

Ephesians

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[0 : 0 0] Sheet 3B we are considering, and if you will take a look at the copy that you have, we will warm to the issue.

We get this thing started right. And we are on the cutting edge of some information that has, in my estimation, escaped much of Christendom for a long, long time.

And that is what we refer to as the update of information that was given by our Lord Jesus Christ after he ascended to heaven.

And perhaps the most common opinion is that the marching orders that were left by our Lord for believers to obey are those consisting of Matthew 28, 19, and 20 about what is referred to as the Great Commission.

The Bible never calls that the Great Commission. That is simply a designation that people have tacked on to it.

[1 : 1 1] And I'm sure that it enjoys the name the Great Commission because it was a commission that Christ gave. Well, for the record, we may be sure that any commission that Christ gave was a Great Commission just because he gave it.

However, the important thing that I really want you to note is that that was not the last commission that he gave. In fact, the last commission that he gave has to do with that which has not yet even transpired.

And that will be the book of the Revelation. There are things that have been prophesied and that have been given as orders or marching orders for believers during that time, which of course hasn't yet even occurred.

We don't know how far away those events are that are depicted in the book of the Revelation, but they are coming. So the important thing for us to note is that the Bible is a book of ongoing revelation.

There is a progression of revelation. And when you start out with the beginning of the book of Genesis, you've got very little information given insofar as the deity behind creation.

[2 : 3 8] It just starts out in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Well, that's very elemental and very basic. But the first few chapters of the book of Genesis all relate to creation.

And as you move on through Genesis, you will find that God begins revealing himself more and more to individuals like Adam and then like Noah and then like Abraham.

And all we are saying is that Abraham, who came many, many years after Noah, was up on information about God, his natures, character, etc.

that Noah didn't have. Because God had not revealed everything to Noah that he revealed later to Abraham. And yet, as Abraham is one of the fathers referred to as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you move on past Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and then go into the twelve sons.

And each of these twelve sons have more information about the revelation, the character and nature of God, and his dealings with people than what their grandparents had.

[3 : 55] And as we move on through the Bible, through the Pentateuch, through Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, then you get into the Judges. They've got even more information because God continually unveils himself as he moves on in his dealings with humanity.

And as you move further, then we've got the Kings. Well, the Kings is an update from the Judges. And the prophets come on the scene. And then you've got the Psalms and David and so on.

So all I'm saying is, as you move through the Bible, we find a progressive unfolding of the nature and character of God and his dealings and relationship to humanity that you don't find in the very earliest part of the Bible.

And that is obviously by divine design. But then when we come into the minor prophets and in the English Bible, the King James Bible, or what's commonly referred to as the Christian Bible, the last book that we have is the book of Malachi.

But if you're following the Jewish canon of Scripture, which, by the way, has the very same books that the Christian Bible has in the Old Testament, you'll find that the order of the books is a little bit different.

[5 : 16] And they close out the Old Testament, which, of course, our Jewish friends refer to as the whole Bible. They believe that what we call Genesis through Malachi, consisting of 39 books, what we call the Old Testament, the Jews call the Bible.

That's the whole thing as far as they're concerned. And they do not recognize our New Testament at all, which is understandable if you are Jewish. We believe that they are in error in that.

And, of course, they believe that we are in error. We say that Jesus was the Messiah promised by Moses and the prophets. And they say Jesus was not the Messiah.

And that they, the Jewish people, are still looking for the first coming of the Messiah. We tell them, Fellas, you missed the boat. He already came the first time.

We're looking for the second coming. But all of this has to do with updated revelation. And then, as you read, as you read the Old Testament, and if you're reading in the English Bible, and you conclude with Malachi, unless you are a very extraordinary person, when you come to the reading of Malachi, and you close the Old Testament, you're kind of scratching your head and saying, you mean that's it?

[6 : 37] That's the way the story ends? And no, Paul Harvey would say, you need the rest of the story. And the rest of the story doesn't even begin until 400 years.

Four centuries after the Old Testament has concluded. And these are sometimes referred to as the four silent centuries, given that name, because during those 400 years, also called the intertestamental period, God had nothing to say to anybody by way of revelation.

No information was forthcoming from heaven. No prophets were writing. There was nothing given to writing about. In these 400 years, there were significant things happening in the nation of Israel, particularly in connection with the Maccabees, and the revolt, and so on, and the rise of the Greeks to power, and Alexander the Great, and all of these things.

They all took place during that intertestamental period. But then, as the New Testament opens, we find, of course, the arrival of John the Baptist on the scene, and the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And this represents a huge unveiling of brand new information that in the Old Testament was only prophesied.

[8 : 06] And by the way, as Malachi closes out, you will find Malachi in chapter 3 and in chapter 4, both referring to the arrival on the scene of John the Baptist.

He's not given that name, but he's given the one who will come in the power and ministry of Elijah. And Malachi says, And he will prepare the way of the Lord.

And then when you read in Malachi chapter 4, we've got the prediction of the Messiah himself coming. And as the New Testament opens, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we have our Lord Jesus Christ on the scene.

And this, of course, represents a huge increase of information that was only prophesied in many times vague details in the Old Testament.

But now it is coming to life. And in the person of Christ, he is introduced to the nation of Israel by John the Baptist. And this is all new stuff.

[9 : 17] I mean, this is all brand new. And by the way, you ought to note that the people of Israel, when John came on the scene and began preaching, Prepare ye the way of the Lord.

That's simply another way of saying, Get ready. He is coming. And make his path straight. And when John began preaching this message, and then looked up and saw Jesus, the Messiah, coming down the road, he announced, Behold, the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world, and so on.

And John's ministry was absolutely electrifying. These people were so excited because they knew. They knew what John was talking about.

And by the way, guys, when you read about John baptizing the people who came to him, there isn't any indication anywhere that anyone asked, John, what are you doing?

What is this? Why are you baptizing all these people with water? Never ask that question. Nobody ever asked that question. And the reason they didn't ask the question is because they already knew the answer.

[10 : 34] They knew that John was announcing the coming of the kingdom of heaven. He says, Get ready, everybody. Hey, get your act together. You need to repent of your sin because God is on His way and He's going to judge you and you better be ready to receive Him.

You need to repent of your sin and you need to be ceremonially cleansed and washed. And that was the purpose of baptism for John. And we don't know how many people, but there were huge throngs that came out to be baptized of John.

We do know that with everything that God has to do anything with, there is always opposition. And in this case, just like the common people heard Jesus gladly, the common people heard John the Baptist gladly.

and they came out and were baptized by Him because Moses had prophesied way back in the book of Exodus that God was one day going to make the entire nation of Israel a kingdom of priests.

And this is really different because Israel already had a priestly tribe. that was a tribe of Levi. And the Levites were to serve as priests.

[12 : 02] You see, a prophet is one who represents God to man. A priest is one who represents man to God.

And what Moses is saying is while it's all well and good that the nation of Israel twelve tribes has a priestly nation that's the tribe of Levi.

They were the ones that took care of the religious ritual and the sacrifice of the animals and all of the things to do with the altar and the covenants and all the rest of it. But he's saying the time is coming when I'm going to make the whole nation of Israel a kingdom of priests and they are going to represent the whole world to God.

they are going to be priests for all the world. The Gentiles. And we are told that one of the reasons that the Israelites were raised up of God was to be a light to the Gentiles.

Now, if you're going to be a priest in the tribe of Levi, you would be inducted into the priesthood at the age of thirty. And by the way, Jesus was thirty years old when he was baptized of John, inducted into the priesthood, but it wasn't the Levitical priesthood because Christ was not qualified to be a Levitical priest.

[13 : 32] He was qualified to be a different priest of a different order. That's of the order of Melchizedek. A very special one because he was not of the tribe of Levi. He was of the tribe of Judah.

But this is a unique priesthood. priesthood. So Christ is going to be established as prophet, priest, and king. The only one to have ever filled all three offices.

And you know, our founding fathers, by the way, I want to digress here just a little bit, but they recognized the principle that is involved in that and God would not allow any human being in Israel to occupy the office of prophet, priest, and king.

And that would be a consolidation and a concentration of too much power in one individual. Wouldn't be able to handle it. But Jesus is prophet, priest, and king, and we don't have to worry about his corrupting his power.

He will exercise and use it judicially. And our founding fathers picked up on that when they recognized that no individual in government can be invested with too much power because they can't be trusted with it.

[14 : 46] They understood something about human nature. And that's why we have a legislature, a judiciary, and an executive office, because each one could provide a check and a balance on the other.

And where you have, like in some countries, a dictatorial type of government where one person makes the laws and they make all the decisions, you can be sure the corruption is right around the corner.

So all of these things are built into this factor. And what we've got here, with John the Baptist baptizing these people, interestingly enough, great throngs came out to be baptized of John, but there is no record that John ever asked anybody, by the way, you are of the tribe of Levi, aren't you?

Because nobody else is supposed to be baptized as a priest unless you are of the tribe of Levi. He didn't do that. John baptized everyone who came to him. And by the way, you can be sure of this, they were all Jews.

One hundred percent Jews. Because what John was doing and saying and baptizing had no relevance at all to non-Jewish people.

[15 : 59] They didn't even know about it. But the Jew, they were steeped in this thing about the Messiah coming. And the kingdom of heaven coming to earth and Israel being a kingdom of priests.

And when John began preaching that message, people were saying, hey, this is it! This is it! And they came out in great droves and were baptized of John.

We don't know how many because we're not given a number. But we do know there were huge throngs of people that lined the banks of the Jordan and were baptized by John as he predicted the coming of the Messiah and then announced him.

So these people were just electrified by John's message. However, as I made the statement earlier, anything and everything that God has ever done in any age he has ever done it has always been opposed by the unbelieving element.

When God called Noah to build that ark the opposition was there. Laughter, ridicule, etc.

[17 : 11] Noah preached for how many years? And tried to win people to his side and we know that as an evangelist it was a grade A failure.

He ended up convincing nobody but his own family and sons-in-law and eight souls went on that ark and all the rest perished.

They were the opposition. So when John is going to be preaching this message the common people will come out and they identified with John and they were baptized of John and they were listening to John's message get ready the Messiah is coming and in John chapter 1 he makes it very clear and by the way you need to separate John the writer of the gospel from John the Baptist there are two different Johns and John said the reason I have come baptizing the very reason for me doing this is that I might reproduce the Messiah to Israel and here he is and Jesus came to him for baptism and John said I can't do this I can't baptize you I just can't do this he saw Jesus as being ineligible unqualified to receive the baptism that he was administering and you got to remember that how close these two were

I don't know but they were second cousins because John's mother and Jesus' mother were first cousins and John refused to baptize Jesus and he said I just can't do this and the reason he took that position of course was because John was preaching repent and be baptized for the remission of sins what would that imply of anyone who submitted to John's baptism that they were a sinner nobody needs to be forgiven of their sin if they don't have any sin and Christ clearly did not qualify because John was baptizing those who were confessing acknowledging admitting their sin and receiving this ceremonial cleansing and then Jesus made this significant statement suffer it now to be so well that's the

King James he said allow it now to be so for thus it becomes me it is fitting for me to fulfill all righteousness and in saying that Christ was identifying himself with the nation of Israel and as a loyal observant Jew this is the same one who is later going to say when he is accused of breaking the law which he never did but he frequently broke the Pharisees interpretation of the law particularly regarding the Sabbath and he took the position that he came not to destroy but to fulfill the law and as this baptism was a preparatory thing for the coming of the kingdom of heaven Christ took his position alongside all of the rest of Israel being identified with them as a corporate body and entering into that obedience that Moses required and Christ kept the law of Moses perfectly in fact he is the only

[21 : 00] Jew who ever did and then John when he understood that John was willing to baptize him and he did when he did of course the dove descended from heaven the voice was heard this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased hear him and so on so all of these things are taking place and this is brand new this was just vaguely prophesied way back in Exodus 19 and verse 6 and I will make you a kingdom of priests and couple of thousand years passed before that was going to be fulfilled and here this is a radically updated revelation nobody in the Old Testament had any idea that this was coming and when Christ came on the scene he of course ministered for three and a half years and main purpose he came as he made it very very clear that he came to reveal the father and to do the will of him that sent me and all of this was about new information the most dramatic thing about this was going to occur is that when Christ is offered by John and later when he offered himself where do we find that same thing surfacing again that did with Noah and his message that did with all the prophets and their message that did with John the Baptist did the intelligentsia did the elite did the shakers and movers of Israel come out and be baptized of John no no the scriptures tell us that the scribes the Pharisees

Sadducees rejected the counsel of God against themselves not being baptized by John they wouldn't recognize him John was not from one of their rabbinical schools he was this weird guy with a strange diet and strange apparel out in the wilderness preaching why who legitimized that guy we didn't put our stamp of approval on him he didn't come from any of our schools he was just a nobody you know and they and they rejected him so they rejected John and by the way remember later on when they asked Christ a question he said well that's an interesting question he said I'll answer it for you but you'll have to answer a question for me first and they said okay what was it and he said tell me the baptism of John yes was that of men or was it of God now now they're put in a corner because if they say well it was just of men they knew that they were going to have all of the common people down on them because they had already accepted

John and his message as legitimate and they had been baptized of John so if they say well God didn't have anything to do with it it was purely human that's all then what does that make the masses look like who've already submitted themselves to John's baptism makes them all wrong stupid but on the other hand if they say well it was obviously of God then Jesus was going to come back and say well if it was of God then why did you refuse his baptism why weren't you baptized so they had a little huddle over there they put their heads together and they said you know what this guy's got us either way we go we can't answer either way so they came back with this profound conclusion we don't know we can't tell Jesus said well that's interesting well neither can I tell you the answer to your question and that was the end of that so what we've got here guys is doctrine revelation information on the move and when it comes to the rejection again the opposition you see they oppose

John now we know they're going to oppose Jesus and there's going to be a crucifixion all of this is an anti God thing going all the way back to Noah well actually it even predates Noah it goes back to the serpent that's where the opposition began in Genesis 3 so everywhere and anytime God is revealing himself and unfolds a new measure of his plan or revelation there is always opposition time is coming of course when that will be finally dealt with but for now opposition to bounds and today in the day and age in which we live right now nothing has changed there is opposition afoot everywhere you look and it and it is opposition to the plan and program of God so we've got Christ actually going to that cross dying on the cross being resurrected after three days and it is generally assumed generally assumed that was

God's final what shall I say that was God's exhaustion of his long suffering since he sent his own son and they did not see fit to accept him but they crucified him I'm writing off Israel they're finished kaput done over and out and that is probably the common opinion but it would be a radical mistake to assume that because the Bible does not say that anywhere I think and I'm not particularly proud to admit this but I think for several years probably the first 15 years of my Christian life I just assumed that that was the end of Israel and that Acts chapter 2 opens and it's the beginning of the church that's the birthday of the church and Israel is off the scene that was an assumption that I made and it was the party line and you know something fellas it still is the party line you can ask almost any preacher anywhere what was the birthday of the church and they'll tell you

[27 : 54] Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost everybody knows that's the beginning of the church well the Bible never says that that is an assumption that is imposed upon it what Peter does when he preaches that Pentecostal address when these fellows say what's going on here and they were speaking with tongues and speaking languages that they had not heard not learned and they say what in the world is this what's happening here there's this voice this noise as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled the whole place where they were sitting and everybody is dumbfounded and puzzled and scared and what is this what's happening somebody piped up and said oh I know what's wrong these guys are drunk they're a bunch of drunks they're hung over and Peter stood up and said no no no no listen these men are not drunken as you suppose for crying out loud it's only nine o'clock in the morning they're not drunk and then

Peter says this is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel now the way a lot of our brethren would have that read is that Peter stood up and said this is the birthday of the church but there is no such thing not even a hint and what Peter does is he levels an accusation an indictment against those people who were gathered there and he said God sent his son to this earth to be a witness to him and we saw you saw with your own eyes many of the miracles and signs that he did and the people that he healed and so on and God demonstrated he was working through Jesus the Messiah and you you have by wicked hands crucified and slain the Lord of glory but God raised him from the dead and now the message that is delivered to you is you cannot undo what you did you can't uncrucify him but you can be big enough and honest enough to acknowledge what you did admit that you were wrong and do a 180 reverse yourself and be baptized in the name of this one whom you crucified and 3,000 of them did just that and fellas they were all

Jews this was in the Jewish temple area you weren't even allowed to be there if you weren't a Jew and 3,000 of them came to faith that Jesus was the Messiah and to prove that they identified with him they submitted to baptism in the name of Jesus of Nazareth this was more update information now consider this if you will in connection with this and what is supposed to be the beginning of the church it is no such thing what it is is the partial fulfillment of a promise that God made for Israel and the promise is given back in Joel chapter 3 but it is only partially fulfilled and what you see is taking place in the balance of Joel's prophecy has to do with things that will be involved with the second coming and that is the sun being darkened and the moon turning into red blood color and all of this that's not going to happen because that part of the prophecy yet remains to be fulfilled but the first part was fulfilled and that is what

Peter is pointing to and what he is telling Israel and to me guys this is so critical this is so critical please listen up what he is telling Israel and these people that are gathered there is listen even though you arranged for his crucifixion God raised him from the dead and I want you to know you still have an opportunity it is not completely passed God will still make good on his promise if you as a nation will do what these three thousand did God and this is in Acts chapter three and it is as clear as a nose on your face I don't know how I read over this many times but I never saw it and Peter said two things are required for this kingdom of heaven to come to earth one is the Messiah has to pay the price for reversing the curse and the price of course will be death because that's going to make that payment and

Peter tells his audience and this is in Acts chapter three it's kind of like a continuation of the Pentecostal message Peter tells his audience that Jesus has already done that God has done his part so the first leg of a two leg thing is complete and the first is Messiah must die and he did God did that now Israel the ball is in your court what are you going to do and we lose sight of the fact that Israel remains as a nation in a mode of rejection and we become so enamored with the numbers of three thousand that were saved we look at that as a kind of wholesale reversal of the nation and it wasn't anything of the kind because three thousand made up a very tiny pittance of the nation as a whole this was a very small number later in

[34 : 21] Acts it'll be increased to five thousand because more and more believers are being added and they're all Jews there'll be two thousand more Jews who will come in line based on the testimony and the witness of the three thousand who did but the point that needs to be made and this is so important is that the possibility of the kingdom of heaven coming to earth did not end with the crucifixion the opportunity is extended to Israel and this was the mission and ministry of the twelve they were preaching the same thing that John preached which was repent the kingdom of heaven is at hand and they were told to take this message to Jerusalem Judea Samaria the uttermost parts of the earth and as you read later on in the book of Acts these guys these twelve had not gotten out of

Jerusalem and it's years later they're still in Jerusalem they're supposed to be going to the whole world no no no no they're supposed to begin in Jerusalem and the idea is when you have succeeded in winning Jerusalem then you go to Judea then to Samaria and then to all the world did they ever win Jerusalem no no that's the whole point they did not win Jerusalem were they wrong no were they ineffective no were they disobedient no well who was Jerusalem Jerusalem maintained their unbelief they dug their heels in and would not come to their message so all of this is moving moving moving Joe why did those movers and shakers Jerusalem the head why didn't they believe was it two reasons one

Jesus didn't come the way they expected him to come like a king to overthrow the Roman government was that one reason or the power thing they were going to lose their power if they conceded to Jesus which was it both it was a combination of both the corruption that was in the high echelons of government and by the way you cannot divorce government in Judaism you cannot divorce government from from faith because they don't have the separation of powers like we do here it was it was the power was vested in the priesthood and the chief priests and the rulers the Sadducees and so on so with them it was an ego thing like Joe suggested they knew that they would be relinquished in power and authority and prestige and everything that went with it if they embraced Jesus as the Messiah he would shake up things he would make things the way they were supposed to be and then in addition to that there is satanic involvement as well so there is ego problems there's corruption problems there's confusion and all of these things are playing in at the same time they all contributed to the whole mix so but if you just remember this if you just remember this and

I'm not asking anybody to buy this but I would respectfully ask you to consider it that the church did not begin on Pentecost and just for starters let me insert this more than anything else guys more than anything else the church that which makes the church the church the body of Christ is the amalgamation of Jew and Gentile into one unit a concept that was absolutely unheard of particularly by the Jew and that Christ would be the head of this new spiritual body and if you want the best commentary on that read Ephesians and Colossians where the twain Jew and Gentile have become one new man in Christ this is earth shaking stuff and it all began with the outgrowth and the realization of what

Christ did on that cross when he died and what he is making available so we just touched the surface of this sometimes I say we scratched the surface well all we did was scratch the scratch on the surface this is so involved and yet be reminded it is movement it is progression of information that is moving on through the book of Acts and if you stop anywhere you miss the progression that follows and many of our friends have stopped with Acts chapter 2 and the day of Pentecost and that's what they see as the marching orders for the church when in reality the marching orders for the church are supposed to be the latest given to us and it's found in 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 where Paul says God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself not not not assigning their trespasses to them and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation and so on that's that's our latest message that's what we ought to be preaching today and it's there in 2nd

[40 : 09] Corinthians 5 well I wish we had time for Q&A; but I don't want your food to get cold and it's here and thank you for your kind attention enjoy your breakfast