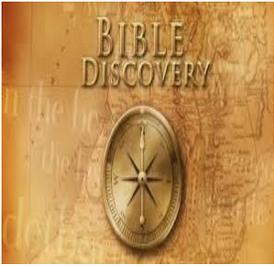


The Mystery of God



Have you ever enjoyed a good mystery? Our world seems awed by the ability to be wrapped up in a tale with its many twists and turns and keep us guessing as to its outcome. Some even suggest God has written such a story – they say the Bible isn't clear, it doesn't give us a clear indication of who God is or what He expects of us. But that isn't true. God wants us to know the secret of wisdom and knowledge and to have an understanding of Him thoroughly.

The problem isn't with God, it's with His creation. We've got a bent understanding of right and wrong; we've developed a way in which everything must be complicated if it's worthwhile. If you doubt me, just try following the instructions for putting together a child's bike or the family BBQ. The good news is we're not just minds and bodies; we're also spirit. Paul remarks, it's only *'in God that we move and live and have our being'*. The presence of God then, invades every dimension of our lives including knowledge of ourselves and our world. Our heavenly Father is even at the heart of our relationships with others. When we fail to see God in nature or in one another we can be sure we're failing to appreciate its true depth and beauty; fail to see the creative foundations of the world around us and in those closest to us. We're effectively saying *'God isn't there'*. This is why the more we come to know and appreciate others, the more we become aware of the reality of God in that person! Again and again in his letters, Paul reveals to us how God has revealed Himself. Paul's letter to the Church at Colossae is perhaps one of his most straight forward when he states clearly, *"May they be rich in understanding and know God's secret."* ***"It's Christ Himself."*** [vs. 2]

It's one of those "hah-hah moments when Paul takes confused minds - those who seek after God through works & man-made pursuits, who search scriptures diligently yet remain unclear to whom they're pointing. They're like wise men from the east following a star – understanding it points to a king – yet seeking Him in the house of wealthy, worldly leaders rather than trusting to let God lead them to the place where Jesus is. We've all done it – read a page, anticipated where it was going, and quickly assumed we knew the conclusion. It can be embarrassing when asked a question if we haven't actually read what's on the page.

Having a "Hah-hah moment" when what was previously hidden from our understanding is revealed and understood is really exciting in our lives. For instance, in John 9 we read of Jesus healing a man born blind. Against the many demands of the Pharisees, the man's final answer was, *"one thing I do know, I was blind but now I see!"* The apostle Paul, then known as Saul, could understand the man's response, even as scales fell from his own eyes. He'd been blinded on the road to Damascus and then had journeyed to the home of Judas on Straight Street waiting for Ananias to place his hands on him. In that hah-hah moment, Paul received the Holy Spirit, Ananias was encouraged as a follower of God's will, and we're told, *"Something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again."* [Acts 9:18]

The mystery of God is revealed to us by Paul within the details of God's grand redemptive plan. The mystery was made known not only to Paul, but also to the apostles and prophets of the early church. The mystery was revealed by the Spirit. The mystery is also revealed to each of us together with all the saints by the Spirit, through the teaching of the apostles and prophets found in God's Word. The mystery expresses the essence of the gospel -- the good news of Jesus Christ!

**The mystery of
God is revealed
to each of us by
the Spirit of God**

One Bible commentary reminds us, "The word *"mystery,"* so often used by our apostle, doesn't mean something incomprehensible, but *"something before kept secret and now only fully disclosed"*. This mystery, formerly hidden in the secret counsels of the Almighty, is this: an entirely new creation, made up of a diverse assortment of people, both Jew and Gentile, comes into existence. This new creation is described as dwelling within a living, organic union together with the resurrected, glorified Lord Jesus Christ. It's in fact

called 'the Body of Christ', or the 'Bride of Christ', or 'the Church'. It's not an organization, but an *organism*. The Lord Jesus is the head of this unique organism. And we're in Christ. The union is complete – Christ in the believer and the believer in Christ. Someone gave the crude analogy that, while imperfect might help us

**Body of Christ –
the Church - is
not an
organization, but
an organism**

understand. Consider a bottle immersed in the ocean. The ocean water is in the bottle, even while the bottle is in the ocean. Our Lord alluded to this mutual indwelling through the illustration of a vine and its branches, just before He was crucified. He shared with the disciples, *"Remain in me and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."* [John 15:4-5]

Note that to realize the full value of this union, we must 'remain' in the Lord. We're to always be in conscious union with the Lord Jesus. No one who shares the exalted concept of our Lord Jesus Christ, such as the Apostle Paul understood, could ever accept anything less. No one could be indifferent to the inroads of error which the enemy throws like darts against the believers of Christ within His organism the Church. **Or could we?** Paul felt compelled to address the heresy that had crept into the minds of followers gathering at Colossae and such warning bares examination in our own hearts regularly to ensure we never fall out of the truth of Jesus as our revelation of the Father and as our Saviour and Lord.

***"Just as you received
Christ Jesus as Lord,
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First, if we would remain in Christ, we must heed these words from the Apostle Paul that *"Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness."* [vs. 6-7] It's a phrase demanding our full attention and acceptance. It's a summary of our new life in Christ, a reminder of our great wealth through the wonderful gift of grace given by our Heavenly Father through the sacrifice of His own Son, Jesus. If we're to live triumphant lives we must remain in Christ whom we have received as Lord when we believed in our heart and confessed with our mouth HE IS LORD! The once for all experience, this being permanently rooted is the foundation on which our lives are "built up" through continually walking with our Lord. We adhere to Christ through faith, indeed through the body of truth – God's Word where even here we rely of God's Spirit to lead us. And we demonstrate our walk with Christ through the overflowing of thanksgiving at all times. In fact it has been said that "gratitude is the end of all human conduct". There is nothing greater than a thankful heart!

Why's it so important to know Christ, to remain in Christ, and to live lives which bring glory to God and celebrate our lives with thankfulness? Is it not because those who lack a deep sense of their place in Christ and fail to comprehend their great dependence on the Father are especially vulnerable to doubt and spiritual delusion?

Let me leave you with three ways in which those who would lead you to error work *"through hollow and deceptive philosophy"*.

- First, through the traditions of men – human traditions built upon pagan theories, folklore, wishful thinking, and wild imaginations; not the divine revelation of a holy, all knowing Heavenly Father through His Son, Jesus Christ.
- Secondly, a philosophy dependent upon the basic principles of this world. I think Paul is saying that we're settling for simple ABC's by being trapped through the pursuit of elementary spirits – false spirits, rather than following the true spirit, being led by God's Holy Spirit, knowing the Saviour, Jesus our Lord.
- Third and foremost, to follow any system of the world is to do so by following a system which is not according to the teaching of Jesus. When the teaching of others doesn't correspond with the truth we

find in Christ, when the standard collapses on its own footings, when its claims reject God, then we must not accept its teaching. The standard by which all teaching is measured is Jesus! Any system, whatever its claims, must be rejected if it fails to conform to the revelation God has given us in Him.

***There's a battle waging against us!
Are we prepared?***

May we go from this place, fully aware that such warning is justified. Recently I heard of pastors in Houston Texas being required by by-law to submit to city council transcripts of any sermons speaking against homosexuality and deviant behaviour" and are subject to imprisonment for failure to comply. The mayor is openly homosexual. And just this week, in British Columbia CANADA, the decision was made by British Columbia's Law Association to ban Christian College law school graduates from Trinity Western University from practicing law in B.C. Not because these students would be unqualified. Not because they've done anything unethical. The opposite, in fact: it's because Trinity Western students sign a personal conduct pledge to live by Christian values — including to abstain from sex outside a traditional marriage. It's illegal — the Supreme Court of Canada already dealt with this subject, when the B.C. teacher's profession tried to blacklist Trinity Western students before. The Supreme Court ruled 8 to 1 in favour of the school. These B.C. lawyers know they're flouting the Supreme Court's ruling but they did it anyway. I am again reminded that our battle is not against flesh but against the principalities of darkness which are at work against us. Our defense is the truth of Jesus Christ. The full deity of Christ, our glorious Lord, gives us His Spirit to strength us, guide us continually. The fullness of deity dwells in Christ in bodily form — He understands us and what we're going through. How? Because Christ is fully God *and fully man*, believers in Him are made complete, recognizing that union we enjoy with our Saviour. We're the branches — He is the vine! John Calvin writes, "*Ye are made full*" does not mean that the perfection of Christ is transfused into us, but that there are in Him resources from which we may be filled, that nothing be wanting in us." What a glorious thought! There's no need for us to fall, no need for us to turn to empty philosophies, ritualistic religion, or false gods. As Charles Wesley put it in his Hymn Jesus Lover of My Soul...

**The fullness of deity
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***Thou, O Christ, art all I want
More than all in Thee I find.
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick, and lead the blind.
Just and holy is Thy Name,
Source of all true righteousness;
Thou art evermore the same,
Thou art full of truth and grace.***

Paul affirms the all-sufficiency of Christ enabling us to receive full understanding of the mystery of God. We owe our being to Christ and are under His Lordship. While the powers and authorities of this world may be plentiful we are secure as we remain in Him! But we must be in Christ and He in us! If that is not a certainty in your life today, give us a call at 1-519-317-8659 or email to office.mbbc@xplornet.com. God bless you.

Pastor Dave