other ages he's talking about? All of the ages previous. All of the Old Testament.

This mystery that he is talking about in connection with Jesus Christ as the Messiah had never been revealed before.

This is brand new stuff. That's why I call it an update. An update. Something nobody ever dreamed of. And, it was not made known unto the sons of men in other ages as it is now.

[16 : 13] Contrast. The past now. Revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. And Paul was the initial recipient of this truth.

As such, he was designated the apostle to the Gentiles. And, he immediately began sharing this message. And, one of the first ones that he obviously shared it with was a man by the name of Barnabas.

And, he and Barnabas constituted a team. And, they went on that first missionary journey together. And, they were proclaiming this new information to the Gentiles.

Preached to the Jews also. But, he preached to the Gentiles. He was the apostle to the Gentiles. Roger, question? Verse 4, he says, when you read, you may understand my knowledge of the mission.

Right. He's it. Well, I'll tell you, the Greek uses a couple of different words for a personal pronoun. For my, there is a, there is just a way of saying my in ordinary conversation to say that that's my idea.

[17 : 27] But, there is another way of emphasizing it in the Greek. Now, what we do is we put it in italics or we put it in bold print or something like that. But, the Greek used, they would just add an extra letter to it, usually an epsilon at the beginning and instead of it would, instead of coming out my, it would be my alone or mine myself.

And, that's the emphasis that was given to it as opposed to just a regular mine. And, it's used many, many times in Paul's epistles and it is designed in the Greek but it isn't brought out in the English to indicate the singularity of his information that this was not known to others at all.

It was revealed to Paul. And, it did not become known to others until he revealed it to others. And, then of course, it grows exponentially because when one person tells two people then those two tell four people and those four tell eight people and it just keeps spreading.

But, it began with the revelation of the mystery given exclusively to Paul. And, Paul was charged with the responsibility then of giving it to others.

And, here is the essence of it. Verse 6 that the Gentiles that is non-Jews should be fellow heirs and of the same body.

[18 : 55] And, that was a bombshell. Paul is going to be giving a number of bombshells in this epistle before we get through it.

And, one of the biggest ones he is going to give, in addition, and this is the biggest one with the implications, but he is going to give another really big one in Ephesians chapter 5 when we get to it that was absolutely unheard of.

And, he is going to say something like this, Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. and gave himself for it.

What? If you knew anything about women's suffrage, in the first century, women's suffrage meant women suffered.

That's about what it was. They suffered. Remember, there were second class citizens. There were women years ago. And, for him to come on the scene, and by the way, I consider it absolutely ironic that the Apostle Paul has been a major target of women's lib.

[20 : 04] They think that Paul, they've even called the Apostle Paul a woman hater, that he puts down women. You can imagine that. And, this is the same man that dropped this bombshell.

And, he says, I want all of you men out there to understand, you are to love your wife with a sacrificial love, because that's the way Jesus Christ loved the church.

He loved the church and gave himself for it. And, husbands, you are to put your wife's needs and protection and interests ahead of your own, because that's what Jesus Christ did for the church.

And, you talk about a bombshell, that was a bombshell because men were not accustomed to treating their wives that way. And, Paul is saying, that's what's required for those of you who are in Christ.

And, you wives, you are to be subject to the authority of your husband. You are to provide for him encouragement and cooperation. And, you are not to struggle or to fight against him.

[21 : 11] You are to submit to his authority. And, you've got a dynamic there that is incredible. Very few marriages today are made of this, even among a lot of Christians.

So many marriages are power struggles as to who gets their way, who got their way the last time, so this time it's my turn, that kind of thing. That's nonsense.

And, he gives a formula for a biblical marriage that the world has not recuperated from since. And, by the way, it's still very, very applicable. So, Paul is going to be used of God to divulge all kinds of things that were completely unheard of before.

We could enumerate a long list of them, of a dozen or so. Where, where, but in Paul's epistles do you find the rapture of the church, the body of Christ, the translation?

Nowhere. Nowhere. He says, behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in the moment and the twinkling of an hour.

[22 : 14] Where do you find that in the Old Testament? You don't. Where do you find that in the Gospels? You don't. Who's revealing that? Paul. Only Paul. Exclusively. And, it wasn't Paul's idea.

The risen Christ gave him this information through the abundance of revelations after his conversion. This is brand spanking new stuff. And, it hit that first century like a bombshell.

You know something? It is still struggling to make headway today. And, the reason is because so many Christians, so many churches, so many pastors are stuck in the Gospels.

Why? Because, that's where Jesus is. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. You can forget the rest of the Bible because Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. That's all that counts.

And, fellas, that is so wrong and so grievous. The Gospels represented a past update.

[23 : 20] Now, we've got an update to the Gospels. And, when you say Jesus is in the Gospels, listen, Jesus is in the Pauline Epistles.

Jesus is in the book of Revelation. Jesus is in Isaiah. Jesus is in Genesis. The whole book centers upon the person of Christ. But, it is an unfolding revelation.

And, when you, and I, don't get me started on the red letters. But, I tell you, there, you talk about unlearning something that's difficult.

people get hung up on those red letters and those are the only things that really mean something. The rest of the Bible, yeah, you can take it kind of seriously, but, it's those red letters that count.

And, man, you better do what those red letters said. Well, if you're going to, if you're going to follow that, then you need to follow it very, very carefully because you're going to be keeping the Sabbath and you're going to be offering sacrifice and you're, you know, that, hey, you can't take part and leave part.

[24 : 26] What you've got to do is keep in step with the update. And, let me say this, when, when this update comes to a conclusion, that is the Pauline revelation of these mysteries, when it comes to a conclusion, and when will that be?

When the church is gone. When the church is translated the rapture, when that rapture occurs, guess what? There's going to be another update from that which Paul gave.

So that Paul's information will not be the last word. What will be the last word? The last word will be Hebrews and the Peter epistles, 1st and 2nd, 1st and 2nd, 3rd John, and the book of Revelation.

They will constitute the new update. And that hasn't come yet. That's prophetic. That's still future. Right now, we are living in the present update of the mystery age, which was not revealed in times past, as it is now made known to the apostles and prophets.

So that's where we are. That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body. The Jews would be saying, these are believing Jews now.

[25 : 45] I'm talking about believing Jews because we're talking about Jewish people who had come to faith in Jesus as their Messiah.

Among these are the 3,000 who were baptized on the day of Pentecost. And they believed on the day of Pentecost. These are believing Jews. And they're all Jews. That's why they were there.

Because it was a Jewish feast. And they were Jewish people. And these who believed are now going to hear a message that is given by Paul not only to the Jew, but to the Gentile as well.

And Paul's message is now going to say, for there is no difference. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And we are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

And the Jew and the Gentile are on the same plane. And what is this new thing called? It's called the body of Christ. And Christ is the head.

[26 : 52] This is a concept that is never before imagined, never talked about, never hinted at in the Old Testament, nor in the Gospels. Completely different.

And Paul is charged with the responsibility of preaching it. And let me tell you something. When you're going to preach something that people haven't heard before, you better brace yourself for a lot of rejection.

Because it will not comport with what they've already tucked away in their minds and hearts. And this comes along. This bombshell revelation. And it's going to be well received by some.

And by the way, who's going to receive it? Who's going to be glad to hear it? Gentiles. Gentiles. Because as we saw in chapter 2, Paul reminds the Gentiles of their state before Christ became available to them.

And he says, where were you guys? Where were you Ephesians before Christ came along and died for your sins? I'll tell you where you were. You were without God, without hope, in this present world.

[28 : 03] You were doomed. Remember who you were and what you were. Now, now, they are in the body of Christ as bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh.

It is an amazing thing. And this is what he is charged to preach. Don't? A few years back, I read a book and in it it said the Bible would be a lot simpler if it wasn't to Paul.

Oh yeah. There are a lot of people that feel that way. Yeah. And one reason is because one reason, and I read you some of the objections before, some time ago, and some see contradictions in what Paul has to say.

And they are. they are contradictions on the surface. What they are, they are updates that do not comport with the previous information.

And people have difficulty squaring these. You will have difficulty if you don't see the progression of Revelation. Now, let me give you an example here.

[29 : 12] Here's where people do recognize the progression of Revelation they don't have any argument about. and here it is. I say, do you believe the Bible? Oh, absolutely.

Do you believe you ought to do what the Bible says? Oh, absolutely. You ought to do everything the Bible says. Alright. When's the last time you offered animal sacrifices? Oh, well. Well, we don't do that.

We don't do that. Well, now wait a minute. Why not? Well, that was for a different age. That was for a different time.

Exactly! That's the whole point. It was for a time that has now become passé. It isn't for that time anymore.

Nobody is saying they were wrong offering animal sacrifices in the Old Testament. They were supposed to. God required that. But once that final ultimate sacrifice was made on the cross, this man not with the blood of bulls and goats but with his own blood offered sacrifice for sin forever sat down by the right hand of the majesty on high.

[30 : 26] That's an update. We don't do that anymore. In fact, Gentiles never did do that. Gentiles were never given the law of Moses.

Romans makes that quite clear for the Gentiles which have not the law do those things written in the law because God has written the law in their hearts. Gentiles were never under the law of Moses.

They were never required to keep the Sabbath. They were never required to keep a kosher kitchen. They were never required because those things were not... You see, this is rightly dividing the Word of God.

And if you don't rightly divide it, the only alternative is to wrongly mix it. And when you mix it, you've got nothing but confusion. So people have no difficulty seeing an update from the Old Testament and we don't offer animal sacrifices anymore, but here's the punchline.

So many do not see the update within the body of what is called the New Testament. The Pauline epistles are an update from the Gospels.

[31 : 34] And the book of Acts is the connecting link. It is the Acts of the Apostles that consume 30 years of time that constitute the bridge between the Gospels and the earthly life of Christ and the Pauline epistles.

The Acts of the Apostles is in between there. So you've got doctrine on the move. It is developing. It is maturing. It is changing. And we need to change with it.

So where are we now? We are in the dispensation of the grace of God, which is the church age. And that's why we focus upon the epistles written to the churches.

I've often said, if you want to know what a church is and what a church is supposed to do, don't go to the book of 1 Kings. Don't go to the book of Esther.

Don't go to Exodus. go to the letters that were written to the churches. As I've said, it's not rocket science. That's where we get our marching orders.

[32 : 42] In the Pauline epistles. And the time is coming when they too are going to be passe. There will be another update.

Because everything that Paul was talking about relates to the church. but when the time comes that the church which is the body of Christ is gone, raptured, then a new administration, a new dispensation begins.

And there will be another update. And the church will be out of here, be gone. What will be underway then eventually will be the tribulation period and the content and the book of the Revelation and so on.

Comments or questions? Anybody? Anybody? Larry and then Roger. Paul was here to the Gentiles but yet he went to the temple.

Is that because the Gentiles also gathered there? Well the Gentiles who gathered in the temple were very very few.

[33 : 49] About the only Gentiles you would find in fact you wouldn't find any in the temple because we're talking about two different things now. Paul did go to the temple.

There was one temple and that was Jerusalem. But there were a lot of synagogues. And whenever Paul got into a new town he always headed for the synagogue.

You can read that on his missionary journeys. He always went to the synagogue. And when he went to the synagogue what he always preached was the same thing he preached in Damascus right after his conversion.

conversion. I mean apparently the man hadn't been saved but a couple of days maybe even hours. And the book of Acts tells us in chapter 9 right after his conversion he spent those three days without eating or drinking three days blind until Ananias came and laid his hands on him and saw it.

And then we read this remarkable thing. Acts 9 says and then straightway that's the Bible's way of saying he got right with it.

[34 : 54] Straightway he went into the synagogue Damascus. Damascus. Who's going to be in the synagogue?

Jews. And what Jews in particular are going to be in that synagogue? They will be Jews that he came to Damascus to persecute. to round up and drag them back to Jerusalem.

These Jews are going to be in that synagogue. And a whole lot of other Jews that lived in Damascus ordinarily lived in Damascus. We're talking about a foreign country now. This is Syria. This is a hundred miles plus from Jerusalem where Paul traveled to.

And he's got all of these Jews who are local residents of Damascus living in Damascus there at the synagogue and the Jews that he came to persecute there gathered there in the synagogue and we are told straightway Paul went to the synagogue in Damascus and preached that Jesus was the Messiah.

That's the very thing. That's the very same message that got Stephen stoned to death while Saul of Tarsus held the garments of those who stoned him. You talk about a 180.

[36 : 13] There's never been a 180 like this 180. And now he is preaching in the synagogue that Jesus is the Messiah and Israel crucified him. Wow.

This is a bombshell that just won't quit. This is amazing stuff. Problem is we just kind of read these things kind of gloss over them and we just halfway absorb what the text says and we just don't understand what's really taking place and the implications.

This is dynamite stuff. Later Paul is going to be called this guy who's turned the world upside down. That's quite a statement. Now no doubt there was some exaggeration there but to say something like that of somebody.

This guy has turned the world upside down and now he's come here to do the same. And that's exactly what he was doing because that message was so dramatic and so different and it constituted something that they had never heard before.

It was something. Wow. Give anything to live 15 minutes back in that synagogue and been a fly on the wall. That would have been sometime. Other thoughts or comments?

[37 : 19] Rod, you had something? Yeah. I had a conference a couple weeks ago and they had a big chart on the wall and it showed the Old Testament and the Old Gospels and underneath that it said for us and then Paul's official back and Paul's official to us and then the yeah.

That is good. That is good. And that's something that I wish we would all keep in mind because it is absolutely critical and that is all of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is equally inspired and is equally the Word of God and no portion of the Bible is somehow more God's Word than other portions.

Like keep in mind what Paul said. Whatsoever was written aforetime was written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. And a phrase that I hope you will cement in your mind and heart is this.

All of the Bible is for us but not all of the Bible is to us. And there's a huge difference between those.

And anybody who thinks all of the Bible is to us then you're put in that impossible situation of needing to do everything the Bible says and who's prepared to do that.

[38 : 45] You've got to keep in mind the updates are critical, they are dramatic, and they are so necessary to understanding the Word of God. Well, breakfast is here.

Thank you. Okay. Yeah. Dana. So why the portion of the Bible that's not to us, why is that for us? It is for us because it is for our learning.

It is for our understanding and appreciation. Everything that is prior to this dispensation, which is the age of grace, is designed, let me put it this way, the only possible explanation of the present is the past.

The only way to understand where you are is to understand how you got here. We are what we have been becoming, and we need the information from the past in order to make sense of the present, because the past is the only thing that explains the present.

The better grasp we have of the past, the more we'll be able to appreciate the present. And the time is coming in the future when we'll be saying the same thing about this present time, because that's the way history is, that's the way it works, and that's the way learning works.

[40 : 01] It's a beautiful thing.