***The Church and the Intercalation

Colossians 1:1-2

COL-011***

**The Church**

Colossians 1:1-2, "The Salutation - Number 11." The Christians in the city of Colossae are said to be in Christ by virtue of their salvation. At the point of their trust in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross in payment for their sin, they were baptized by the Holy Spirit into Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 12:12-13). To be in Christ is in fact a technical term in the Bible declaring that one is in the invisible Church, the body of Christ. To be in Christ is to be part of the Church. The Church of the New Testament era is a special group of believers made up of Jews and Gentiles, separate and distinct from the saints of Israel in the Old Testament era. Please learn that. This whole point of reviewing the significance of being in Christ, and thus part of the Church, is to strengthen your courage and your faith to realize that you are the minority.

Most of the great denominations do not believe this. They do not teach this. Most of the great churches do not believe this. They do not teach this. They are the majority. You are the minority. They all believe that Israel evolved into the Church. They teach that all the things that Israel once did, you can do today, and you should do today. You should have priests and altars and holy days and rituals and all of the externals that appeal to the human heart, the Sin Nature.

Now you must understand that somebody is right in this, and somebody is wrong, and the consequences are going to be eternal. Somebody is going to be eternally in sorrow over having been misled to thinking that there's a connection between Israel and the Church, and so the Church should act like it was the new Israel when it is not. It is something totally different. So this is no small doctrinal point and even though you believe it, I want you to understand it so that you cannot be swayed by the powerful preachers, the powerful organizations, and the powerful movements in our society today.

**Promise Keepers**

We are constantly being bombarded by some great new movement. Currently it's a thing called Promise Keepers. Promise Keepers for men, to gather in huge numbers in stadiums around the country and they have a big kicky service in which everybody is emotionally kicked up high and they're going to keep their promises starting with their marriage promises and down the line the promises of integrity which are inherent upon us as Christians. Now all that is well and good, but it's all going to blow off. It is going to blow off because the poor promise seeker and keeper men are not being taught who they are as members of the body of Christ, that they are a royal group of human beings who have enormous potential, enormous authority, the authority of the Holy Spirit Himself, Who is within them, giving them capacity for everything in life that they need.

So these great rallies are wonderful for religious leaders who are constantly thinking up some way of getting people in the Christian community thinking that they're getting on track with God. The only way to get on track with God is to understand who you are as a member of the body of Christ, the Church, a new group of human beings, and to know that God has given us a way of living on this earth that was never known before the era of the Church, and that that way of living was field-tested by no less a personage than Jesus Christ Himself, Who (I remind you,) lived in His humanity, not in His deity when He was here, and Who was given a way of living in this world as a human being so that the devil could not bring him down, and so that He could live a godly life of great integrity, and thus one where God could just pour out the cornucopia of His prosperity and blessing.

If you want to be prosperous in life, if you want to make money in life, the first step is to know that you're a member of the body of Christ, the Church, and then to know what are your privileges, what are your unique distinctive characteristics as a member of that royal group. And consequently, then you will know how to live, how to walk, how to move through society, and all of a sudden people are going to look up to you. I mean the lowest dog in the world system when he has a problem, is not going to go through another low dog like himself. He is going to look to you as a Christian, and he is going to come to you in every institution of life and say, "This is the person that can lead me out of my particular dilemma." You cannot have stability in your life if you do not understand your position in Christ, a member of his body with all the privileges and powers appertaining there too.

**The Abrahamic Covenant**

Now this Church body began on the day of Pentecost. The Church will be God's special work on earth until the Rapture event, when the completed Church body is transferred into Heaven (I Thessalonians 4:15-17). After the Church dispensation, God will resume his program of Judaism with the Jewish believers as in the Old Testament era. That's the next point you should understand. God is not through with the Jew. Judaism is not over; it is on hold. It is yet to be God's way of dealing with the Jewish people. But this only comes after the dispensation of the Church has been completed.

The eternal irrevocable Abrahamic Covenant which God made and ratified only with Himself and not with Abraham involved at all. God said, 'I'm making this promise. No matter what you do, Abraham, no matter what your descendants do, I am making this promise to you. It's eternal, it's irrevocable.' Israel will be the leading nation of the world and this promise to Abraham is still intact today. It is simply on hold during the Church age. The Church is not the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Now all these things that Churches and religious organizations do that are clearly out of the Old Testament, you will never find them in the New Testament Church era, are because they think that the Jews forfeited their special standing with God forever and that the Christians of the Church have taken over. Not true. The Jews are one thing, the Christians are another thing. Jesus himself came to fulfill the Abraham Covenant.

These promises have not all been fulfilled to this very day and God said this was irrevocable. He says, 'As long as the sunrise isn't set, as long as there's a moon in the sky and the stars are out there, as long as I God exist, these promises will never be changed.' Now you must understand that the promises of the Abraham Covenant, that Israel would become the leading kingdom of all this earth, and all nations would be ruled under the authority of the Jewish people, with Jesus Christ the leader and the head government official of all the world, that's going to happen. That is yet in the future and that marvelous golden age of humanity is still ahead, but it is all on hold. We are not bringing in that kingdom now. What we're dealing with is building the body of Christ, the Church. And the eternal promises to Israel will yet be fulfilled, but it comes after the Church age.

Jesus came to fulfill this covenant. The Jewish leaders and the people rejected Him as their Messiah and they murdered Him on the cross. Jesus, upon this rejection, turned to begin what up to then had been a secret with God alone. He turned to begin and to form a special group of people called the Church, the body of Christ (Matthew 16:18 the first introduction to that). Now the key characteristic of the Church age in contrast to the Old Testament Judaism is grace. The Old Testament Judaistic system worked on human works, human determination that you had self-will that could drive you to do what was right and it all broke down. It was not a system that could work, but it was never intended to work. The Old Testament dispensation was designed to show you that you can't make it on your own. No matter how determined you are to do right, you're going to do wrong. No matter how exemplary you want to be, you're going to break down.

**A Better Way**

So God says, "Now I'm going to show you a better way. I'm going to show you a way which carried the humanity of Jesus Christ through the devil's world without one spot of sin upon Him." It's a way of knowing doctrine and being in temporal fellowship with God the Holy Spirit guiding your life with those doctrinal principles. He gives you the power to do right. And all of a sudden somebody who's an alcoholic who can't break the habit, bingo, it's gone because there's now a new power flowing through him. Somebody who can't get off of some drug, bingo, a revolution internally takes place in his genetic system and the thing is gone. It is the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Jew of the Old Testament never knew anything like that. He never had the power of the Spirit of God. And my point is it's disgraceful for us as Christians to live like we were dogs of an Old Testament human self-effort system when we are something so special and we should rise to it and we should quit this rationalization, quit excusing ourselves, we should take the word of God and its principles and do what it says. We should do right, because that is God's way.

My spies, spread throughout the congregation at the wedding yesterday, reported to me the reactions (visual, and the words) and what people said - the looks on their faces, etcetera, as I went through the biblical stipulations for what a husband should be and what a wife should be. And when they get to those, one lady who was a charismatic said to me afterwards (And I know that probably when it said a woman is not allowed to speak in Church, it's a shame for her to get up and preach and she's listening to people doing that all the time.), she says, "Well you look very professional. You seem to know what you were doing." I said, "Madam, God knows what He's doing, and if I look good it's because He looks good. And when you play His way, with doctrinal principles His way, that's the way to go. That's the only way to go." And this business of trying to reinvent God's ways of doing things is stupidity in the extreme. You do what is right.

When my daughter Heidi was married, I made some changes in that ceremony, one that I see has had some effect. And that was, after I quoted Scripture saying 'the Bible that says a husband should do this, indeed this,' and I would quote the Scripture, but I never gave the reference. Now I added the references. So, it made it very clear that I was talking about the Bible. You knew exactly when the verse stopped, and there was the reference. The weddings I've found have not been as much fun since I've started doing that because it was inevitable that some gal was going to come up and say, 'Very nice ceremony, very impressive, but I didn't exactly agree with you what you said about women.' And I loved it because I would say, 'Oh, I agree with you completely, but I was simply quoting God, and you'll have to deal with Him on that matter. He seems to have this opinion.' I loved it, and the conversation ceased.

I loved dealing with these people. Do I want to say the Bible is wrong? Now when I add the verses, they don't even come and talk to me. I'm going to quit doing it I think, because the other way was more fun. But when you put the verse, you know you're going to say 'God is right' or 'God is wrong.' Are you going to be prepared to say that God is right? Some people do. They say, 'Well, that is in the Bible, but people wrote the Bible - that's what they think. That was their opinion.' And they get out of touch of the reality that God said, 'Well, yes, people wrote it, but I guided them, and they wrote it right when they wrote it.'

So, understand who you are as a Christian. Stand on the principles of doctrine and don't be dissuaded, because all of society now is against us, and you find yourself in an isolated minority position. You are the best people in the world because you are part of the Church of the Living God. And furthermore, you're in a superior position because you have the advantage of being taught the word of God, so you know how to capitalize on your royal position.

**The Christian Lifestyle**

Many Christians never know how to capitalize on their royalty because they're reared as stumblebums. They are not reared to understand how to act as royalty. The key characteristic is the grace of God, which enables us to rise to something we never could possibly be on our own self-determination.

Now I want to make it clear that salvation in both the Old and New Testaments is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, the Messiah Savior. Some people don't like the doctrine of dispensations because they think we're telling them that there was one way of being saved in the Old Testament and another way of being saved in the New Testament. Know in the Old Testament they look forward to the Messiah Savior and the New Testament we look back, but it's all an act of God's gift to us.

The way of life or the lifestyle of the Church in Judaism, that's what's different and that's what we're talking about. That is radically different. We don't live like a new Israel, we're not a new Israel, we're nothing relative to Israel. We have a totally different lifestyle as Christians.

Today is Sunday. You could do anything you want today, it's a day of freedom. The key word on that first Sunday of the resurrection of Christ was 'joy,' 'All hail! Great joy!'

Sunday is the fun day of the week. You don't have to punch a time clock; you don't have to report to any burdens. All you have to do is get up and get out to Sunday school and enrich your soul, get out to the services during the day and you've got the whole day to do whatever you like. You can wash your car, you can go to the grocery store, you can go out to eat. It's a day of freedom to do whatever you want to do. You can plow up your yard and plant your garden.

It's great freedom, but we don't use the day disrespectfully to God. We are in Church. We are in the place of worship. We are in a place of instruction. It is the key day set aside for that purpose, but it is not a legalistic burden offensive day. Grace is our lifestyle. Works was a lifestyle of the Old Testament Jew. The lifestyle of Judaism is dependent on human willpower. While that of Christianity is dependent on the permanently indwelling Holy Spirit and our positive volition to doctrine.

So, if the Church is something brand new, this had to be revealed at some point in time in history. We've been told already in scripture that it was a secret in the Old Testament and that it was never found in the Old Testament, not a whisper about this marvelous thing, the Church Age.

In Romans 16:25-26, Paul closes his great and definitive letter on justification to the Roman Christians with these words: Roman 16:25, "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 [He is referring to the mystery of a Jew and a Gentile being put together in a new body of believers called the Church.], [26] "but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all nations, leading to the obedience of faith."

Here the apostle Paul closes his letter saying, 'What I've been telling you about is the great secret revealed to me in Arabia when I was taught the full gamut of the doctrines of the Church Age never known before, never revealed in detail to the other Apostles. And this mystery of the Church was kept secret for generations after generations, century after century. Now it has been made fully known by the New Testament Prophets through the Scriptures which they have been written according to the guidance and the commandments of the eternal God.'

**The Mystery of the Church**

This particular word that Paul uses here, "mystery" looks like this in a Greek Bible, "mustérion" (moos-tay'-ree-on) M U S T E R I O N. "Mustérion" is clearly you see where we get the word translation mystery. But please understand that this word in the Greek Bible does not mean something which is hard to understand. Like when you say, 'I don't know, it's a mystery to me,' meaning 'I can't understand something.' A mystery in scripture is a truth which is unrevealed in the Old Testament but is then made known in the New Testament. It's a truth, which in the old era was a secret, but it was a truth that was there. It was a great reality in the Old Testament, but no one ever knew about it because God never revealed it, and it was therefore a secret.

Now the Church itself per se is not called a mystery in a New Testament. Some yo-yo might come to you and ask you to show them where in the New Testament the Church is called a mystery, a secret, so they can prove that the Church began with Abraham, and therefore it has evolved right down the line. No, it did not begin in any era previously, and it is never called a mystery as such.

What is called a mystery are the main features of the Church. Things that were never true of believers before, suddenly, this mystery, this mystery, this mystery, and we put it together and we say, "Hey, this is only true of Church people - Christians. So, the Church is a mystery, a revelation of a secret of God.

**Jew and Gentile Equal in the Church**

For example, in Ephesians 3:1-11, one of the things that is called a mystery is the fact that a Jew and a Gentile are going to be joined together into one spiritual body. That was unthinkable in the Old Testament, Jews and Gentiles on equal footing before God in one body. Ephesians 3:1-4, "For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles - [2] "if indeed you have heard of the stewardship [or the dispensation] of God's grace which was given to me for you; [3] "that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery [or the secret], as I wrote before in brief. [3] "And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the secret of Christ."

Paul says, 'I was given a great secret, a great mystery and I have revealed it to you.' What was it?

[continuing in Ephesians 3:5] "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." There you have the biblical definition of a mystery - a secret now revealed never known in the Old Testament. "To be specific," Ephesians 3:6, "that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel." That's the secret. Jews and Gentiles are going to be on equal footing, (which was never true under Judaism and is not going to be true under Judaism in the future,) Jews and Gentiles, equal footing, equal authority before God.

Ephesians 3:7-11: "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. [8] "To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, [9] "and to bring to light what is the administration [or the dispensation] of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; [10] "in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. [11] "This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which he carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord."

That's the mystery: Jew and Gentile in one body. And that is the thing that is true about the Church. It is made up of Jews and Gentiles who are equals. Now it is true that the Jews had been promised blessings in the Old Testament through the Jews. They had been promised salvation through the Jews. That was no secret. But that they would be under some relationship where a Jew had no more favor with God than the Gentile, that's unthinkable. And even worse, where the Gentile begins to outshine the Jew, which is what has happened in Christianity in the Church era, that because of the Jews' spiritual blindness toward Christ, the Gentiles even took over in superiority. This one body of Jew and Gentile is called the Church. It is that they are both in Christ.

Ephesians 1:22-23, "And He put all things [God the Father put all things] in subjection under His feet [God the Son], and gave Him as head over all things to the church, [23] "which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." So here we have this secret; Jews and Gentiles are going to be brought together in one group and they will form the very body of Christ, the analogy that Jesus is the head, and we are His body.

**Christ Indwelling Every Believer in the Church**

Another mystery that is characteristic of the Church is the fact of Christ indwelling every believer. Now this should make the hair stand out in the back of your neck unless you're dead from the neck up.

Colossians 1:24-27, Jesus Christ is living inside of me. Colossians 1:24, "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 all that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions. [25] "Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship [or the dispensation] from God bestowed on me for your benefit, that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, [26] "that is, the mystery [the secret] which has been hidden from the past ages and generations; but has now been manifested to the saints, [27] "to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this secret among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Now that has to thrill the soul of the most insensitive. Christ in you, living in you as your hope of eternal glory.

If Christ lives in you, dear friend, you cannot go anywhere but Heaven because that's where He's going. And this indwelling is a permanent relationship. All these New Testament relationships under the Church era, our permanent. They are not subject to being lost as the things that the Jews were given under the Mosaic Covenant, which could be lost if they didn't do right. So here's another factor, indwelling of every believer by Christ, that's a secret and that's part of the Church why we call the Church of mystery.

**The Church is Christ's Bride**

Here's another one. The fact that the Church is related to Christ as a bride. Notice Ephesians 5:22-23, "Wives be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord. [23] "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the Church, He Himself being the savior of the body."

The Church is related to Jesus Christ as a bride is related to her husband. Now, Israel was related to God as His wife, His unfaithful wife, but the Church is related to Jesus Christ as the Virgin bride of Christ, a totally different picture. That any group of human beings would ever be related to a person of the Trinity in such intimacy was unknown in the Old Testament and yet what a great thrill to know that that is exactly our relationship.

**The Mystery of the Rapture**

Here is another mystery: the fact of the rapture event for the Church saints. 1 Corinthians 15, and all the big denominations miss this one, plain as it is, as plain as the nose on their face. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, the fact of the rapture event of the Church saints. It had never been revealed in the Old Testament that God at some point in time is going to take his hands and just scoop out of the earth a group of dead believers and wipe off the face of the earth a group of living believers who belong to a certain royal group and He's going to take them all to Heaven at one time. Nobody ever thought of such a thing in the Old Testament. It was a secret.

1 Corinthians 15:51: "Behold, I tell you a mystery; [a secret] you shall not all sleep [Which means you will not all die. Not all Christians are going to die before Christ returns.], but we shall all be changed, [We will all get glorified bodies like Christ had.] [52] "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed." That's a secret never known before; all that the Jews knew about was resurrection. They knew that, but they did not know this kind of magnificent catching up to meet Christ in the air and being escorted by Him into Heaven.

None of these internal realities was revealed in the Old Testament. Jews only knew external realities about Christ through the rituals at the temple and the symbolisms that were involved there. But these particular facts, Jew and Gentile joined into one new body - that was a secret. Christ indwelling every believer - that was a secret. Church related to Christ as a bride - that was a secret. Being caught up to meet Christ in the air and being taken to Heaven by God Himself - that was a secret. And because these details that are true of the Church were secrets, we say that the Church was a secret, never seen before.

**Two Advents**

Now why was the Church Age such a puzzle to the great scholars of the Old Testament? I Peter 1:11 gives us a little indication of the problems that the Old Testament prophets struggled with. In 1 Peter 1:11, Peter says about these writers, "seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow." To the prophets had been revealed that Jesus Christ would come as a suffering Lamb of God. To the prophets was revealed that Jesus Christ would come as a conquering lion of the tribe of Judah. And they said this is contradictory. Christ the Messiah, when He comes, cannot come as a lowly suffering lamb and a conquering lion. Those are contradictory. They don't go together. Anybody can see that. But they had the sense to know that there was not a mistake in the revelation from God. They just wished that they'd had more information. That's what they were asking for. They knew as you and I must know, when we find something in the Bible that we can't coordinate doesn't click together, that there's some information we don't have that would explain everything. And in time the secret that they did not have was made clear.

Christ prophesied as coming in suffering as a Lamb of God in Isaiah 53. Christ promised as coming in the glory of the conquering lion of the tribe of Judah in Isaiah 11. This was a confusing revelation to the prophets because of these contradictory images. What was the answer? Well, we know the answer was two advents: not just one, two advents and the Church Age in-between.

Here's a mountain peak. Here's a mountain peak. The prophets sit here, and he looked out here, and all he saw all the way across was one mountain peak. He stood out here and the mountain beyond him was right in line. He saw the peaks and he thought it was one mountain. That was the problem. He thought it was one mountain. He thought this is the coming of Christ and this is it. And therefore, for Christ to come as a conquering lion and as a meek and lowly lamb did not make sense. What they did not understand was that there were advent number one/advent number two, first coming/second coming, and in-between the valley of the Church Age.

Now once you had the information that we have, then it all made sense. There was no contradiction. It was two comings and something that God was going to do, a "mustérion" secret in-between, that he never revealed. And the Old Testament prophecy deals with Israel only. So, the Church is treated as unrevealed truth.

What we call this, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer came up with a word he called an intercalation. You look that big word up in the dictionary and the word intercalation means 'something that is inserted between two things, that has nothing to do with either thing.' It is just inserted between two things.

The Church is an intercalation. It's inserted between the first and second advent. It's got nothing to do with either advent, it's just stuck between these two mountains, a valley unknown before. So, this intercalation is into Israel's program. It interrupts the program, but it is not part of the program. This valley is not part of the mountain here; it's not part of the mountain here. Israel's program has been interrupted by the Church age. The Church is an intercalation into Israel's program.

If the Church is a full blossom from Israel the bud, then every legalistic feature of Judaism may be imposed upon the local Church believers today, see. If the Church is a full blossom from Israel the bud, then all that stuff from the Old Testament way of life is still on us. And that's the very thing Paul wrote the book of Galatians for, to say, 'Forget it folks.' Now if you want to have religious holidays, fine. But don't think God is impressed with that. If you want to go through religious ritual, fine, but don't think that God's impressed with that. If you want to meet in a building that's got stained-glass windows, that's fine. But don't think that God's impressed with that.

I was in a Church yesterday where I'm always reminded why I don't like stained glass windows in certain respects, because a stained-glass window right there was in front of the preacher's eyes. It's the whole wall. Somebody got really carried away. And when you look at the people out there, you see a shade with the two black spots. I always think that everybody's dead out there when I stand out there because you're completely blinded by this huge religious stained glass, not a window, a wall. Somebody said, "Let's do something really spiritual, not just a window, but a whole wall that is stained glass." And unless you have fast dilation capacities of the pupils of your eye, you're in big trouble, because you look up here, and your pupils go 'poop.' And you look down here, and you go 'boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom.' My pupils are always tired when I get through speaking in that place.

But some people think that that's important because it brings them near to God. Fine, if you want to think that, do it. But don't think that you've got some special favor from God because you got the stained-glass windows there.

The Church is not the blossom from Israel the bud. Any similarities between Israel and the Church do not prove identity or even relationship. The differences make them mutually exclusive. I think all of you can understand that just because a horse has four legs, it's not the same thing as a dog. There are differences that make the difference.

What the Old Testament revelation did was something very marvelous. It kept allowing gaps that we can look back and see now. They couldn't see it when they read it, those prophets there. But we can see gaps in it. To us, it is amazing that these gaps were placed in the Old Testament scriptures to allow for the insertion of the Church Age, which was never mentioned in the Old Testament; nor is it mentioned in the Gospels, except in Matthew 16:18 and John chapters 13 through 17. John chapters 13 through 17 belongs to the Church. The rest of the Gospels are the finish of the Old Testament, especially Matthew. And only in Matthew 16:18, Jesus says, "I'm going to build My church." Bingo. That's it, No more. It took Paul to get the information about this new group of believers, this new dispensation.

So until the time of the Lord's Ministry on Earth, the Church was a complete mystery. In the Old Testament where a passage comes to the Church Age (Which is built upon the death, the burial and the resurrection and the ascension of Christ.), it stops and it skips over to the Tribulation and the Millennium. When the prophets looked at this, they saw the coming of the Savior, the Tribulation era, and the Millennium. They saw it all here. It just skips right over to what is actually the Tribulation and the Millennium here at the Second Coming. When they looked at it, they just skipped from His coming to the end because they didn't see what was in-between. They treated it as if there were no time separation between them whatsoever.

**The 70 Weeks**

Israel was actually given a timetable for its history to the very end. I want to show you one of those gaps. Please turn to the book of Daniel, Daniel 9:24, "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people." This is an answer to Daniel's question, 'God, how long is it going to take for you to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant promises?' God says, 'Abraham, you want to know how long? Is that what you want to know Abraham? Do you want to know how long it's going to take? I'm going to tell you Abraham.' And then God gives him the answer: '490 years.' 'What? .490 years and it's all over.' 'That's right. 490 years for everything I promised to the Abraham Covenant, the subsequent Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants, everything's going to be fulfilled and Israel's going to be riding high as the ruler of all the world.' '490 years.' 'That's right.' 'Whoa.'

Daniel 9:24, "Seventy weeks [Each week is a year, 490 years.] have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for inequity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place." '490 years Daniel, and the millennium begins.'

Daniel 9:25, "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks [49 years from the time that the Median-Persian emperor Artaxerxes in 445 BC authorized the return to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, that's when the clocks started ticking. You'll find that in Nehemiah chapter two. You'll know that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, 49 weeks for the rebuilding] and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress." And the whole city will be restored, and it will go on for another 62 weeks of years and it will come to a glorious point in time, namely the arrival of the Messiah.

[Daniel 9:26] "Then after 62 weeks, the Messiah will be cut off [Now that's 483 years have passed to the very day on Palm Sunday in 32 AD. And this event was the final cutting-off of Messiah when Jesus was officially rejected by both the leaders and the people. One week later they crucified Him. After 62 weeks the Messiah will be cut off and the prophetic clock stopped ticking seven years short of the promised fulfillment of God's work for Israel.] and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come [the Romans] will destroy the city and the sanctuary [which happened in 70 AD]. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined."

[Daniel 9:27] "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week." Zip! Between Daniel 9:26 and Daniel 9:27 is the whole Church Age. And it goes from one to the other between year 483 and 484 of God's predicted program for Israel. It goes that if nothing happened, you couldn't tell from reading this that 2000 years already have passed between Daniel 9:26 and Daniel 9:27, because verse 27 jumps to the antichrist.

[Daniel 9:27] "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week [the last seven years] but in the middle of the week [three-and-a-half years] he will put a stop to [Israel's] sacrifice and grain offerings; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate [or horrible]." And this is a description of the desolation which will come to Israel and the whole world at the hands of the antichrist. He's going to be their friend for three and a half years protecting them from the Arab world. And he is going to turn on them and say, 'No, here's my image in your temple that I've helped you rebuild, and you are to worship me. I am your God.' And when that seven years is over, the 490 years that God promised for Israel's final history, will be over. And the millennium will begin. Between Daniel 9:26 and Daniel 9:27 comes the intercalation of the Church age.

**Jesus Christ reading Isaiah in the Synagogue**

Let me give you another one. A fascinating one, Isaiah 61:1-2. Now you're learning things. You're getting smarter than people in churches all over the city. None of them could explain what you've just heard. None of them understand this relationship between Israel and the Church. None of them see how this secret was held in the Old Testament, and yet room was allotted for it to be inserted at the proper time.

Isaiah 61:1-2, "The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives [Obviously, Christ the Messiah is speaking here], And freedom to prisoners; [Verse 2] "To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn."

Now, keep your finger in that passage and go over to Luke 4:16-21. After His water baptism, Jesus returns to Nazareth, His hometown. On Saturday, He goes on down to the synagogue and it was His turn to read the scriptures. So, He sits up front; they delivered to Him the scroll; and, He unwinds it to the book of Isaiah 61:1-2. Here in Luke 4:16-21, we had the historical event of the reading of this Isaiah passage recorded for us.

Luke 4:16-21, "And He came to Nazareth where He had been brought up. And as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read. [17] "And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him, and He opened the book and found the place where it was written. [Now we're going to quote exactly what we read in Isaiah. [18] "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE DOWNTRODDEN, [19] "TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD." [20] "And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him."

The reason the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon him was because he stopped at a comma. Go back to Isaiah 61:2. Isaiah 61:2 says, "To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord," and the rest of the verse says, "and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn." Jesus said, "To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord," and He closes the book. 'Whoa, wait a minute, you didn't finish the verse.' Yes, he did, because the last part of verse 21 was now to say something he could not have said if he had read beyond the comma. [continuing with Luke 4:21] "And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'" "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." What scripture - "proclaiming the favorable year of the Lord; proclaiming the release of captives from sin; proclaiming the recovery of sight to the blind; proclaiming freedom to those who are downtrodden in sin and under the oppression of tyrants of various kinds." To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord is the first coming of Christ. This was the first mountain peak. This was His first advent. And when He came the first time, this is what He came to do, and all that He had indeed accomplished.

The rest of verse two, the day of the vengeance of our God, has to do with the second coming, the second peak. Had He read that He could not have said, "This Scripture has now been fulfilled in your hearing this day," because that part was still in the future, 2000 years in the future. So, Luke 4:19 refers to the favorable year of the Lord, which dealt with His first advent. Jesus indicated there was a gap between "favorable year" and "the day of vengeance" into which the Church Age is inserted. The Church Age is represented by that comma. The Church Age, 2000 years, represented by this comma. From the reading of Isaiah 61:1-2 in the Old Testament, you see that that gap would not have been evident, nobody would know it's there. The Church Age was a big secret mystery. No one and not one part of the passage which comes after the comma in Isaiah 61:2 has been fulfilled. All that comes at the very last of seven years.

**The Gap in Daniel 9:26-27**

Let me give you one more, in the book of Daniel 9:26-27. I want to remind you this again, we've already touched on this. Daniel 9:26 represents the first advent of Christ and results in the destruction of Jerusalem. Then there's the gap of the Church Age. In Daniel 9:27 is the rule of the antichrist during the seven years of the Tribulation. So here between Daniel 9:26 and Daniel 9:27 is the Church Age, though you could not know that from reading it simply in the Old Testament. And that has already been 2000 years long.

So I hope this morning you have a little better appreciation for what it means to be "in Christ," because that means to be part of the Church, which is His body and is a marvelous special work of God. God put the greatest full impact of His capacities as the Almighty in devising this special thing, in all the Church, so dear to His heart, so intimate with His Son Jesus. And you are such a very special person because He chose you out of the mass of humanity to be related as a bride to His Son, as a virgin bride to His Son, to His clean-cut Son. Forever you will walk with Jesus on the most intimate terms two human beings can have, that within the marriage relationship. And this special act of God, a secret in the Old Testament, now revealed in the New Testament.

It seems so simple to us. We keep asking ourselves, how could the bright and smart men of the reformation have missed all this? But they did. And that's why Churches are still trying to chug along on one cylinder not working, and things not fitting together because the reformers missed this all together. They could not shake off the Roman Catholic doctrine that the Church became the new Israel. And while they had most of the truth restored and while they could come across the sea to create a great nation like this on Biblical principles, they did not get straight how distinctive we Christians are. So then how should we now live?

**Benediction**

Dear God, our Father, we thank You for this Thy truth, and we pray Thy continued blessing on our understanding of the distinctiveness of the Christian's place in the plan of God. We thank Thee, that this great truth is well known to us and we pray now that because of that, we will not live as if we had no controls, as we had no Christ in us, the hope of glory, as if we did not have the Holy Spirit indwelling us to empower us to do right, to be men of great stature and women of great commanding presence because we are in Christ and we act like that. God bless what we have learned this morning to our souls. In Christ's name, Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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