

THE MYSTERY

REVEALED TO AND PROCLAIMED BY PAUL TO CHRISTIANS
THROUGHOUT THE GENTILE WORLD

By Arlen L. Chirwood

“The mystery” revealed to Paul, “hid in God” *from the beginning* (the beginning of the ages), of necessity, forms an integral part of the Old Testament Scriptures. There is nothing in the New Testament that does not have its roots in one or more places in the Old Testament. The New is simply an opening up and unveiling of that drawn from foundational material previously set forth in the Old, *drawn mainly from the types* (cf. Luke 24:25-27, 44; I Cor. 10:6, 11; Eph. 3:9-11; Col. 1:16-18, 25-27).

And, aside from the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the New Testament has to do mainly with *one major facet of Old Testament revelation*:

The New Testament, in this respect, has to do mainly with *all the various things pertaining to the heavenly sphere of the coming kingdom — first, as these things pertained to Israel; and then, as these things presently pertain to the one new man “in Christ.”*

“The mystery” was revealed to Moses first, though remaining *a mystery*, remaining *veiled*. Then, some fifteen centuries later, God took Paul aside (evidently to Arabia [the same country to which he had previously taken Moses to reveal things pertaining to the theocracy], then into heaven [II Cor. 12:1-7; Gal. 1:11-17]); and, in the person of His Son, God *opened up and unveiled* various things which He had previously revealed to Moses and other Old Testament prophets (cf. Luke 24:25-27).

(A “mystery [Gk., *musterion*, meaning, ‘a hidden thing,’ ‘a secret’]” in the New Testament can be defined as *something previously hidden in the Old Testament but now revealed* [cf. Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:4, 5].

Contrariwise, a mystery *can never* be thought of as a reference to something not found at all in previous revelation, for, again, there is *nothing* in the New Testament that does not have its roots in one or more places in the Old Testament.

Thus, a “mystery,” *pertains to something dealt with in previous revelation [seen mainly in the types] but not opened up [or fully opened up] to one’s understanding until a later point in time [seen mainly in the anti-types]*. And the opening up and unveiling of a mystery [such as the mystery revealed to Paul following his conversion] could occur only through Divine intervention. *Only the same person* Who had previously established the mystery [via revelation, through one or more of the Old Testament

prophets] could open up and make known the mystery [via revelation, to one or more of the New Testament writers].

And, in Paul’s case, this can be seen through that which he himself testified concerning how he came into possession of a knowledge of the message which he had been called to proclaim among the Gentiles. The Lord Himself took Paul aside, then moved Paul into His presence, and personally taught him — *One-on-one* — the message which he, in days ahead, was to proclaim to individuals [Christians] and groups of individuals [Churches] out among the Gentile nations.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself *personally* opened up and explained things to Paul which had previously been revealed through Moses and the Prophets [Gal. 1:11-18; Eph. 3:1-11; Col. 1:20-28; cf. Luke 24:25-27]; and Paul had been called to take these truths and proclaim them to *the one new man* “in Christ” out in the Gentile world, in both verbal and written form.)

Progressive revelation of this nature can be seen in Peter’s reference to angels desiring “to look into” things pertaining to *the salvation of the soul*, things which the Spirit moved him to write about, and things intimately associated with the mystery revealed to Paul (I Peter 1:3-11). These angels could only have previously seen, *in the Old Testament Scriptures*, that which was being opened up and unveiled to Peter (and others). These were things which they desired

to know more about; but, *apart from the later revelation, which opened up and provided additional light on these things*, the saving of the soul in connection with sufferings and glory could be little understood.

Thus, “the mystery” revealed to Paul was simply an opening up and an unveiling of things which had lain in the bosom of an existing revelation — a revelation wherein the roots of all Biblical doctrine lie.

And, as previously stated, it lay centrally in the types, which God had established in the beginning. Then, the various types which deal with the bride of Christ, and thus “the mystery,” do so in different ways.

For example, Genesis chapter two deals with the bride being removed from the body; Genesis chapter twenty-four deals with the bride being taken from the family; Genesis chapter forty-one and Exodus chapter two deal with the bride being taken from among the Gentiles. And there are numerous other types as well, which, together, deal with *all the various facets of the matter*.

Further, “the mystery” has to do with revealed truth surrounding believing Jews and believing Gentiles — forming *one new man* “in Christ” (where there is neither Jew nor Gentile) — being *heirs together*, “of the same body.” It has to do with “Christ in you [*lit.*, ‘Christ being proclaimed among you’], the hope of glory” (*cf.* Eph. 2:12-15; 3:1-11; Col. 1:24-28).

Note how “the mystery” is explained in so many words in the Book of Ephesians — a book centering around Christians one day realizing an “inheritance” *in heavenly places* (ch. 1), a sphere presently occupied by the incumbent rulers, Satan and his angels (ch. 6):

“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery...

That the Gentiles [believing Gentiles] should be fellowheirs [with believing Jews], and of the same body [forming *the one new man* ‘in Christ’], and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel [the gospel of the glory of Christ]” (Eph. 3:3a, 6; *cf.* Eph. 2:11-15).

And a type which, among other things, would have to do with Jews and Gentiles together in one body would be the account of Caleb and Joshua’s experiences, beginning in Numbers chapter thirteen and extending through the Book of Joshua. The name “Caleb” means *dog*, and the name “Joshua” means *salvation*.

It was the “Gentiles” who were looked upon by the Jews as *dogs*, for whom *salvation was provided through the Jews* (John 4:22). And Gentile believers, with Jewish believers, are destined to realize *an inheritance together in a heavenly land*, just as Caleb and Joshua realized *an inheritance together in an earthly land* (*cf.* I Cor. 9:23-10:11).

And though God, in the beginning,

designed various Old Testament types to reveal these things, once He had called *the one new man* “in Christ” into existence and Israel had rejected the reoffer of the kingdom, these things had to be *opened up and further revealed* to those comprising this new creation. Apart from such an opening up and unveiling, God’s purpose for the present dispensation and the place which the Gentiles would occupy in this purpose could not be properly understood (*cf.* Acts 10:45-48; 11:15-18; 15:12-18).

This is the reason that the Lord took Paul aside shortly after his conversion and provided extensive instruction concerning this whole overall matter, for these things comprised *the heart of the message* which he was to carry to individuals out in the Gentile world.

And this is the reason that Paul’s ministry dealt mainly, not with the gospel of the grace of God, but with the gospel of the glory of Christ. And, correspondingly, this is also the reason that the emphasis *in all of his epistles* is, likewise, on the gospel of the glory of Christ rather than the gospel of the grace of God.

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