

## **Bible Special 06-08-08a**

This is Tuesday, the 8th of August, 2006. We continue tonight our study called, depending on my mood, why the Bible or the dismal competition offered by world religions and cults, or what is it that people choose when they reject God? Let's take a moment as we begin to ensure that this time we spend together is well spent by going to the Lord in prayer, ensuring that God, the Holy Spirit, can minister the truth of his word to our hearts. Shall we pray? Father, what a privilege it is for us to gather, to assemble as believers of like mind, to enjoy the blessing and the fellowship that comes when we spend time together.

We know that where two or three are gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus, he is amongst us, and we ask your blessing on us now as we look at the important distinctives of our faith in relation to what is often embraced by those who are outside. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

We began a two-part study last time. I didn't know until I ran out of time that it was going to be a two-part study, but it is now officially a two-part study because we continue tonight our look at Roman Catholicism. We noted several of the distinctives, particularly in terms of where the church came from.

How did the Catholic Church become the Catholic Church? And we saw that historically speaking, this was an outgrowth of politics. In the 5th and 6th centuries in particular of the common era, they like to say that now instead of A.D. You know why we say B.C. and A.D., don't you? B.C. is before Christ. A.D. is Anno Domini or Year of Our Lord.

And so the dividing line in history is centered on the Lord Jesus Christ. You've got either time before Christ or it is the year of our Lord because he's come and we measure time as it was thought from his birth. Well, of course, the Jews weren't real fond of that and the secular scholars weren't real fond of that.

So it was fine all through the 1600s and the 1700s and the 1800s. And then when you get into the late 1900s, everybody began to object. Well, I don't want to have to write a paper and say B.C. and A.D. So they came up with new abbreviations.

The time divides the same and they really can't get around that. It's too late. There's too much literature written.

But now they say B.C. and C.E., before the common era and the common era. And I won't go into why it's common, but that way they can get away from talking about Christ. And conveniently, common starts with a C. So, you know, it's sort of the same.

But we saw that in the centuries following the death of the apostles, the church began to go the way that Judaism had gone, went into formalism and went into ritual and went into structural formality that resulted in sacramentalism. And this, of course, is a bad thing. The doctrinal deviations began or actually took on formal structure likewise at that point, because there had

been gradually, the church had been fighting heresies all through the first two or three centuries.

There were people who said, well, Jesus wasn't really in a physical body. He just appeared to be physical, but he wasn't really of the material. This is Gnostic thinking that material stuff is sinful and evil and philosophical immaterial stuff is good.

And since Jesus is good, then he could not have partaken of the sarks, the flesh, because the flesh is evil. Well, this is doceticism. This is what they call docetic Gnosticism.

And the docetists said, oh, Jesus was just an apparition. He wasn't really there. I had a dream one time where somebody was standing there, and you've probably seen this on a TV show or something, where somebody has a hologram or whatever, and you stick your hand right through them.

You used to be able to do this with the Quantum Leap guy. He had his little friend and he could just stick his hand right through him. I had a dream like that one.

Scared me to death. Woke me up, sitting up in bed, stark middle of the night. I was a little kid and I had reached out to grab a hold of my mother or somebody.

My hand just went right through. They weren't really there. Well, this is docetic Gnosticism.

Jesus wasn't really there. He was an appearance or an apparition. Well, so the early church was busy just trying to get little simple things like that figured out.

Why do I bring this up? Listen. You and I are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we believe the word of God. We believe that these scriptures are inerrant and infallible.

They are the only rule of faith and practice for us. There is no companion book. There's not another gospel, the Book of Mormon or the Science and Health by Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy.

We don't have this plus the Koran. We don't have this plus 12 books by Sam Hall telling you what the Bible really says. I haven't written any books, so that's a safe bet.

It is scripture, scripture alone. This is our guide. This is our rule.

Now, what do the scriptures mean? A lot of people have different ideas about what the scriptures mean. People say, oh, your Bible is vague. Your Bible, people can't figure it out.

The Methodists can't agree with the Baptists who can't agree with the Presbyterians who don't agree with the Episcopalians who don't agree with the Lutherans who don't agree with the you know, on and on and on all these 400 odd denominations. Nobody can agree on what the Bible says. So how can you hold up your Bible and say this is my rule of faith and practice when you can't really tell me what it says? Yes, I can.

I can tell you what this scripture says in any God fearing Bible believing, asking, seeking, knocking Christian will find the truth of this word. The fact that there are silly people and goofy ideas about the Bible doesn't change the fact that the Bible can and should be understood rightly. Study to show thyself approved unto God.

Remember our memory verse, say it with me. Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. You can rightly divide this word of truth.

And when you show up at the judgment seat of Christ, you will not be ashamed because you knew what it said and you lived in its light. Now, why would the Bible say rightly dividing the word of truth if it can't be rightly divided? It can be now part of that rightly dividing. And I do have a point here, so don't drift off on me.

Rightly dividing the word of truth, one of the things that we have learned as we study the word of God is that there are dispensations, there are ages in which God has a particular program for his people. And his people have a particular definition. There are two great divisions in this dispensational plan that you can divide it up into more dispensations.

You can talk about Adam and Eve in the garden and Adam and Eve in the fall and what happened before the flood and so on. But for our purposes, we have two great divisions, and that is before Christ and after Christ. Now, we can divide things more finely than that, but this is a basic understanding.

God dealt with his people, primarily Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants. That's the primary focus that we have in our Old Testament scriptures. We've got the book of Genesis with 50 chapters in it, but Exodus through Malachi, you have God dealing with his people, Israel, and he deals with them in a particular way.

He gives them a ritual system of teaching that they can observe every day. Why? Because in the Old Testament days, you have a lot of people, but you don't have a lot of literacy. You don't have people, you don't have printing presses, you don't have people learning to read in the kindergarten and first grade and second grade and that sort of thing.

Right. So how are people going to learn? Are they all going to carry around a little Torah? Do they all learn how to read and write? Do you have the technology for reading and writing? No. So how do people learn? How do they take in information and store it and retrieve it and so on? It's visual and it's oral.

So what does God give them? He gives them a symbolic system of teaching. He gives them the law of Moses and it is worked out and it's illustrated in the Levitical priesthood and the Levitical offerings and the Levitical feasts. The Levites, the priests of Israel, act out these rituals.

It's the big, of course, nobody knows what this is anymore hardly, but it's the big flannel graph. When you wanted to illustrate something in my childhood, you would get a flannel board, great

big flannel board, cover it with flannel. And then you had little paper cutouts with stuff.

This is like pre-Velcro, but it works sort of the same way. The little cutouts would have fuzzy stuff on the back that would stick to the flannel board. So you could take these cutouts and here's Abraham and here's Isaac and here's the mountain and here's the ram caught in the thicket.

And here's God speaking from heaven, stopping Abraham just before he plunges the knife into his son and speaking to him and making a point. We used flannel graph. When I was a child in school, when they wanted to do multimedia, they would use a film strip.

Sometimes there would be a voice speaking on a tape and every so often it would beep and then the film strip would advance one frame and you had these still images that were up on a screen that was on a tripod up front. Well, why do they do this? Why did they do this with little kids in Bible class? Why did they do this with children in school? Why do they show films? Used to have those old safety films and hygiene films and traffic safety films. You'd run these old tired things that were all full of streaks and big clicking noise from the projector and they would show it up on a reflective screen up in the front.

Of course, that's all antiquated technology now. But why do we do this? Because children learn visually, learn by hearing. And it's too monotonous for somebody to stand up like I'm doing right now.

Your attention wanders, your eyes start to get heavy. So they would put pictures up to help you remember what the Old Testament law was. God's picture book.

It was God's teaching tool for people that didn't have multimedia, who didn't even have writing for the common man. Only the scribes and the priests and those who were highly educated could read and write. And there was no mass distribution of texts.

Now, what does this have to do with Catholicism? Pay attention now, because one of these days you'll be talking to a Catholic or talking again to a Catholic. God in former days used those illustrations. That's the former dispensation.

It's the old way of doing things. And God's people were Israel. If you wanted to be God's people, you came to Israel.

If you're Uriah the Hittite or you're Naaman the Syrian or you're Rahab the harlot or you're Ruth the Moabitess and you want to get close to God and learn about God, you come to Israel. This is where the picture books are. This is where the Mosaic law is.

This is where the Levitical offerings and the teaching about God is. You say, well, now, I wonder what they did before that. How did Job and his three friends know all of their stuff? Well, in days previous to that, when there were many fewer believers and they weren't organized into a nation, God actually sent individual angels to proclaim and to teach.

How did Abraham find out that he was going to be the father of many nations? Well, God spoke to him. God sent angels to him. But when the people of God became very numerous, he organized them and he said, I'm going to put you all in the nation of Israel.

I'm going to put you near enough to the nation of Israel that you can get there and learn what you need to know. So this was great. We have a ritual system for teaching people who that's the most practical way to teach them.

That was God's plan. Now, later on in the history, B.C., in the three or four hundred years before Christ comes, suddenly you have a revolution in knowledge and you have a revolution in science and you have Aristotle and you have Socrates and you have the Greeks who rise up and develop this very knowledgeable civilization and science and culture and art and literature. And the Greek language becomes very expressive and very precise.

And no sooner do you have Alexander the Great spreading the Greek empire all around than he dies. And not long after, his empire divides into four sections. This was all predicted.

God knew it was coming. God intended it for it to come, showed it to Daniel. And then the Roman Empire takes over the Greek empire and expands it even further.

But it retains the Greek culture and the Greek science and the Greek language and spreads it even further. And under the aegis of Rome, you have a whole new kind of civilization, a whole new kind of world. And into that world comes the Lord Jesus Christ at the fullness of times, scripture says.

God sent his son into the world and God had prepared a new kind of ground into which the seed of the gospel would be sown. Jesus comes. He accomplishes the work of salvation on the cross.

There's a whole new world of information about God that's been revealed in Christ. We've seen this in our John study on Sunday mornings, John chapter one. The word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory.

It's a whole new thing. Hebrews chapter one says God spoke a lot of different ways in times past. But in these latter days, he has spoken to us by a son, the son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ came.

It's a new wealth, a new fountain of living waters, springs of information about God. Now, how is this going to be communicated? Jesus told the parable, you don't take new wine and put it in old wine skins and you understand the principle of that new wine. When you take a fermentation process for grape juice, fermentation produces gases.

And so when they would take the grape juice and say, we're going to ferment this into wine, they would put it in a wine skin, which was made out of the internal organs of an animal. It would clean them real thoroughly. They would sew them into a wine skin and it would be made

of the internal organs of an animal.

They put the grape juice in there, well, you know how new leather is, it will stretch. I didn't wear my oldest leather belt tonight, but I have a leather belt that I bought when I was in high school. I still have it.

I've been wearing that thing for more than 30 years. First buckle fell off of it. It had a buckle like a Levi Strauss emblem.

Well, that one was pot metal and it broke. And so I put a Marine Corps buckle on there that I got over in the Philippines, made out of an artillery shell. And trust me, that thing is sturdy.

It's made out of solid brass, etched with the Marine Corps emblem. And that's been on there for the last 25 years. Well, that belt over the years has stretched.

I have gotten very slightly bigger around, but that belt has gotten a lot bigger around because the leather stretched. But after it stretched to a certain point, it stopped. There was a certain amount of flexibility in that leather and then it kind of reached its limit.

And now it does fine. It doesn't stretch anymore. If I get bigger, why I have to change notches, the belt will only stretch so far.

That's how wineskins were. And so when you put new grape juice in and the fermentation process begins, it would put them and seal them in a wineskin. And then that skin, as the fermentation would take place, that wineskin would stretch and accommodate this new energetic substance that was inside.

And they would grow, the wineskin would grow and accommodate that new wine. Well, now that wineskin is stretched out. So let's say you empty that wine out, you serve it to your guests or whatever.

Now you've got this empty used wineskin. You say, well, I've got a fresh batch of grape juice here. I'll pour that into my wineskin.

I'll save some money. I won't have to buy another wineskin from the goat herd or whoever it is down here that sells the internal organs of the animals. So you put some more new wine into that old wineskin.

Well, it begins to ferment, gases begin to form, begins to build pressure. Well, the old wineskin is already stretched to the limit. So what's going to happen? It's going to split.

The wineskin is ruined and you lose the wine. Now, bear with me here. This is all about the Catholic Church, I'm telling you.

See if you can figure out where I'm going. The old Levitical system contained the information, the new wine of God's plan and purpose for Israel. That's how it was communicated.

That's how it was expressed through ritual, through a priesthood. That's how God communicated to his people. His people were Israel.

They had the Levitical offerings with the Levites. And that's how it was communicated. Here comes the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's a new dispensation. There is new wine. And Jesus says, when you've got new wine, you have to put it in new wineskins.

So one of the applications of that parable is that the New Testament information about the Lord Jesus Christ and in particular, the church is going to have a new operating system, a new way of communicating, a new medium. It's not going to be poured into a ritual system of priests and sacrifices and a lot of rules and laws like God used for the old wine. That's the old wineskin.

You don't take the new wine and put it in that same old wineskin. Well, what do we have in the first days of the church? We have the apostles. The apostles don't say, all of you people who are believing in Jesus come down to Jerusalem and offer a sacrifice.

All of you people who are trusting Christ as your Savior come down and watch us do this new set of rituals that we're going to do to communicate. They had basically one ritual that they practiced in the first days of the church. And the reason they used that ritual is it was a transition time because how many books of the New Testament existed when Peter and John walked the streets of Jerusalem and were healing people and teaching about the Lord Jesus? There was no New Testament.

So there was a stopgap. There was a transition time where God used special means to get this new information across. He authenticated it with miracles, healings, speaking in tongues, the performing of miracles.

But once the scriptures, the New Testament scriptures began to be written, once the Apostle Peter and the Apostle John and the Apostle Paul began to put this information into writing, many more people now are literate. It's not like the Old Testament days where you've got two million people wandering in the wilderness and there's only a handful of them who know how to read and write, Moses being one. Because he was a prince in Egypt.

Now, in the Greek speaking world, in the Hellenistic world, in the world of the Roman Empire, scads of people can read and write. And so you can have small groups of people scattered in communities, you can send them a letter and any one of a number of people can stand up and read this letter to the group and they can make copies of it. And that information can reside and be retained in groups all over the place.

And so this is the New Testament mode of communication. There is no ritual that is set up. They had the ritual of baptism initially, which, again, is a part of that transitional time.

The Jews knew what baptism meant and there was baptism initially done to teach identification with Christ in his death, his burial and his resurrection. But this gradually phases out as you get this information in the scriptures. It is the scripture that is God breathed.

It is the scripture that is profitable. Where do you have the Old Testament telling the people of Israel, all you need is the scriptures? It doesn't talk about scriptures per se, does it? It talks about the word of God because the word of God is contained and expressed in and through those rituals and those Old Testament wineskins. In the New Testament, you have the scriptures.

All scripture is God breathed. Plus, you have the entire record of the Old Testament age in the scriptures. Search the scriptures, Jesus said, that's where you're going to find me.

That's where you're going to find life. Search the scriptures and you will see that they testify of me. So in the early church, you have the apostles and they have small groups and they have churches that meet in homes.

There is no formal structure. There is no institutionalization. There is no great ritual involved.

People meet in homes. Everyone is sort of equal. You don't have a separation between clergy and laity.

You heard those terms before? The clergy are the mucky mucks in the church and the lay people, the laity, they're just the peons in the pews. The sheep, you got the shepherds and the sheep, the clergy and the laity. There was nothing like that in the New Testament church.

They said there are elders. There are those who are more experienced, more knowledgeable because they've been around longer, they know more, they've accumulated some wisdom and they can teach. The older women can teach the younger.

Were the older women that were spoken of in that passage, were they clergy? Were they some sort of formal church ministers of some sort? Not at all. The older women can teach the younger women. The older men can teach the younger men.

There was just a division of responsibility in terms of who will do what. But it wasn't a vertical structure. There wasn't any kind of monarchical structure, authority structure in the sense of, well, let's get incorporated here.

Let's have layers where you report to me and I'll report to him and he reports to the big guy in the sky. That's the early New Testament church. Now, over the course of the centuries, by the time you get down to 500, 600, 700 AD, what happens? The church has been fighting these battles the early centuries.

They've been trying to figure out what does the scripture really say? What did the apostle mean when he says that Jesus Christ is the son of God and he is born of water and that there are

witnesses that testify and these things we believe and so on. What does it exactly mean? They fought a lot of these battles. Once they started getting that ironed out, they put them in creeds.

So you have the Nicene Creed and you have various kinds of creeds that come out. And from that begins formalism because they say, well, it's the scripture and my creed. And if you don't agree with my creed, you're outside my church and my church is the place where the holy people are.

My church is the place where the right people are. You're outside my creed and you're outside my church and you're wrong and you're a heretic. And yes, indeed, there are people who misinterpret scripture and who misunderstand it.

But if they are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, that doesn't make them anathema. That doesn't mean that they should be hunted down and killed, which is what started to happen over time. And it doesn't tell us that we should create a church and make a big issue out of our church and what our church believes.

Well, you don't believe what my church believes and you're not a member of my church. And so you're an outsider. Church does not draw a circle around who's saved and who's unsaved.

Jesus Christ is the issue. We are Christians. We are not somethingists.

That's why Grace and Truth is a Bible church, independent of any other form of organization. We don't subscribe to a denomination. We don't subscribe to a creed.

We don't even have a church constitution. We don't have a membership list. We are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and the word of God is our authority.

Now, as the Roman Catholic Church begins to emerge in the middle of the first millennium A.D., all of that begins to change and you begin to have this authority structure that says, I will tell you what the word of God says. You don't need to worry about figuring it out for yourself. I will tell you who is saved and who is not.

In fact, we, the church, are going to be the instrument by which you receive God's grace. If you don't get God's grace through us, you're not getting God's grace at all. That is the root problem.

That's what we looked at last time in some detail about the fundamental problem with the Roman Catholic Church as it exists and has existed for the last 1500 years, is that it interposes itself between man and God and takes upon itself the role of mediator. We will mediate your relationship with God. If you want to relate to God, if you want to get forgiveness, if you want to be cleansed, if you want to learn, you want to know what Scripture says, come to us.

We will broker your relationship with God. We are your mediator. Now, what does Scripture have to say about this? There is one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus.

He is the one and only mediator. I am not the means of your approach to God. I don't somehow

sponsor or oversee your priesthood.

You represent yourself to God through Christ. And so do I. And we are equal in that respect and in virtually every other respect. We are believers of like mind.

We gather. And this is what the Word of God tells us. Jesus Christ is the mediator.

Who would dare? Who would dare elbow the Lord Jesus Christ aside and say, I'll do your job for you. Let me mediate these people's spiritual life. It is a grievous error, and it is an error that the Catholic Church has been committing for centuries.

There is no scriptural basis for a church interposing itself between Christians and their Savior, Christians and their God. Well, we'll pause here and take our break. When we come back, having reviewed and emphasized the history of the Catholic Church, we're going to see what are they currently teaching and practicing? Are they Christians or not? We'll see when we come back.