

Ephesians

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Date: 28 December 2015

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, those of you who have a scripture sheet 2C and 3A, we're going to be looking at chapter 3. We've already begun that, but we've had a brief hiatus from it, so I'm going to review just a little bit.
- And I'm doing so because of the importance of the material and because of its tendency to be misunderstood or not appreciated at all in the Christian community.
- And up front and at the outset, I want to make this statement because what we are sharing from the scripture verses will elaborate on that.
- And this is my premise, and it is one that is not well understood and in some circles even not well received in the Christian community. And that is, with the raising up, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who is going to be designated as the apostle to the Gentiles, we are saying that a whole new order, the word that's being used now is paradigm.
- A whole new paradigm, a whole new methodology is going to appear on the landscape that was never there before, never thought of before, a completely new thing.
- [1 : 2 3] The core, the center of this message, of this ministry is going to remain the same. It is going to be focused upon the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- However, the great distinction that is to be made is the difference between the ministry committed to the twelve apostles before the crucifixion and the ministry committed to Paul the apostle after the crucifixion.
- And here's the difference, and it is a big, big difference. The marching orders that the twelve got, as Christ began his ministry, and this is reflected in Matthew chapter 10, where all the twelve are named and they are called, they are given power and authority and so on.
- They were to go exclusively to the children of the house of Israel. They were specifically told not to go to the Gentiles, not to go to the Samaritans, confine your ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
- And the message that they were to preach was the gospel of the kingdom, and that is, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. This is the same message that John the Baptist preached.
- [2 : 4 3] It is a message that was in fulfillment of the promises that God gave in the Old Testament, and he is now beginning to fulfill them. And Israel is at the very center of this, because it is through the nation of Israel that the Messiah is to come.
- And that's what made Israel so important, is because it was Messiah-centered. And when the twelve began their ministry, that's exactly what they preached.
- They preached the same thing that John the Baptist preached, and Jesus preached the same thing that they did, and it did not, it did not then concern itself with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.
- In fact, none of the twelve even believed that was going to happen. That was part of the plan and program of God from the very beginning, going all the way back to Genesis 3.15.

And Christ came for the purpose of dying, of providing redemption for humanity. But the twelve didn't understand that.

- [3 : 47] Even after he told them clearly, the Son of Man must needs go to Jerusalem, and there be subjected to cruel treatment for the scribes and the Pharisees, be handed over to the Romans, be crucified, and raised the third day.

And Dr. Luke tells us, and yet, these words were hidden from them. They did not understand the message. In fact, one occasion when Jesus was talking like that, Peter, who would be the only apostle that would have the brass to do this, the only one that had the gall to criticize the Lord, he took Jesus aside and said, you stop talking like that.

That's not going to happen. You're not going to Jerusalem and be crucified. That's the end of that. Well, of course, we know that's exactly what happened because that was part of the plan. But the twelve didn't understand that.

And fellas, the thing I want to emphasize, this is so important, the marching orders that the twelve had were given by our Lord specifically for Israel, and they contained the message for Israel that really didn't mean anything to anybody else.

And that had to do with the coming of the kingdom of heaven on earth. So keep in mind this fact. Jesus, Jesus the Christ, did not come to the world.

- [5 : 13] He came to Israel. This is John 1. He came into His own. His own, the nation of Israel. And His own received Him not.

So He did not come to the world. He came to Israel for the world. Israel. And Israel was intended to be the spearhead nation for reaching all the other nations.

But their cooperation was lagging. The Old Testament says, God says He'd raised up Israel to be a light to the Gentiles.

That is to all the other nations. But frankly, they weren't all that interested. They had a corner on God. They had the law. They had the covenants. They had the sacrifice.

They had everything. They just kind of kept God to themselves. And that is one reason that when the Messiah came, they would not accept Him because He did not meet their credentials for being the Messiah.

- [6 : 14] They said, We'll not have this man to reign over us. And we know the story. He was crucified. And what Christ gave to the twelve by way of their marching orders had to do with this kingdom thing.

Now, after death, burial, and resurrection, Christ is ascended. He's in heaven. And fellas, keep this in mind.

The cross, death, burial, and resurrection changed everything. That became the central focal point for all humanity.

Everything focuses on that. Death, burial, and resurrection. Now we have no longer a Christ on earth concerned with physical, material things.

Now we have an ascended Christ in heaven. And the emphasis is no longer on the physical. It's on the spiritual. And this is really radically different.

- [7 : 14] So what I am suggesting, and what Paul is going to be telling us here, and spelling out in chapter 3 as we get into it, he is saying that there is a whole new revelation.

And the term that I am using, because it's one with which we are all familiar, if anybody has ever done anything with a computer familiar with this, what we are saying is that the Apostle Paul is going to be given by the risen Christ an update.

An updated message different from what the Twelve had. He is going to reveal things to Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, that the Twelve never knew about.

That's right. And that the Old Testament prophets never prophesied. So they were not anticipating a fulfillment of something that was never prophesied.

And when Paul came on the scene, he sprang this new revelation on the world, because it was sprung on him by Christ.

[8 : 18] Now let's look at chapter 3 of Ephesians. And he says, for this cause, and he's talking about earlier in chapter 2, we'll not go back there because that's going back too far, that he talked about Jew and Gentile coming together in one body.

And the emphasis is upon the two, which is Jew and Gentile, being made into one entity. Well now that, previously, was completely unthinkable.

Because if there was anything that characterized the Jewish people, it was their separation from all the rest of the world. And now, this man, Paul the Apostle, is saying that separation is done away with.

And that God is making of the two, one new man. And it is called the body of Christ. And Jesus Christ himself is the head.

The church is the body. Who is in the church? They are Jews and they are Gentiles. Who else? That's it. Because that's all there are. In the whole world's population, there isn't anyone who exists who isn't a Jew or a Gentile.

[9 : 39] You're one or the other. You've got to be one or the other. It doesn't make any difference whether you want to be or not. You are. If you're not a Jew, you're a Gentile. If you're not a Gentile, you're a Jew. And now this new thing is, the wall of separation is broken down.

And in Christ, we are all children of God, whether we be Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female. That is totally new.

Totally new. And it came on the scene in the first century like a bombshell. And it caused a lot of confusion. Yes. And here's what we've got in the book of Acts. This is revealed.

And this is why to this day, the book of Acts remains the most controversial book in all of the scriptures in Christendom.

And we've got all these different denominations, beliefs, sects, splits, splinters. And they are all focusing on the book of Acts. And each one brings their own interpretation from the book of Acts.

[10 : 40] And most do not see that there are two programs running side by side. That is the gospel preached by the twelve and the gospel preached by the apostle Paul.

They are different gospels. And the distinction I want to make, and I have to insist upon this, the distinction I want to make is there is not just one gospel in the Bible.

There is more than one gospel. And by the way, the word gospel means good news. Would anybody suggest that there is only one item of good news in the New Testament?

Of course not. There are whole lots of them. There are a whole lot of gospels. But the gospel of the kingdom that the twelve preached for which they were praying, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come.

That's a prayer. Thy kingdom come so that thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That's a kingdom prayer. And that consists of the message that the twelve were preaching.

[11 : 52] But Paul's message is Israel has been set aside in unbelief. Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles become in.

And God is going to use the rejection of the Messiah by Israel as the basis for extending the gospel of the person of Christ to the entire world and it includes all of the Gentiles.

And what was available to the Gentiles before? Nothing. Nothing. This is why Paul said in Galatians and in Ephesians 2 when he writes to the Gentiles he says, And remember, you once were children of wrath.

You were without God, without hope, in this present world. But now, in Christ Jesus, you are brought near. You who one time were far off, you are brought near by the finished work of Christ.

And so, God is going to use the rejection of Christ by the Jews to actually make him available to all the rest of the world.

[13 : 07] In other words, he's going to use Paul as one man to complete, to begin and complete the ministry that Israel was disobedient in fulfilling.

And whereas the twelve and the Jew did not extend the light of God to the Gentiles, he is going to raise up this one man, Paul, and utilize him as the apostle to the Gentiles.

And that's where we're in chapter 3. For this cause, I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. Paul is saying, Listen, that's why I'm in this situation.

It's for you Gentiles. That's why my ministry was birthed. That's why God called me. It's for you Gentiles. If you have heard, assuming that you have heard, and the translation says, For I suppose that you have heard, and are also built up together, or the stewardship, I'm sorry, the stewardship of God's grace, which was given me for you.

Stewardship was that which was entrusted to someone with the intent that they diligently and faithfully carry out the responsibilities of the stewardship to honor the one who gave him the stewardship.

[14 : 28] And this goes all the way back to this goes all the way back to the book of Genesis and the stewardship concept that was established with Joseph and Pharaoh.

When Joseph rose to this position of prominence in Egypt, Pharaoh installed him as his steward. Remember, he had the dreams about the seven lean years and the seven years of plenty and everything, and it resulted in the salvation of the nation of Egypt.

And Pharaoh was so grateful that he appointed Joseph as his steward. That meant he put him in charge of all of the affairs of the entire nation.

he entrusted responsibility to Joseph as the steward. And Christ refers to this in the New Testament when he talks about the ministry of stewardship and how you are to faithfully carry out and represent the one who put you in that office.

And here Paul is saying that he has been committed with the stewardship of God's grace which was given me for you. Knopf translates it, you will have been told how God planned to give me a special grace for preaching to you.

[15 : 51] And the RSV says, assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you. Now the question is, to whom else did God give this?

And the answer is, nobody. Nobody. Nobody. He gave it to Paul exclusively. Now when Paul shared it and gave it to others, then each one could pick up that baton and carry it on.

And that's the whole idea of evangelization. One who knows the truth tells it to a body of people who then all know the truth and then they can all take that truth and expand it further.

This is the principle of multiplication. It's not addition, it's multiplication. But it began one man. One man to whom God revealed, listen, to whom God revealed something that He had never revealed before to anyone.

Hmm. We are told that it had been kept secret in the mind and heart of God from the beginning.

- [17 : 09] And now at this strategic point, He reveals it to this renegade on the road to Damascus and calls him with a special deputation that had never been given to anyone else.
- And let me tell you something. Paul had a difficult time in a lot of places convincing people of that. And so it is today.
- There are still people who do not see the authenticity and the uniqueness of Paul's ministry. And a great deal is lost because of that.
- Let's continue on now. Verse 3. How that, we're in chapter 3 now, how that, by revelation, that is, by direct revelation, by disclosure, He, that is, the risen Christ, made known to me, Paul, the mystery.
- Best way to translate this word mystery is secret. It doesn't mean something that cannot be known, but it means something that cannot be known unless you have the key to the code, unless you are let in on it.
- [18 : 31] It is a secret. And when each of us here today, each of us here today, has information in our human spirit, in our mind, that no one else in this room knows.
- All of us do. We all have a thing called a private mind. and all of you have experiences and thoughts in your mind that nobody else in this room knows.
- And to you, and for you, that is your secret. Nobody else knows that. But the moment you tell somebody else, then the secret is out.
- It's no longer a private matter of secret reserved only to you because you told somebody. Now it's out. That's exactly the status of this information that God is going to reveal to Paul, the apostle.
- It is something that was hidden in the heart and mind of God that he had never before divulged to anyone. And now, it's time to bring it out.
- [19 : 44] And he reveals it to Saul of Tarsus. How that by revelation, he made known to me the mystery. And I'm in 3B here.
- And this is one that you might not have, but I know that it was distributed before. So, if you don't have a scripture sheet, then get your Bible, if you will. But this is 3B.
- how a revelation taught me the secret, how he allowed me to understand his secret by giving me a direct revelation as I wrote afore in a few words, as I've already shortly written to you, whereby, verse 4, Ephesians 3 and verse 4, whereby, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.
- 20th century New Testament says, you will be able to judge how far I understand this hidden purpose of God in Christ. Weymouth says, you can judge of my insight into the truth of Christ.
- Williams, you will be able to understand my insight into the secret about the Christ. Who else had that insight? Nobody. Nobody.
- [21 : 15] Until Paul revealed it. And let me tell you something, guys. If there is anything that men are skeptical of, and in many cases, they have a right to be, it is something that is presented that is brand new.
- We have a reluctance to embrace a new concept, a new idea. We are far more comfortable with the old, the tried and true with which we are familiar.
- And when someone kicks over the traces and takes off on an entirely different tangent, that sends up a red flag to us and we say, hey, wait a minute now, you better watch this guy.
- Where is he going with this? We never heard this before. And the skepticism is natural, predictable. And I'll tell you what, in most cases, it's probably a good thing.

You need to be skeptical of an entirely new concept, of something you've never heard of before. This is the basis on which a lot of cons and schemes are built. And the old saying goes, you know, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably isn't true.

[22 : 32] So you need to look at it with a skeptical eye. We need to develop a spirit of discernment. And the issue here, and I mean the issue here, is this.

Did the risen Christ appear personally to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus and give him this information that had never before been divulged to anyone else?

Did he do that? Or did he not? everything hinges on your answer to that question. And who does he have besides himself and the Spirit of God to sell, and I use that word advisedly, to sell this message brand new to everyone?

you talk about a gargantuan task. You talk about an incredible undertaking. This is what was put on the shoulders of this man.

But the God who put it there would be the God who would be with him. Even through the stonings and the beatings and the deprivation and everything that went with it.

[23 : 55] Because Paul, like the Christ before him, is going to pay an enormous price for delivering the truth.

And let me tell you something, guys. It has always been this way. When our Lord was here, he upbraided his own people, the Israelites, and he said, which, name just one, which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?

put to death, mistreat, vilify, deny, ridicule. Which of the prophets that God raised up did your fathers not reject?

And they continue in the same vein in their treatment of Jesus Christ, and they're going to continue in the same vein with their treatment of the Apostle Paul. And you read that list of things to which he was subjected all the times.

He was beaten by the Jews. His shipwrecked. He was without food. He was in the deep. He was beaten five times for the Jews. Forty stripes, save one. All of this stuff he went through for one reason.

[25 : 06] He was proclaiming the truth. And men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. And that's where we are today. Nothing has changed. Joe? But Paul was put to death by the Romans, right?

Well, what was he guilty of in the Romans law? What was he guilty of that they put him to death? Well, we aren't given the particulars of the trial, but my suggestion is this.

And we are not given this information as the book of 2 Timothy concludes. We can only gather that Paul was expecting shortly to be executed because he talked about he fought a good fight.

The time of his departure is near. He's ready to be offered up. He was under a death sentence then and he knew that the end was near. And in so far as and by the way, let me just insert this.

When he first arrived in Rome, he was allowed to live in a rented quarters. He rented a little villa and local Jews there in Rome came to him almost on a daily basis and he was able to receive company, but he was under house arrest and he was still handcuffed to a Roman guard.

[26 : 31] He was a Roman citizen. That's why he was allowed to do that. And apparently, we aren't told this in Scripture, but apparently, Paul had his day in court before Caesar because he said he appealed the Caesar and as a Roman citizen he was able to do that.

And from what we gather, he must have been found innocent of whatever charges were laid against him because he was released and he enjoyed about two or three more years of freedom.

And by the way, while he was under house arrest in Rome, he was under protective custody of Rome and during that time, a couple of years, he wrote the letter we're reading, Ephesians.

He wrote Ephesians and Philippians and Colossians and Philemon. Those are the epistles that Paul wrote. They are referred to as the prison epistles.

It's not really a good term. I would prefer to say they were epistles that he wrote during his house arrest. And from that, he apparently was found innocent and was set free and he enjoyed about two or three years of freedom where he continued preaching and traveling throughout the Mediterranean world and he was re-arrested.

[28 : 04] And this time, he wasn't in house arrest. I'm not sure about this, but I think this was a case. You'd have to check history to be sure. I think there was a different Caesar. You know, the Caesars came and went as they died off and as they were killed off.

And I think Paul faced a different Caesar of Rome than what he did the first time. This time, he's not under house arrest. This time, he's in the Mamertine prison. And it is from there that he writes his second and we believe his last epistle.

This is what he wrote to Timothy, 2 Timothy. And he talked about his execution being upcoming. Now, Rome, Rome would not charge anyone or execute anyone, certainly for embracing a different religion.

Because Rome was thoroughly committed to polytheism. They already worshipped many gods. And if you were willing to consider Jesus Christ as just another god and add him to the list, Rome didn't have any problem with that.

The problem was, if you insisted that Jesus Christ was the only lord, then that was considered an insult to the emperor of Rome.

[29 : 26] Because he was deified by Rome and he was considered a god. And if you would not say Cicero Curios, that's Latin for Caesar is lord.

And when you use the word lord, you are saying that this one occupies a position of prominence above which and beyond which there is none other.

Lord means the top. That's it. There's no appeal above that. And as long as you were willing to say Caesar is lord, you were okay with the Roman empire, then you could go ahead and bow down to any other statue, idol, whatever you wanted.

It didn't make any difference. But a committed Christian was unable to do that and live with his conscience. And the only thing he could say is Jesus Christ is Curios.

Jesus Christ is lord. That automatically made you a traitor to Rome. And treason was the penalty met with death.

[30 : 37] And that's why a lot of Christians were put to death. They simply would not say Cicerem Curios. And for that it cost them their life.

Joe? Why wouldn't the Jews then also have been guilty of that? The Jews that, you know, God was it. It was one God. That was their God. That's the only one they worshipped.

Why wouldn't the Jews have come under the same persecution then as the new Christians? Now, I understood, this is secular history now, that Rome would allow the Jewish religion, because it was an old religion, it was there, it had been established before Rome took over the empire, before Rome captured the world.

That's true. But any new religion that came along, if a new religion came along, then it was outlawed, it was not allowed, it was sort of building. I'm sure that was part of it.

And here's another thing that you have to consider. The laws of Rome were imposed wherever Rome was in power. However, they were much more strictly enforced in Rome and the immediate environs of Rome.

[31 : 48] And there was a lot of latitude and a lot of liberties that were extended in the far-flung regions where Rome did not have such centralized kind of control. And if you lived in Rome and were subjected to this, and by the way, this is when all of this real intense persecution was going on, and Paul was in the midst of it.

This is when Christians were being butchered in the Colosseum, being thrown to the lions, being sport for the gladiators, and all the rest of it. This is where and when that was happening, and Nero, who was probably one of the worst of the Roman emperors, you'll recall the story about Nero fiddling while Rome burned, and the whole suggestion was that it was Rome itself and the henchmen of the government that set the fires, and that burned Rome, and then they blamed it on the Christians.

And part of the rationale was for Christians, well, you know, these Christians are talking about the fires of hell, and they're the ones who set these fires, and the Christians were blamed for the burning of Rome, and that, of course, gave them immediate license to come in and persecute the Christians and execute them, and there were thousands and thousands of believers put to death in Rome because of the whim of the emperor, and this Nero was, in every sense of the term, a megalomaniac, a madman of extreme proportions, and he was responsible for all kinds of brutality, as were some of the others, and this continued on and on until it got to the place, got to the place in the fourth century, shortly after the 300s began, 313, 315, somewhere, when Constantine, the emperor, came to the throne, and he saw the writing on the wall, and the writing on the wall was this, listen, the more we try to stamp out these people, the more they multiply, and he made what appeared to have been a purely political decision.

We don't know if anything genuinely spiritual entered into it, because whenever politicians make religious kind of decisions, they're always a little suspect, because some politicians are just political to the core, they always want to know which way the wind's blowing, and that's the way, that may have been the situation with Constantine, we don't know, but in 3, I think it was 325 or 323, the edict of Constantine was a document, an official document, that was provided by the emperor of Rome, Constantine, and in short, it said this, it is no longer illegal for anyone to be a Christian.

It is now illegal for you not to be a Christian. And they had thousands of pagan priests, line up and wait their turn to be baptized into the Christian faith, so-called.

[35 : 13] And as some have pointed out, Christianity has never recovered from that, and in many respects probably hasn't, because people do not become Christians by going through some kind of a rite, such as water baptism.

becoming a Christian is a matter of the heart, it is a matter of conviction, it is not associated with political expediency.

You don't become a Christian because someone else has become a Christian. You become a Christian because of the conviction and persuasion of your own mind and heart, so that it is a decision you make because you are convinced it is the right decision and it's the right thing for you to do.

Not because you are coerced, forced, paid to, or anything else. So, all of these things come into play. And in the midst of this, the Apostle Paul is proclaiming something that is brand new.

Folks, the Middle East and the Mediterranean world, politically and religiously, is in an explosive kind of cauldron during these first three centuries.

[36 : 31] And the Apostle Paul is right on the cutting edge of it. And there is so much going on, so much confusion, and so much change taking place. And so far as the people of God are concerned, the greatness of this change has to do with this whole new shift, this whole new thing that has come about whereby you are justified by grace through faith plus nothing.

And this hit the whole continent, all three continents, like a bombshell. And they are trying to recover from it and trying to appropriate it and understand it.

And as I mentioned before, this is what creates so much confusion and so many different interpretations from the book of Acts. Well, yeah. you mentioned that Paul's ministry was not prophesied in the Old Testament.

I'm sorry, his what? Paul's ministry was not prophesied in the Old Testament. It's not a subject of prophecy. Is there any logic to that in your mind?

So many other things are prophesied. Being such a major thing, why would that be? I think it was specifically omitted, intentionally omitted. it was hidden in the mind and heart of God to be revealed at this strategic time and this is the time.

[37 : 58] And we'll look into this further because it's developing here. And the interesting thing is, we'll not go there now because the food is here, but we'll be looking at Galatians and Paul says that when he received this ministry, when he received this message from the risen Christ, and this is really important guys, put this in your mind and we'll get to it the next time.

He says, as he wrote to the Galatians, he said, he did not consult with flesh and blood, neither did he go up to Jerusalem to talk to the twelve, because they could add nothing to me.

In other words, the twelve could not tell me anything that I didn't know. In fact, I knew some things that the twelve didn't know. And this is why Peter closed out his second epistle and he writes about Paul and he says, our beloved brother Paul wrote some things that are hard to be understood.

Well, they were hard to be understood by a whole lot of people and many did not get it. And fellas, let me tell you something. Many today still don't get it.

And the difference is night and day. And we'll see that as it develops further. Thank you for your participation. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.