

the Mysteries of the New Testament

AND THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

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2 Timothy 2:2 - ² And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

Someone once said, "You cannot run from your shadow." Neither can you hide from the shadow of the cross. The cross of Calvary casts a shadow on the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. The cross also casts a shadow on every man.

INTRODUCTION

THE MYSTERIES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AND SHADOW OF THE CROSS

For a great deal of time, I have desired to do a series of studies on the mysteries of the New Testament and arrange them in a book form. However. As it is with so many things it was difficult to know where to begin. The Mysteries of the New Testament are so closely woven together it seemed difficult to separate them into subject and chapter form.

The entire Bible itself, while it deals with so many different subjects, at different periods of time in history, is still one whole unit, and it fits. Together perfectly. It could not be otherwise. For God is absolutely perfect, and the Bible is His word. Only God could give us such a perfect book.

It is not this writer's intention to claim the right to set forth a new commentary on the Bible. That right has already been reserved by so many great men over the years. We would like to give those men credit for the inspiration and insight they have given us. We are deeply indebted, to the many great Bible scholars and teachers we have learned from over the years, many of whom have went home to be with the Lord. We do not count

ourselves worthy of their efforts. However, after much prayer, and thought, and a lot of study, we have decided to do a series of studies on the mysteries of the New Testament, for one reason; Maybe we can help someone learn a little more about the Bible.

INTRODUCTION CON'T

As we have already stated, we had difficulty knowing where to begin, until recently. Please allow me to tell a short story.

For some years now I have been looking at a small unused empty church building in a small community near where I live. The building was run down and in need of repair. It had been vandalized and most everything was stolen except the pews and the piano, which were probably too heavy to carry. Most thieves are lazy, that is why they are thieves.

Finally, the Lord gave us the building. It was a gift of a lifetime. Now we could evangelize the area and try to build a church. We had to rely on donations and contributions in order to get the building in operating condition.

One day as I was working on the church a pastor friend of mine stopped in with a new water heater he was donating. As he looked around the building,

I proudly showed him a cross I made and painted white and hung on the wall behind the pulpit. He said something that in my ignorance I never thought about much before. He said “I like that because it is an empty cross. I hate to see a cross with a figure on it. Christ is not on the cross anymore, he is risen and in heaven.”

That is when it hit me. This book will begin where the Lord said in John 19:30 “it is finished.” We will begin where our salvation is sealed with an empty cross.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE GREATEST EVENT OF ALL TIME

1 Timothy 3:16 - ¹⁶ And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

This verse in 1 Timothy, I believe, covers a period of some thirty-three years. It begins with the conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary by the

Holy Spirit and ends with the ascension of the Lord into heaven.

God said in 1 Timothy, “without controversy” there is no doubt about it, no argument, God became manifest in the flesh.

Over the years in our attempt to lead people to Christ, we have often run into those who think they are too intelligent to believe in God or Christ.

We have always challenged those people to go to the Bible and prove us wrong.

I have never heard from those men again, and they will probably never hear from me again, because we don't have time to waste with those who reject Christ and deny God.

We simply must move on and spread the gospel to those who will hear it.

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John 1:18 - ¹⁸ No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

There is no controversy, no argument about it, God became manifest in the flesh. No man has seen God at any time. Christ, however, has revealed God. He has revealed the righteousness God, the

holiness of God, the grace of God, he is God. Christ died, was buried, and rose again leaving behind an empty cross.

MANKIND'S DENIAL

Throughout history, man has been trying to justify his position in life. He has been trying to justify his reason for existence, his importance. He tries to do so without God. He goes through life ignoring the first five words in the Bible, "In the beginning God created."

Man has been trying to prove he does not need God. The evolutionist has been trying to prove man has evolved from something. From an ape, or from a fish, or maybe from a BLOB from outer space. Perhaps from a speck of dirt he says, or maybe from an amoeba. Perhaps, he says, an explosion occurred in outer space and the earth came into existence.

The anthropologist spends his entire life in some remote part of the world, at someone else's expense, digging up a few small fragments of bones. Then, with tons of plaster, he pieces together some sort of animal that he claims man evolved from.

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NOTE: At the time of this writing, a group of scientists from a large university have declared there may be life on Mars. This life, however, is in the form of a worm that lives below the surface. They claim this worm was somehow transported to earth and evolved into life as we know it today.

If man evolved from a speck of dirt, or an exotic animal or plant life, or, as we are now led to believe, a worm from Mars, then man is something that just happened to come into existence. There would be no difference between man and a smelly old fish, except man is more destructive.

These anthropologists and evolutionists spend their entire lives trying to prove there is no God. they have filled libraries with their “findings” and “writings”. Still, after all this time, they are left with just “theories”. The latest and most radical theory being that man evolved from a worm from Mars.

Some of the most noted evolutionists, scientists, and anthropologists, have long since died and become exactly what they used to try to prove their theories. A pile of bones covered with worms.

The agnostic claims it is impossible to prove there is a God. The atheist claims there is no God. The only difference between the two is the agnostic thinks he is too intelligent to be called an atheist. After all,

the agnostic forms his opinion on scientific facts.
They both

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deny the existence of an almighty God. The evolutionist does not believe God created. He denies God.

1 John 2:22-23 - ²² Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. ²³ Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.

There is no difference between the agnostic, the atheist, the evolutionist, or anyone else that denies and rejects God. Whosoever denies the Father and the Son is an ANTICHRIST. Whosoever denies Christ also rejects the Father. Whosoever denies the Father also rejects Christ. He is Antichrist.

God became manifest in the flesh. His name is Jesus Christ the Lord. He has revealed God. Anyone who denies God, the existence of God, and his son Jesus Christ, is a liar. God has revealed himself to all mankind.

John 8:28 - ²⁸ Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know

that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

John 12:32-33 - ³² And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. ³³ This he said, signifying what death he should die.

In the verses just quoted, we see some very important facts revealed by the Lord. He was telling those gathered around him that he was about to be lifted up

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and nailed to the cross. **“This he said, signifying what death he should die.”**

After he was lifted up and placed on the cross, two things were going to happen. First of all, he said, **“ye shall know that I am he.”** The second thing he pointed out was that he would **“draw all men”**. When this event took place Christ said he would draw all men. Not a few good men. Not some special or chosen men, but all men. Cross said he would draw all men and all men would know that **“I am he.”**

When someone says there is no God, or you cannot prove God exists, then we say, according to the word of God, they must be lying. Christ said he would draw all men and we would know that he

was God and he revealed God. To those who deny God the Father and God the Son, we simply say, look to the cross.

Allow us once again to quote the verse we began this chapter with.

1 Timothy 3:16 - ¹⁶ And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

As we stated before, we believe this verse covers a period of some 33 years. It begins with the conception of Christ, to the ascension of Christ. We have also divided this verse into six parts. We have already looked briefly at the first part, which is, God was manifest in the flesh. Please follow along with us as we look briefly at the other five parts of this verse.

JUSTIFIED IN THE SPIRIT

Man cannot be justified in the spirit. Only Christ was justified in the spirit. God is a Trinity. He is 3, yet one. He is God the father, God the son, and God the Holy Spirit. Personally, I do not claim to know how God does this, I only know he is what he says he is.

Man can only be justified by the faith in Christ. Man is a Sinner, and sinful by nature. Jesus Christ knew no sin and could not sin, therefore he is just and justified.

1 Peter 1:9-11 - ⁹ Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. ¹⁰ Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: ¹¹ Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

To those who claim Christ is not God in the flesh, we suggest they read this verse. It plainly says the Spirit of Christ was in the Old Testament prophets. This was the same Holy Spirit of God. The same Holy Spirit that overshadowed Mary when Christ was conceived in her womb. The same Holy Spirit that came upon him when he was baptized by John. The same Holy Spirit that was with him in the wilderness. The same Holy Spirit that gave him power to perform miracles and that raised him from the grave.

1 Peter 3:18 - ¹⁸ For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring

us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

A perfect Christ died on the cross for imperfect man. Truly he was justified, truly he was just. He was just because he testified to the Old Testament prophets of his suffering and glory. As always, God kept his word. The Old Testament prophets did not understand this completely, because it was a **mystery concealed**. That is why they “**searched diligently**.” We will cover this subject in a later chapter.

SEEN OF ANGELS

How the angels must have felt when the Angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would be overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and conceive a child. That child would be the Lord Jesus Christ. He would be the savior of the world (*Luke 1:26-47*).

It was the angel of the Lord who went to the shepherds and announced good tidings of the birth of the Savior, and glory of the Lord shined round about (*Luke 2:8-15*). It was an Angel of the Lord who appeared to Joseph and warned him to take the child Jesus and flee to Egypt and escape the wrath of Herod (*Matthew 2:13*). Angels ministered to Christ in the wilderness after Satan had left him.

Imagine how the angels must have felt while they watched the Lord of glory being nailed to the cross. The crown of thorns clung to his bleeding brow. Then in those final moments, when he took upon himself the sins of all mankind, the brief instant when those sins separated him from God the Father, and darkness covered the earth, how the angels must have felt.

The very angels who had spent eternity with Christ since the time he created them, now had to watch as he suffered and died.

To those who deny God and the forgiveness of sins, we can only say, look to the cross.

We have looked at the first three parts of 1 Timothy 3:16, Which are, God manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, and seen of angels. Now allow us to look at the last three.

PREACHED ONTO THE GENTILES

If we were to ask the question, “who was the greatest preacher of all time?” Many would probably say Paul the apostle. In human terms I would agree. However, the greatest preacher of all time would be Jesus Christ.

Some would say Christ was received up into glory before he was preached unto the Gentiles, and

believed on in the world. Actually, that is not true. Christ was preached unto the Gentiles (nations) before his birth. As a matter of fact Christ was preached unto Adam and Eve by none other than Christ himself. It was Christ who was walking in the garden calling out to Adam. It was Christ who slew the animal and clothed Adam and Eve.

John 5:46 - ⁴⁶ For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me.

John 8:56 - ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

The only way to have eternal life is by grace through faith. That is the grace of God, and faith in Jesus Christ. Nothing else will work (*Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5*). Moses wrote about Christ. Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day. When he saw it he was glad. Abraham was a gentile. We are told that "Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness." (*Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3*).

Moses knew the gospel. Moses, who gave us the first five books of the Bible wrote about Christ through divine inspiration. Moses was saved through faith. We know Moses was saved because we saw him on the mount with Elijah at the transfiguration. (*Matthew 17:1-3; Mark 9:1-4; Luke 9:19, 31*).

Was Christ preached unto the Gentiles? Yes, without a doubt. Adam and Eve were Gentiles. Abraham was a Gentile before he became the father of all nations. Lot was a Gentile and God said Lot was a righteous man (2 Peter 2:7-9). Christ was preached unto the heathen (Gentiles) and believed on in the world long before he was received up into glory.

BELIEVED ON IN THE WORLD

Since Christ was preached in the world before his birth, he was also believed on in the world. As we stated before, Lot believed in Christ. Many believed in Christ during his earthly ministry. Many of those who believed in him were Gentiles. He was preached about and believed on and was the preacher.

RECEIVED UP INTO GLORY

The word received in 1 Timothy 3:16 is the Greek word *analambano* and it literally means “to take up.” It also means “to take to oneself” and “to have offered.” Christ was taken up and offered. Also very important is the meaning “to take to oneself.” Being that God the Father and God the Son are one, Christ was literally taken to himself.

Physically, however, as we see in Acts Chapter one, Christ was literally “taken up.”

Acts 1:9-11 - ⁹ And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; ¹¹ Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Christ was received up into heaven in his glory. He will return in his glory. He could not do all of this unless he was glorified. He was glorified because he died on the cross, was buried and rose again.

Without controversy, the greatest event of all time was the manifestation of God in the flesh, Jesus Christ the Lord. It began with the conception and has never ended. Jesus Christ still reveals God, is still seen of angels, is still justified in the Spirit. He was preached on and believed on in the world, and still is.

Therefore, we repeat the words spoken to the men of Galilee. "Why stand ye gazing?" Go tell the world about Jesus Christ. Tell them he died for our sins. He went up in glory and will return in glory. **EVEN SO COME LORD JESUS.**

CHAPTER 2

MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL

The word mystery and mysteries are used a total of twenty-seven times in the New Testament. It is always translated from the same Greek word *musterion*. It means a truth concealed until the time revealed.

Someone once said that the Old Testament is the New Testament revealed and the New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed. That is an accurate statement if you look at the meaning of the Greek word for mystery.

DIVINE REVELATION

The word mystery implies divine revelation. In other words, the mysteries of the New Testament can only be revealed by God through the Holy Spirit.

To those who have never trusted Christ as their personal Savior, the mysteries of the New Testament will always remain a mystery. What a sad thing it is to miss the joy of having knowledge of God's word.

To have a working knowledge of the mysteries of the New Testament as God has given the to us, is to

have a good understanding of the entire word of God.

Ephesians 6:18-20 - ¹⁸ Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; ¹⁹ And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Paul the apostle was asking the saints at Ephesus to pray for all saints and to pray for him also, that he might open his mouth BOLDLY and make known the mystery of the gospel. Unfortunately, the gospel remains a mystery to so many people because we, as Christians, refuse to open our mouth.

What a shame it is that so many Christians put on a “show” of righteousness yet will never open our mouth and witness for Christ. If we could only realize the potential, we have as Christians.

Paul said in Romans 1:16 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

The gospel is the power of God. If we only realized when we open our mouth to make known the

gospel of Christ, we have the **power of God at our disposal**.

THE NEW MAN

After his encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ on the Damascus road, Paul the apostle was a man with a new message (*Acts 9:1-16*).

Now instead of persecuting the church of Christ (*Acts 8:1-3; Philippians 3:6*), he was proclaiming Christ as the Lord and Savior.

Paul now had one goal in life. That goal was to open his mouth and declare the gospel. He asked his fellow saints to pray for him that he might have the strength and courage to be a witness for Christ.

We cannot all be preachers, we cannot all be deacons, or song leaders, or evangelists or dynamic speakers. But we can all open our mouths and declare the gospel.

If we are completely ignorant as Christians, we would still know one thing, or we would not be Christians, and that is the gospel of Christ.

In order to be a Christian, I have to put my faith in Christ. In order to put my faith in Christ, at some point, I have to hear the gospel. Someone had to declare the gospel when I heard the gospel. That is when I heard and believed.

So you see if I were completely ignorant as a born again Christian, I would still know one thing, and that is Christ crucified. The gospel.

The Lord gave instructions to his disciples just before he was received up into heaven and these same instructions apply to all of those who have trusted him today.

Acts 1:8 - ⁸ But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

You will notice some very important things contained in this verse. Christ said, “**ye shall receive power**,” then he said, “**ye shall be witnesses**,” he also said “**unto the uttermost part of the earth.**”

We have the power of God to declare the gospel and be a witness for Christ. To someone who lives on the other side of the earth, our neighbor would be a long way off. He might be considered the uttermost part of the earth. It would seem a sad thing that someone would have to travel around the world to tell our neighbor about Christ.

However, with many of us, that is the case. Someone from far off must tell our neighbors and friends how to be saved.

THE HIDDEN GOSPEL

2 Corinthians 4:3-6 - ³ But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: ⁴ In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. ⁵ For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Satan, that old deceiver, is out to destroy the message of the gospel. He does not want anyone to be saved from death into eternal life. Therefore, he will blind the minds of as many as he can, so they will not even listen to the gospel.

As saved, born again Christians, we have the power of God at our disposal, to make known the mystery of the gospel.

We have the light of Christ, which is in us, if only we would use that gift.

Is it any wonder Paul the apostle asked that constant prayer be made for him so he might make known the mystery of the gospel. Prayer is the power of God. The gospel is the power of God. We need the power of God to overcome Satan and the darkness of deceit.

The gospel will remain a mystery, only if we as Christians, refuse to open our mouth and reveal the mystery.

Christ is light and in him is no darkness. He is the light that shines in darkness (*John 1:4-8; 1 John 1:5*).

The gospel is referred to as the glorious light shining out of the darkness. As Christians we have access to that light. The light and the power of God are at our disposal.

Colossians 4:2-4 - ² Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; ³ Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: ⁴ That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

“Pray for me” Paul said. Pray that the Lord will open a door of utterance. Pray that when he opens the door I might have boldness to “speak the mystery

of Christ,” and to “make manifest, as I ought to speak.”

In reading these verses I wonder how many people are hoping down deep, that God will never open a door for them. They would much rather be silent and not confess Christ for someone to hear the gospel. After all, is it not an embarrassment to be associated with Christ?

It was not an embarrassment to Paul and it should not be to you and I.

“Continue in prayer and watch in the same.” The Lord warns us to continue in prayer and watch in prayer. If we do not Satan will get his foot in the door and we are in danger of becoming lukewarm and losing the power of God.

Satan is darkness and in him is no light. He hates the gospel. He would like to keep all the doors shut and keep mankind in the dark and keep the gospel a mystery.

Let us pray therefore that we may open our mouth boldly and make known the mystery of the gospel. We have the power of God if we use it. Or we can yield the power of Satan.

In these first two chapters we looked at two of the mysteries of the New Testament. The mystery of

godliness and the mystery of the gospel. We have tried to be brief yet informative if space would allow we could probably quote scripture upon scripture to make our point.

At this point we will give a few reference verses to consider in order to help “rightly divide the word.”

God became manifest in the flesh. His name is the Lord Jesus Christ. (*1 John 1:2; John 1:14, 18: Hebrews 1: 2-3, 8*)

Is it there any to wonder God said there is no controversy God became manifest in the flesh.

Over the years we have witnessed for Christ, we have noticed that no matter what kind of reception or reaction we get from people, when we ask them if they have heard of Jesus Christ the answer is always yes.

When we explain the mystery of the gospel and the reason God became manifest in the flesh and they remain in unbelief there remains for them no excuse.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

Matthew 12:38-41 - ³⁸ Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we

would see a sign from thee. ³⁹ But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: ⁴⁰ For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹ The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

Even though we never met one of my Bible teachers was the late Dr. M.R. DeHaan. I read everything he wrote. In his book entitled *Daniel the Prophet*, Dr. DeHaan stated that all scripture has three basic rules of interpretation.

1. All scripture has but one primary interpretation.
2. All scripture may have several practical applications.
3. Many scriptures have a prophetic revelation.

Personally, I use this rule in my own studies. The scripture we have just quoted in Matthew I believe is one of those portions of scripture. Allow us then, to use these basic rules of Bible study to view this portion of scripture.

PRIMARY INTERPRETATION

In Matthew chapter 12, the scribes and the Pharisees, came to Christ seeking a sign. To those religious leaders one more sign would have made no difference. Their minds were made-up. One more sign or miracle would have given them another excuse to accuse him of blasphemy. At least thirty times in the gospels we read that the leaders of the people came “testing him.” These religious hypocrites love to have honor and glory bestowed on them, why would they give it to Christ. Christ said, **“the scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses seat,”** (*Matthew 23:2*) and **“and love the uppermost rooms at the feasts and the chief seats at the synagogues.”** (*Matthew 23:6*). They loved **“greetings in the marketplaces”** (*Matthew 23:7*).

When Christ entered the scene, their authority and power were being challenged. When Christ performed a miracle, they accused him of doing so by the power of Beelzebub or Satan. (*Matthew 12:4*)

The Pharisees **“held council how they might destroy him.”** (*Matthew 12:14*) They came with the scribes and **“found fault with him”** (*Mark 7:1-2, 5*). The scribes and chief priests sought to **“destroy him”** (*Mark 11:18*).

The Pharisees came with the Sadducees and tested him, that he might show them a sign (*Matthew 16:1*).

The chief priest and the scribes sought how they **“might kill him”** (*Luke 22:2*).

The Pharisees took counsel with the Herodians **“how they might destroy him”** (*Mark 3:6*).

All of these prominent people of Christ's day joined forces together and made a league with one another in order to discredit and destroy Christ.

The Pharisees were a group of religious leaders of the Jews who trusted in their own righteousness the very name means “separated.” Yet when it came to Christ, they were willing and eager to make a pact with the very people they hated most; Everyone.

They came with the Herodians. The Herodians were a group of Jewish political leaders who were loyal to the Roman government, in order to further their own interests. The Herodians came to Christ with the Pharisees to **“entangle him in his talk”** they asked if it were **“lawful to pay tribute to Caesar.”** Christ called them **“hypocrites”** when he **“perceived their wickedness”** (*Matthew 22:17-18*)

The Sadducees came questioning Christ about a certain woman who had many husbands and whose wife she would be at the resurrection (*Matthew 22:23*). They were hypocrites indeed because the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, angels, or spirits. (*Matthew 22:23; Acts 23:8*)

The Pharisees on the other hand believed in all these things they disagreed on almost every strand of doctrine they could not ordinarily get along or agree on anything until it came to rejecting and “testing” Christ. Among these groups of prominent religious and political leaders there was animosity, jealousy, hatred, envy and contempt for one another. Yet when it came to Christ **“they were gathered together”** (*Matthew 22:34*)

Is it any wonder he called them hypocrites? Is it any wonder he said, **“An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.”** (*Matthew 12:39*) then he told those wicked men who gathered against him **“there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of a prophet Jonah for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”** (*Matthew 12:39-40*). The only sign mankind needs is **the sign of the cross.**

THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Christ called them evil and wicked. The two words are interchangeable. They come from the same Greek word *porneros*, which means hurtful or evil by influence. The word generation comes from the Greek word *genea*, and it means age nation or time.

Christ called them an evil and wicked generation. In Matthew 16, Christ said beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. The leaven is their teaching or their doctrine. He said this because of their influence (*Matthew 16:6-12*).

By practical application we must ask ourselves how does this apply today? In the primary interpretation we see quite simply the leaders of Christ's day were wicked and evil by their teaching and their influence. They rejected and tested their Messiah and Savior. They tried and tested God who was in their midst. God who was manifest in the flesh (*1 Timothy 3:16*)

By primary interpretation these leaders of the nation of Israel by their wicked and evil influence, had caused the Nation of Israel to reject their Messiah. By primary interpretation we see that these men of different doctrines and teachings who ordinarily could not agree came together against Christ.

They were told by their own prophets their Messiah must suffer for their iniquities (*Isaiah 53*). He even told them himself (*Mark 8:31*).

Things have not changed in 2000 years. Today men of different denominations who do not agree on Bible doctrine will come together and agree that Christ was not who he said he was. They claim he was not God in the flesh. They claim he was just a good man who showed us how to live a good life. They claim he did not perform the miracles recorded in the scriptures. They claim he did not die on the cross, he merely swooned. TESTING HIM.

Today just as it was then we live among a wicked and adulterous generation. We have religious and political leaders who are **hurtful by influence**.

Recently a group of 200 religious leaders from various denominations calling themselves the Council of 200 **got together**. They had a meeting and decided that the miracles of Christ were not real according to the Bible. They decided among themselves the miracles we have recorded in our bibles were only imagined by the writers of the gospels. These same group of men are now in the process of viewing the death and burial and resurrection of Christ. They are going to determine if these events actually happened the way they are

recorded in the Bible. A TEST. If they could, they would ask Christ to “show us a sign.”

When men decide among themselves that the Bible does not paint an accurate picture of the events we take for granted, they will ultimately influence someone that the Bible is flawed and inconsistent. This is called **hurtful by influence**. That is what Christ called **evil and wicked hypocrites**. While they claim to be religious leaders, they are in reality rejecting Christ's his authority. By their influence many will reject God's simple plan of salvation.

These scribes and Pharisees of our day are no different than those of Christ's day. We have in our generation the very same Bible denying Christ rejecting degenerates as we had in Christ's day. These are the same kind of men who rejected God and Christ way back in the time of Noah. Man does not change. In every generation there are those in authority in our political and religious circles who lead thousands away from Christ by their evil and wicked influence.

We have those who flock to church today **“seeking a sign.”** Many go to church today looking for a **“miracle or a healing or manifestation.”**

The evil and wicked men of Christ's day influenced the Nation of Israel into rejecting their Messiah.

The evil and wicked men of today influence many into rejecting a loving Savior who died on the cross for them.

Our religious leaders say the miracles performed by Christ were an exaggeration and a myth. They would still seek a sign only to find a reason to condemn Christ.

THE PROPHETIC APPLICATION

The cross of Christ has long since decayed or burned in one of the many fires that has ravaged Jerusalem over the years. Perhaps it is buried beneath a pile of rubble as the result of the many wars in Israel. Only history knows for sure

Nevertheless, the cross of Christ will remain a symbol to the Christian. A reminder of the sacrifice of our Lord.

We do not pay homage to the cross however as preachers of the gospel of Christ we must always preach an empty cross.

1 Corinthians 1:17-18 - ¹⁷ For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. ¹⁸ For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

The preaching of the cross is the power of God. It is the sign of the prophet Jonah. It is the gospel of Christ. Christ was nailed to the cross died on the cross and finally left behind an empty cross and is alive today.

In Christ day they came together. Those who could not agree on doctrine would unite together against Christ.

Today, they come together. Those who do not agree on doctrine will unite against Christ. They may not agree on salvation by grace period they may not agree on the rapture of the church. But they will unite and seek a sign and test the condemned and ridicule Christ.

Someday soon another will come performing signs and wonders (*2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; Revelation 13*) Practically the entire world will follow him. They will not question or test him. They will simply accept and follow him.

He is called the Antichrist and the Beast. He will not be God in the flesh as Christ was. He will just be a man indwelt by Satan. The world is just preparing itself for this great event (we will cover this subject in a later chapter).

As we go through the Bible in our studies of the mysteries of the New Testament, we hope you will forgive us for our repeating ourselves. We do so intentionally. This writer believes there is remembrance in repetition.

The mystery of the gospel will remain a mystery unless we as Christians open our mouth and make it known. When we reveal the gospel, we reveal God in the flesh; Jesus Christ. We also reveal the love of God when we reveal the empty CROSS.

CHAPTER 4

THE MYSTERY OF ISRAEL'S BLINDNESS

Romans 11:25 - ²⁵ For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

As we dedicate this chapter to the mystery of Israel's blindness, it is important to look at the many things this verse has to say. We must remember that Romans Chapter 11 is written concerning the future of Israel, and their restoration in the Kingdom.

Many Bible scholars believe that the fullness of the Gentiles is a separate event or time period than the

times of the Gentiles mentioned in Luke 21:24. That may be debatable.

However, if the fullness of the Gentiles is the rapture of the church, then there is a seven-year gap between Romans 11:25 and Romans 11:26 because Romans 11:26 is a picture of the restoration of Israel at the end of the seven-year tribulation.

The word Jacob is used interchangeably with the Nation of Israel. The seven-year tribulation is called the time of Jacob's trouble (*Jeremiah 30:7*).

God told Jacob his name would be no more Jacob but Israel (*Genesis 32:28; 35:10*). Jacob's twelve sons became the twelve tribes of Israel, and the mighty nation of Israel, God's people came into existence.

At this present time God has set the Nation of Israel aside and is calling out his church. God calls out his church by the power of the gospel (*Romans 1:15-16; Ephesians 6:19*).

It is by the gospel that God is revealed, through Jesus Christ, who is God. Anyone, whether Jew or Gentile, may have eternal life, simply by trusting Christ as their Savior.

You will notice God said, “blindness in **part** is happened to Israel.” If blindness in part is what happened to Israel, then there must be another part.

The answer, we believe, may be found in Romans 11:20, “... **because of unbelief they were broke off...**” and in Romans 11: 32 “**For God hath concluded them all in unbelief...**”

Therefore, because of Israel’s unbelief, God has broken them off, or has stopped dealing with them as a nation. However, as individuals, if they will believe in Christ, they will obtain mercy, or salvation.

Romans 11:23 - ²³ And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.

Remember in verse 25 God said “**I would not, brethren that ye should be ignorant of this mystery...**”

God does not want his church to be ignorant of Bible doctrine he will always explain himself if we will only pay attention. **Ignorance is not bliss it is just plain ignorance.**

THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS

The religious leaders of the Nation of Israel came to test the Lord Jesus Christ. They came to accuse him, and to find fault with him. They rejected his authority as God. They would not accept his credentials. The people followed their leaders to their destruction.

Isaiah 9:13-16 - ¹³ For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts. ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. ¹⁵ The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. ¹⁶ For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed.

Ever play follow the leader? Israel did! They would not seek God because they followed their leaders, and they erred and were “**cut off.**”

Romans 11:20 “because of unbelief they were cut off...”

Isaiah 5:7 ⁷ For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

Israel is special to the Lord, his chosen people. Yet they made a large error by listening to, and

following their leaders. They rejected God's plan of salvation and became “religious.”

A vine and a plant have branches. In Romans 11:1-24, we see that Israel is likened to a branch and the branch is broken off.

Because they listen to their religious leaders and would not accept the salvation of God the branch was broken. They were cut off. They would not believe in Christ as Savior. **“...because of unbelief they were broken off...”**

Israel, the branch, is cut off and God is calling out his church. Today, in this dispensation, which we call the church age, anyone who trusts Christ as their Savior, will be “grafted into” the church. Even though God has temporarily set Israel aside, anyone of Jewish heritage may be grafted into the church (*Romans 11:23*).

Isaiah 28:14-16 - ¹⁴ Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. ¹⁵ Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: ¹⁶ Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a

foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

Isaiah warned the religious leaders of Israel by divine revelation from God. He called them scornful men. Through lies and deceit they made a covenant with hell and death. The Pharisees of Christ's day were scornful men who made a league with death and hell.

Our religious leaders of today lead many people to hell and destruction by preaching a lie and hiding in that lie as their safety. Our religious leaders make lies their refuge.

In order to gain prominence and recognition they reject Christ and teach their people a lie and **“cause them to error.”**

Those who listen to their religious leaders and reject salvation by grace make a covenant with death and hell.

God said **“I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.”** This stone is Jesus Christ the Lord. **“He that believeth shall not make haste.”**

That means he that believeth shall not be easily shaken or moved. Trusting in Christ will bring peace

joy and will not be shaken from the love care and provision of Christ.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

Deuteronomy 28:63-67 - ⁶³ And it shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. ⁶⁴ And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. ⁶⁵ And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: ⁶⁶ And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: ⁶⁷ In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.

Have you ever had a restless night? A night of tossing and turning and bad dreams, then wake up

and rejoice to discover you were just having nightmares?

Perhaps you have had a bad experience that seemed as though it would never go away. This experience kept you awake at night, and you tossed and turned.

*O night, o restless night
if only the morrow would come*

The Old Testament is laced with prophecy concerning the Nation of Israel. There is no need to lengthen this book with the many prophecies of Israel however we need to point out a select few found in the previous verses.

We have just seen in Deuteronomy chapter 28 a very descriptive account of God's prophecy against the Nation of Israel. God said **“And it shall come to pass...”**

In this amazing prophecy, inspired by God and written by the hand of Moses, God foretold the future of Israel. Written some 1450 years before the birth of Christ, God said Israel would be scattered across the **entire earth. It came to pass.**

To anyone of Jewish nationality, God said there would be no ease among the nations. The sole of their feet would find no rest. We should consider

the magnitude of these words. Can you imagine walking on nails or as the old saying goes “walking on pins and needles”?

The Nation of Israel has never felt at home since God drove them out of their homeland. The land he promised to Abraham Isaac and Jacob.

A trembling heart, failing eyes and sorrow of mind, they would constantly fear for their lives and the lives of their families; **“no assurance of thy life.”**

In the morning, they would wish for evening. The days would be full of fear. At night, they would pray to God for the morning to come. A life of nightmares awaited. With the heart, they would fear and for the sight of thine own eyes.

They would see here and feel things that would lead them to terror.

This amazing prophecy came to pass just as God said it would. Now, almost 3,500 years later, this prophecy is still in effect. Just as amazing as the reality of this prophecy has been, still another prophecy for the Nation of Israel awaits.

This prophecy is yet future and remains to be fulfilled. It is called the time of Jacob’s trouble, or the seven-year tribulation. It will end with the restoration of Israel in the Kingdom.

After all the Nation of Israel has been through come the future will be even more dismal for the apple of God's eye.

However, God is not unrighteous. He will not cast away his people. He will be their king, their savior, and their God, when he establishes his kingdom on earth for 1,000 years. Just as all other prophecy has been fulfilled to the letter, this too shall come to pass.

Israel is still **“the vineyard of the Lord of hosts”** and Judah is still his **“pleasant plant”** (*Isaiah 5:7*).

They are still the **“apple of his eye”** (*Deuteronomy 32:10*).

Yet all of this unhappiness has come upon Israel because their religious leaders **“caused them to err.”** In their attempt to be religious and establish their own righteousness, they ignored the righteousness of God and rejected their Messiah.

The Christian may ask what does all of this have to do with me? Why should I be concerned about the nation of Israel and their problem? After all I have trusted Christ and know where my future is. It does not affect me.

A LESSON TO LEARN

The answer may be found in the word of God. If God recorded all of this, he must have a reason. In his letter to the church at Corinth, Paul the apostle warned them concerning their lifestyle.

Paul, under the tutorship of the Holy Spirit, and the inspiration of God, gave them a solemn warning, which applies to all Christians alike.

In First Corinthians chapter 10 verse 1, we have the warning. **“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant...”** Then Paul gives them a history lesson concerning Israel in the wilderness. He reminded them of the fathers who were under the cloud and passed through the sea. They were all baptized unto Moses, ate the same spiritual meat, drank the same spiritual drink from the **spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.**

Now if you will notice, pay attention verses to these next three verses closely which we will quote in their entirety.

1 Corinthians 10:5-6; 11 - ⁵ But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. ¹¹ Now all these things happened unto them for examples:

and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

God is a just and mighty God. However he will only allow so much to go unpunished. Israel was punished and still is because they would not believe in the rock that followed them in the wilderness: Jesus Christ.

They followed their religious leaders, who rejected their Messiah in the Old Testament and when he appeared in the flesh.

They tested and tried him in the wilderness. They would not believe in him. When he came to die for them, they accused him and found fault in him.

Throughout the Old Testament, God warned his people. Finally the prophecy of Deuteronomy 28 came to pass and is still in effect. Israel was cut off because of **disobedience and unbelief**.

Christians and churches today stand in jeopardy of not pleasing God. **The Rock of the Old Testament is the Rock of the New Testament.**

These things, “were written for an example.”

We need to obey the gospel and preach the simple gospel. Our religious leaders are leading us astray with false religion. They are tempting Christ with false messages and denominational lies.

With many of them God was not well pleased. With many of us God is not well pleased. If we would consider the tragic events that plagued the Nation of Israel, we might learn to **trust Christ and believe in him, plus nothing and be more obedient to him.**

CHAPTER 5

THE MYSTERY OF DIVINE REVELATION

The Holy Bible is called the Word of God. It is full of wonder and amazement.

Revelation 1:3 - ³ Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Not only is the reader blessed, but also the one who hears and retains the Word of God is blessed. This is a promise from God.

The Book of Revelation is called the Revelation of Jesus Christ (*Revelation 1:1*). Just as Revelation is called the Revelation of Jesus Christ, so also the entire Bible is the revelation of Jesus Christ. He is the center, the forefront, and the background, of the entire Word of God.

John 1:1 - ¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:14 - ¹⁴ And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory...)

Today we cannot behold Christ in the flesh, however, through the Bible we can see him as he reveals himself to us as the true and living God.

To those of us who are saved by faith in Christ, God made many promises. One of those promises is that he would reveal his word to us if we would study to show ourselves approved, rightly dividing the word (*2 Timothy 2:15*).

In Matthew chapter 13, the disciples of Christ asked him why he spoke in parables. In verse 11, he said **“because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven but to them it is not given.”**

Of course, to any sincere Bible student, we know he was talking about the Nation of Israel in particular. However, we also know the same applies to anyone who is not born again.

The word know in this verse comes from the original Greek word *ginosko*, and it generally means a progress in knowledge.

Therefore, learning and understanding the word of God is a progress in knowledge. This progress will

lead to the promise of Revelation 1:3 which is,
“blessed is he that readeth and he that heareth.”

1 John 5:13 - ¹³ These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

Try to understand the promise of this verse, which I call the circle of faith. These things were written unto those who are saved by faith in Christ. They were written so we may know we have eternal life. Not so we might think, or hope we have eternal life, but that we know without a doubt we have eternal life.

We have a blessing and a promise that is, to know, to be sure, I have eternal life.

We come to Christ with simple childlike faith and trust him as our savior. Then as we begin to study his word, he reveals to us the mysteries of the New Testament and mixes it with the Old Testament. Soon, we realize how accurate, honest, truthful, holy, and perfect the bible really is.

God begins to reveal himself and our faith is increased. The more our faith is increased through his word, the more I know his word is truth.

As we grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, we are more certain of our eternal life.

We begin by trusting Christ **“believe on the name of the son of God.”** Then we get into the circle of faith (study.) The more we study, the more we **“believe on the name of the son of God.”**

The word *no* in 1 John 5:13 means to come to an understanding. Christ said, “it is given to you to know.” He did not say you will automatically know.

It is given to us to know because God wants us to know his word. A progress in knowledge. Once the progress has begun, I may come to the understanding.

It takes study, prayer and a reliance on the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, the more I study, the more God reveals himself and the more faith I have in Christ.

To those who have never trusted Christ as savior, he said, **“to them it is not given.”**

That does not mean there is any excuse for not trusting Christ as savior. Man may claim to be an agnostic or an atheist, but Christ said he is revealed to **all mankind.**

Neither does the saved born-again child of God have an excuse for not knowing his word because

Christ said, **“to you it is given to know the mysteries.”**

God is divine and therefore he is divinely revealed in one way or another.

MORAL CONSCIENCE

Adam was created completely innocent. Just as a newborn baby is innocent, so was Adam. He lived in the garden, sinless, guilt free and happy. Then of his own free will he lost his innocence. He listened to Eve who listened to Satan.

Suddenly, Adam felt a new sensation, guilt. Adam and his bride knew they were naked and made clothing for themselves. Adam and Eve began to feel new sensations they had never knew existed.

Then as we see recorded in Genesis 3:8, they heard the voice of the Lord God, and they hid themselves. And rightfully so. Adam and Eve felt the pain of their moral conscience.

We are all created with a moral conscience. If it is true, as the trained psychologist would say, that guilt is the leading cause of depression and anxiety, then Adam and Eve must have been overwhelmed with a severe case of depression.

For the first time in their life bothered by their moral conscience. The same God with whom they

had a close fellowship with, was now someone they hid from.

Adam and Eve, however were not the only ones with a moral conscience. All men have a conscience. This conscience reveals man's need of a savior. Unfortunately many men will not yield to that conscience and just like Adam will hide from God.

When God called to Adam however Adam answered the voice of God Adam said, "I hid myself." How many will never answer the voice of God?

Romans 2:15 - ¹⁵ Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

You see, all men have the law written in their hearts and their conscience bears them witness. There is no excuse for rejecting God.

Romans 2:16 - ¹⁶ In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

Romans chapter one versus 16 through Romans chapter 2 verses 16 deals with the revelation of God to man and the consequences of rejecting that

revelation. The end result being that God will judge the secrets or rather the secret thoughts and deeds by the gospel of Jesus Christ. God will then “render” to every man accordingly (*Romans 2:6*).

At that time their “conscience also bearing witness” against them.

In these few verses in Romans, the words used to describe man's knowledge of God such as revealed known manifest and knew are used approximately nine times.

Romans 1:20 - For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Notice in this verse, if you will, that the things invisible, or things that cannot be seen, are understood by the things that are made or made seen.

In other words, the things that cannot be seen, are made visible by the things that are seen. Everything God created that is seen comma reveals the things that cannot be seen.

The moral law of God cannot be seen, yet that moral law is in the heart (conscience) of every man

and the actions of every man reveals his moral attitude.

The wind that moves across the face of the earth cannot be seen however the effects of that wind can be clearly seen.

The oxygen that is given off by the trees cannot be seen, yet that oxygen is necessary for man to breathe and maintain life.

Notice also, if you will, the words **“even his eternal power and godhead so that they are without excuse.”**

The word godhead is only used three times in the New Testament. Each time it is in reference to the Trinity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **“The things unseen are clearly made visible by the things that are made.”**

When Jesus Christ took on human flesh, he revealed the unseen God. God made “manifest in the flesh.”

Jesus Christ was made seen, and revealed the unseen which is God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

The godhead is God the father God the son and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ, the son, revealed the godhead and... **“the invisible things of him are**

clearly seen...even his eternal power and godhead so that they are without excuse.”

Colossians 2:9 - ⁹ For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

In him, that is Christ, dwells the fullness of the godhead bodily. To those who claimed to deny the existence of, or any belief in God, God says they are without excuse. Jesus Christ, the visible God, has revealed the invisible God in his completeness.

In Acts 17:22-31, we have the account of Paul the apostle as he stands on Mars Hill in Athens and makes a bold statement we will condense these verses and give only the highlights.

In verses 22 and 23, Paul said he “perceived they were very religious” but they “worshipped God ignorantly.”

Then Paul said, **“him declare I unto you”**. Then Paul began to declare God.

Verse 24 - God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth...

Verse 25 - ...seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

Verse 28 - For in him we live, and move, and have our being; ...

In verse 29 we have the word Godhead. This verse as with Romans 1:20 and Colossians 2:9 refer to the complete God who cannot be denied because he reveals himself and is easily seen in all things.

Psalms 117:1 - ¹O praise the Lord, all ye nations:...

NO EXCUSE

To those who claim there is no God, or those who claim we cannot prove the existence of God, we say, according to the word of God, there is no excuse.

God has revealed himself in nature, in moral conscience, and in the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ.

The Bible itself proves God historically archaeologically and by prophecy fulfilled.

To those who admit the existence of God, yet never make an attempt to discover his reality, we say there is no excuse.

Many folks will say “you know what the Bible says” then make a feeble attempt to quote something from the Bible that usually is not even there. They

would never in most cases even pick up the Bible let alone read it.

They claim to believe in God yet would never darken the door of a church. The excuses they claim are valid as flimsy as man himself. After all, they say those people in church are hypocrites and self-righteous and are difficult to be around.

Although there is some merit to this statement, as many so-called Christians are hypocrites and self-righteous, not all Christians fit this category.

This is really just an excuse because they never take the time to know any Christians.

“There are so many denominations,” they say. Who is right? Therefore, we will not take the chance. This excuse will not work because they never gave any church a chance and even if they did they would not know the difference. Therefore, they will not attend church because they have their excuses. They will never know anything about the God they claim to believe in. They will **ignorantly worship**.

“We work six days a week and Sunday is our only day off” they say, “and it belongs to me and my family.” Then on Sunday they leave the family

behind and play eighteen holes of golf and have a few drinks with the boys.

They might see the family if the family is very lucky.

If these people ever get the opportunity to hear a preacher everything he says will go right through their head. They will say something like "I don't need church. Me and Jesus got our own thing going."

Maybe they would have us believe they played golf together.

Man will go through his entire life endure, all kinds of hardships and failures, push and strain at every minor burden claim to believe in God. Then his life will end with his being totally ignorant of the greatest revelation of all time, Christ and his death on the cross.

Like the rich man in Luke 16, they will not utter any excuses from hell. There won't be any. **"None will have an excuse."**

Jesus Christ revealed God. He is and always will be God made manifest. Look to the cross and give your sins to the one who paid the price.

CHAPTER 6

THE MYSTERY OF DIVINE REVELATION cont.

The entire Bible is the word of God. However, it is more than that, it is God revealed. In the New Testament God is revealed as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He is the God and Savior of the Christian. In the Old Testament he is the God of the Nation of Israel. They are his elect and chosen people (*Isaiah 45:3-4*).

Israel failed to recognize their God as the savior the Messiah and the Lord Jesus Christ (*Isaiah 7:14; 9:6*).

They could not understand when he came in the flesh and blood physical body of Jesus, that their God was to die on the cross for their sins (*mystery of godliness 1 Timothy 3:16*).

Someone had to shed their blood, for the sins of man. It was necessary. It was written. It had to be perfect, sinless blood. Therefore, it had to be God (*Hebrews 9:11, 22, 28*).

Israel did not understand or even believe this fact (*mystery of Israel's blindness; Romans 11:25.*)

Therefore, when he claimed he must die, they rejected him. They were expecting a King who would set up their promised kingdom (*Isaiah 32:1; 33:17*).

If this was their King, why would he talk of dying (*John 12:24-42*).

Finally, he was placed on trial and convicted, even though he was innocent and once again prophecy was fulfilled. "Away with him, crucify him," they cried, and they chose a criminal to live in his stead (*Matthew 27:15-26, Luke 23:13-25, John 18:38-40*).

Israel rejected their King and nailed him to a cross. However, they would not dirty their hands with the precious blood, so they hired a "hit man."

The "hit man" they hired was a Roman judicial system. They were reminded of this by Peter in Acts chapter two.

When John the Baptist came preaching, "repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (*Matthew 3:2*), the prophecy of the Old Testament was fulfilled (*Isaiah 40:3-5; Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6*).

Truly the kingdom was at hand, because the King was at hand. His name was the Wonderful Counselor, the mighty God and Jesus Christ the Lord. He had to die on the cross and rise again according to the scriptures. He did this for the forgiveness of sins (*1 Corinthians 15:1-5*).

We who have believed this message are forgiven for our sins according to God's word. We are also told to take that message to the world. Every time we reveal this message, we are declaring the gospel to someone the same way it was revealed to us

(mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 4:3-4)).

Jesus Christ has revealed God. He has revealed the grace of God, the righteousness of God, the love of God (John 3:16.)

Christ said, “if I be lifted up...will draw all men.” He did not say some men, or a few good men, or a select group of men, he said “ALL MEN!”

Someone might say “why did God not reveal himself in the Old Testament as he did in the New Testament?”

The answer quite frankly is he did reveal himself in the Old Testament. Christ said the Old Testament scriptures testified of him (*John 5:39*).

Abraham rejoiced to see his day and he saw it and was glad (*John 8:56*).

Moses wrote of Christ’s day (*John 5:46*). Abraham believed the gospel (*Galatians 3:8*). The same gospel was preached to the nation of Israel (*Hebrews 4:2*).

Why then did God set the Nation of Israel aside? For the same reason anyone of the human race is set aside and condemned, because of unbelief. Anyone who does not believe in the gospel of the

Lord Jesus Christ is set aside and condemned of himself (*John 3:17-18*).

If we could go back in time we might claim with excitement to those men who were holding a mock trial “do you know you are about to fulfill prophecy? Did you know you are about to nail our Savior to the cross to pay for the sins of mankind?” We might say “do you know he is the God of the Old Testament?”

Of course it is impossible to go back in time. However, if we could do so, we would find that things have not changed in 2000 years. we would be laughed at and ridiculed. We would be told that Christ is an impostor, and one does not die for the sins of another.

But we would say “he is not just another, he is God in the flesh.” Once again, we would be laughed at and ridiculed. Things have not changed at all.

THE ARM OF THE LORD

In Exodus chapter 6 God told the Nation of Israel that he would deliver them from the Egyptians. He told them he would redeem them with a **“stretched-out arm.”**

This was a definite prophecy which was yet future. God reminded them at least five times in

Deuteronomy of their deliverance from Egypt by his **“outstretched arm.”**

The arm of the Lord is mentioned throughout the Old Testament as having strength, being holy, having victory and being mighty. The references to the arm of the Lord are too numerous to mention. However we will quote a few verses in length because of their importance.

Isaiah 53:1 - ¹Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

Isaiah 59:1-2 - ¹Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: ² But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

Isaiah 59:16 - ¹⁶ And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.

In Isaiah 52:13 through Isaiah 53:13 is a picture of the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a picture of his sacrifice and death. In Isaiah 59:1-2, it is the hand of the Lord that saves. In Isaiah 59: 16, God said there is no man who could save, but “his arm” brought salvation.

Isaiah 52:10 - ¹⁰ The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

The Lord made bear his holy arm in the eyes of all nations and his name is the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah said “all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”

Everyone shall see the salvation of the God of Israel.

The Lord made his arm bare so that all could see his salvation. Christ said **“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”** (John 12:32).

And in verse 33 he made it clear he was talking about his death on the cross. Next in verse 34 the people (*Israel*) said, **“We have heard... Christ abideth forever; and how sayest thou, the son of man must be lifted up?”**

John 12:37 - ³⁷ But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him.

No matter what he did they rejected their savior. The very next verse quotes Isaiah 53:1.

John 12:38 - ³⁸ ...Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

Even though God has revealed himself to all mankind, he will still be rejected. His salvation is revealed. Please notice this amazing prophecy found in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 4:6-8 - ⁶ And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.

⁷ Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm shall be uncovered, and thou shalt prophesy against it.

⁸ And, behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, till thou hast ended the days of thy siege.

This prophecy, we will concede, is very difficult to understand.

We will therefore try to give our interpretation of this prophecy. We know that many will not agree with this commentary, and you have a perfect right to do so.

God instructed Ezekiel to lay on his right side for forty days and bare the iniquity of Judah. Each day would represent a year. That would be forty years.

He also told him his arm would be uncovered. Ezekiel was to lay on his side, with his arm uncovered, bearing the sins of Judah and facing Jerusalem. He was to do this for forty days which would represent forty years.

Judah and Jerusalem are synonymous with Israel.

God said he, **“hath redeemed Jerusalem,”** and he **“hath made bare his holy arm”** (*Isaiah 52:9-10*).

His holy arm is Jesus Christ and make bare means to make manifest. **“His arm brought salvation”** (*Isaiah 59:16*).

“...He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (*Isaiah 53:12*).

Ezekiel lay with his arm uncovered or made bare forty days which would be symbolic of forty years period we believe this is in reference to Christ.

In Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks determined on the Nation of Israel, we have a similar prophecy. However, in Daniel, we have a distinct time period to begin with. **“...From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah...”** (*Daniel 9:25*).

In this prophecy of Ezekiel, we have no time period to begin with. However, if we look at the life of Christ from his birth to his death we have thirty-

three years. We know that leaves seven years. What about the seven remaining years?

Anyone who is familiar with Daniel's prophecy knows there are seven weeks or seven years left to be fulfilled in the prophecy of Daniel. There are also seven years left to be fulfilled in the prophecy of Ezekiel.

Christ revealed himself to Israel as the arm of the Lord for thirty-three years. He will reveal himself yet seven more years during the time of Jacob's trouble or what we call the seven-year tribulation.

Ezekiel was to bear the iniquity, or the sin of Israel, forty days, or forty years. He was to set his face against Jerusalem, with his arm uncovered (made bare) and he was not to move from one side to the other.

Christ, the arm of the Lord, was made bare. He bore the sins of many, and he is immovable. His word will stand. He will judge Israel then he will redeem Israel and once more he will be their God.

Throughout the Old Testament God said he, **“spread out his hands all the day to a rebellious people”** (Italic).

Then in Matthew 23:37, the Lord said, **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... I would have gathered thy**

people together as a hen gathereth her chickens... and ye would not.”

They rejected their king. He told them **“Behold your house is left unto you desolate”** (*Matthew 23:38*).

Finally, God stretched out his arms one last time. This time, however they were nailed to the cross. That cross remains as a symbol for all to see. A symbol of a loving God. An empty cross, an empty tomb and a Savior who lives.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH AGE

Acts 1:4-9 - ⁴ And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. ⁵ For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. ⁶ When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? ⁷ And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. ⁸ But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in

Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. ⁹ And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Please notice we have quoted these verses in their entirety because of the many important things they have to tell us.

It has been almost two thousand years since this historic event took place. The big question was “will thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?”

They were looking for the Kingdom! The answer from the Lord was, “Wait for the promise of the father.”

Please allow us to repeat ourselves once again. Two thousand years ago the King of Israel stood in their midst. They rejected him and called him an impostor.

Then they fulfilled prophecy and he was crucified. Then he fulfilled prophecy and rose from the grave “according to the scriptures.”

Just before he ascended into heaven he said, “wait for the promise of the Father.” Just as most of us,

they were not paying attention. They could not wait; “Lord will thou at this time...?”

It has been almost two thousand years since these events took place. We are living in a time. Called the age of grace or the church age. God is calling out his church by the power of the gospel. The kingdom is on hold. Israel, as a nation, is temporarily set aside. The kingdom will have to wait.

Throughout the scriptures we have, painted in vivid words, the account of kings and kingdoms past. We have the recorded history of the majesty of the mighty Pharaohs of Egypt. Nothing remains except small reminders of the grandeur they once had.

In the book of Daniel we have the prophecy of the rise and fall of the kings and kingdoms. All of this prophecy has come to pass except the ten toes of Daniel and the seven years remaining for Israel.

This too shall come to pass.

There is the golden head of Nebuchadnezzar. Even though gold is the most coveted and precious of metals, it is the softest and most vulnerable. The golden splendor of Babylon yielded itself to the silver kingdom of Persia and media under the leadership of Cyrus and Darius. Soon the tainted

silver once radiant gave itself over to the tarnished brass of Greece.

Under the leadership of that magnificent general Alexander the Great, Greece ruled supreme. Finally the strength of the iron legs of Rome marched across and conquered the then known world. It was the Roman Empire under the Caesars that ruled the world during the time of Christ and the apostles.

Iron and steel, however, are susceptible to rust and decay. Today just as Egypt there is little left to remind us of the once mighty Roman Empire. Rome along with her Caesars our history.

Probably the most influential and glorious Kingdom of all was the Kingdom of Solomon. He was so famous the queen of Sheba traveled all the way from her own Kingdom to pay him respect. The journey must have taken months considering the distance and the mode of travel.

2 Chronicles 9:22 - ²² And king Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom.

It should be no surprise, that in view of the Kingdom of Solomon, Israel should be looking for their Kingdom.

Solomon, however, has went the way of all other kings who have ruled before and after. He is dead.

His Kingdom, however, still remains to be restored. The new Kingdom will be an everlasting Kingdom and the king will be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

For centuries archaeologists have spent their entire lives digging up old ruins and searching for evidence of kingdom's past. Everything they uncover proves what Christians knew all along. The Bible is the word of God and is perfectly accurate. We look to the future; the past is history.

God made a promise That he would establish a Kingdom. This Kingdom would be everlasting (2 *Samuel 7:12-16*).

We as Christians are looking for the Kingdom just as the Nation of Israel is looking for the Kingdom. We know Christ will sit upon his throne just as he promised. Unlike those who wait for the coming of their Messiah, the Christian is waiting for his second coming. In the meantime, we must ask the question of many of God's children: "Why stand he gazing?"

Why stand ye gazing? Christ will "come in like manner." Before he does, however, many things must take place. God is calling out his church. When that is complete, Christ will take his church home. Then will be seven years of tribulation. Then

Christ will set up his Kingdom for one thousand years.

We have no idea when these things will take place. We only know they will happen according to the word of God.

Acts 1:7 - ⁷ And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

The future is in the power of God. There is a present however and we live in the present. Christians why stand ye gazing? Tell someone about Jesus Christ and the cross.

GOD'S PLAN

Since the fall of the Roman Empire no single nation has had complete rule over the earth. Many have tried and failed. This I believe is all part of God's plan.

As we stand on the brink of the twenty first century, we can almost see God's word coming to pass. There is no nation powerful enough currently to rule the earth. As a matter of fact, every nation today that at one time was considered a world power is in danger of self-destruction.

The United States of America has become so ungodly she is divided with strife and turmoil from within. Debt ridden and full of hatred and prejudice, she is ready to fall.

The European countries are completely war-torn and divided. Even the communists cannot agree with the communist.

At this time in history, there are over a hundred wars and conflicts throughout our world.

The very next Kingdom that will try to rule the world will be the Kingdom of the Antichrist under the influence of Satan.

This will last for seven years and will end with failure and judgment.

Daniel 2:34-35 - ³⁴Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. ³⁵Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

Daniel 2:44 - ⁴⁴ And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

The stone is Jesus Christ the Lord. The Kingdom he will destroy will be the revived empires of the ten toes of Daniel. The ten toes of Daniel are the ten horns of Revelation.

These ten horns nations will try to subdue the world into the Kingdom of Satan under the Antichrist. This will last for seven years.

Then Christ will set up his Kingdom the nation of Israel has been looking toward for so long. He is "the stone which the builders rejected" (*Psalms 118:22; Isaiah 28:16*).

He is the cornerstone (*Matthew 21:42; 1 Peter 2:6; Psalms 118:22*).

He is the stone cut out of the mountain (*Daniel 2:34*).

Is it not ironic that every precious metal is extracted from the stone and rock of the earth? Gold, silver, brass and iron all have their beginnings

in the stone of the earth. It is the stone cut out of the earth that smashes them to pieces.

Man has been trying to extract himself from God since the beginning of time. Man has put his trust in gold silver brass iron and the kings and kingdoms. God says put your trust in Jesus Christ the Lord. Look to the cross.

¹¹ ...Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. Matthew 13:11.

PROMISE OF THE FATHER

They were to wait for the promise of the father. Christ said, *"Which ye have heard from me"* (Acts 1:4).

This was the promise of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). This was a mystery to them.

Christ said in John 14:16-17, 26, that the Father would send a Comforter. This Comforter would abide with them forever. He would be the Holy Spirit of truth. He would bring all things to their remembrance and teach them all things.

Christ said when the Comforter came, he would proceed from the Father, and testify Christ (John 15:26).

John 16:13-15 - ¹³ Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. ¹⁴ He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

Here then was the biggest mystery of all, the promise of the Holy Spirit. He would indwell all believers. As he does so, he will teach us the word of God if we make the effort to study his word (2 *Timothy* 2:15; 1 *Peter* 2:2).

The Holy Spirit will glorify Christ. He will be a comforter in time of need. God promised a Kingdom to the Nation of Israel. That kingdom is on hold, until the church is complete and taken home. Then must be seven years of tribulation. These things must come to pass.

For two thousand years, the father has been keeping his other promise, the promise of the Holy Spirit. Those who receive that promise by faith in Christ have the awesome responsibility of telling others about Christ. WHY STAND HE GAZING?

Have you ever made an important phone call and when the party answers at the other end you are put on hold? You reply quite hurriedly, "I just have one question." The answer is, "sorry so and so is busy."

Or you might hear "all the lines are busy at this time, please hold."

When we are blessed with the music of their choice and we wait patiently.

We wait patiently or do we? I must admit many times I have hung up the phone in disgust. Patience is a virtue many of us lack. Patience is summed up in the word wait.

The Lord told those men gathered at Jerusalem to wait for the promise of the Father. This was the promise of the Holy Spirit. This was the promise made by Christ in John 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-15.

However, we're looking for the promise of the Old Testament; the promise of the Kingdom.

Zechariah 14:9 - ⁹ And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.

The Lord does not lie and will keep his promises. He promised a Kingdom. He did not say when (*Acts 1:17*).

The Kingdom has been put on hold. Christ told them to wait for the promise of the father (*Acts 1:17*).

The father kept his promise and sent the Holy Spirit (*Acts 2*).

The Kingdom will have to wait. In the meantime, be patient and listen to the music.

In Acts 1:15 through 2:21, we have the account of our beloved Peter as he swings into action. The Lord said wait.

Peter along with the others could not wait. In their attempt to fulfill prophecy they made two major errors.

Their first error was to hold an election and choose the twelfth apostle. They cast lots and chose Matthias. This was not God's choice.

Their second error came on the day of Pentecost when God sent the Holy Spirit and began the church age. Immediately Peter stood up and quoted Joel the prophet (*Acts 1:15-21*).

We will not fill the space to quote the verses here however we suggest you read this portion of scripture for yourself in Joel chapter 2 and Acts 2:14-21.

You see, Peter made his second big mistake and God recorded it in the Bible. Peter was still looking for the kingdom. The prophecy in Joel chapter two is yet future.

The prophecy of Joel chapter two will be fulfilled at the end of the tribulation AND the church will have been home for seven years.

Let us not be hasty and blame Peter for anything. Even though he was not listening to Christ, he was however trying to do something for the Lord. Most of us do nothing at all.

That is the reason we boast of not making mistakes. We do not make mistakes when we do nothing. We blame others for making mistakes but they at least tried. Most Christians never try to serve the Lord. Most of them are good at condemning those who do however.

Peter was ignorant of the promise of the Holy Spirit but he was not ignorant of the Old Testament. Many Christians today are just plain ignorant. Peter, like most of us had a lot to learn and he did as we will see later.

Ephesians 3:1-9 - ¹For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, ²If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: ³How that by

revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, ⁴ Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) ⁵ Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; ⁶ That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: ⁷ Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. ⁸ Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; ⁹ And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

Because of necessity we have quoted these verses in their entirety. You will notice the word mystery is used three times in these verses. We will attempt to give the important point highlighted in these few verses.

First of all these words were written by Paul the apostle to a group of saved Christians in Ephesus. He was writing about a new time period in the history of man. The age of grace period the church age.

He was informing them of the mystery that was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit.

Remember a mystery is a truth concealed until the time revealed. Not only was the mystery made known to Paul the mystery may also be known by any Christian simply by reading the word.

Notice also this mystery was not made known in any other ages, as it is now revealed unto his apostles. You see then, this mystery, which was concealed in the Old Testament, is now revealed in the New Testament.

The Lord revealed his word to Paul, Paul wrote it down and God preserved it in the Bible his holy word for you and I to read.

There is no excuse for claiming ignorance in the scriptures if you are a Christian.

“By which, when you read, ye may understand...”

What was this mystery revealed to Paul? **“That the gentiles should be below errors and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”**

Remember the promise? The promise of the Holy Spirit. The promise was that the Holy Spirit would dwell in, teach all, things bring in remembrance and be a comforter.

Jew or Gentile; there is no difference. Anyone who trusts Christ as their savior is partaker of the Holy Spirit, in the body of Christ.

This is the grace of God. The mystery hidden in the Old Testament is now revealed in the New Testament. God is calling out his church.

Salvation is offered to all mankind.

“Not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.”

In Matthew 10:5-6, the Lord told his disciples not to go to the Gentiles but to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. Many of them believed in him, but as a nation, they rejected their King and Messiah.

This was the mystery revealed to Paul. This was his knowledge in the mystery of Christ.

The Lord chose Paul to bear his name before the gentiles, and kings and the children of Israel (*Acts 9:15*).

Then after Israel rejected the message, Paul said “from the henceforth I will go to the gentiles (*Acts 18:6*).

Paul said “salvation is come unto the gentiles” (*Romans 11:11*).

Considering all of this, it should be easy to see how Peter made a mistake. The church was a mystery.

Jew and gentile as fellow heirs with Christ and partakers of the same spirit.

The same blessings and the same promises. The same knowledge is given to all.

No! No! The Jew would say. He is not the God of the gentiles. He is the God of Israel. We will not believe such heresy; And many of them did not and will not.

FELLOW HEIRS

Please bear with us as we repeat ourselves once again.

The Lord left them and was taken in a cloud. They expected his immediate return. Therefore, they held a democratic election.

They cast lots, (threw the dice) and the lots fell on Matthias. Matthias became counted as one of the apostles.

There had to be twelve apostles for the Kingdom.

Luke 22:28-30 - ²⁸Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. ²⁹And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; ³⁰That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

There needed to be twelve apostles. They chose Matthias. God had already chosen Paul. They made a mistake. We must be careful to do things according to God's word.

Judas was no longer counted with the 12. In their haste to fulfill prophecy, they chose Matthias. Can you imagine how Matthias must have felt when he realized he was not an apostle?

If we do not wait on the Lord, and do things his way, in his time, the results can be devastating and many could be hurt by our actions.

It was not until God sent Peter to Cornelius the centurion in acts chapter 10, that Peter realized what God was up to (Acts 10:1-11:18).

Please notice the outcome of that historic event and the effect it had on Peter.

Acts 11:16-18 - ¹⁶ Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. ¹⁷ Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? ¹⁸ When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

Is it not amazing how much we can learn in so little time when God is in control? God took charge and sent Peter to Cornelius the gentile and Cornelius trusted Christ as his savior.

God gave Cornelius the same gift. The gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise of the Father which Christ told them to wait for was the same gift to Jew and Gentile.

Please notice also in Acts 11:18, a very important thing happens when God is in control, and we allow the word of God to rule in our lives and wait for his decisions.

“They held their peace and glorified God.”

God gets the glory.

CHAPTER 9

THE CHURCH AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

The word of God is his gift to mankind. Through his word we are told how to be saved. We are told that Christ, was buried and rose again according to the scriptures and whosoever believes in him will have eternal life.

The fact that a savior would come and suffer should not have been a mystery to the Nation of Israel, but it was too many of them.

Consider Simeon and Anna who acknowledged him as the Lord Christ and the Redeemer of Israel (*Luke 2-25-38*).

Simeon said, **“for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”**

Isaiah proclaimed his suffering and rejection. He would be wounded for our transgressions (*Isaiah 53:3-6*).

Zechariah said, **“they shall look upon me whom they have pierced...”** (*Zechariah 12:10*).

Throughout the Psalms we have pictures of Christ portrayed particularly Psalm 22. These are Messianic Psalms because they speak of the Messiah.

When God sent Ezekiel to preach to the House of Israel, he warned him ahead of time they would not listen. However, God said if he sent Ezekiel to a people of a strange language they would harken to him.

Ezekiel 2:5 - ⁵ And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

Even if they would not listen, and they did not, they would know there had been a prophet among them.

Yet, God said if he were to send Ezekiel to the Gentiles, they would have listened.

Ezekiel 3:6 - ⁶ ...Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee.

Isaiah 65:15 - ¹⁵ And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name:

Here then, is one of the mysteries concealed in the Old Testament. The servants by another name is the church.

God sent his message to the Gentiles, and they listened. The message is that anyone who is born again by faith in Christ would be grafted into the church.

This is the mystery revealed in the New Testament. This was the promise of the father. This was the mystery Peter had a problem with.

What about the Kingdom? It was put on hold until the dispensation of grace was complete.

Why did Israel not see the mystery concealed in the Old Testament? Because they were a rebellious and

stiff-necked people. **“Because of unbelief they were cut off.”**

BEGINNING AND END

The God of Israel presented himself in so many ways. Yet they relied on their own righteousness. They would not yield to the righteousness of God (*Romans 10:3-4*).

They felt if they obeyed the law given to Moses, it was sufficient for righteousness. However, the law of God, given to Moses, was not designed to save anyone (*Romans 8:3*).

Israel was like many churches today. Man is always trying to establish his own righteousness. Man has not changed in six thousand years. Man thinks he must take some of the credit for his salvation. We must do something; water baptism, the sinner's prayer, public confession, walk an aisle, trusting Jesus just is not enough we say.

Paul the apostle was a pharisee, a religious leader of the Jews. He trusted in his own righteousness until he met Christ personally on the road to Damascus. It was there he realized only faith in Christ will save a man from his sins (*Philippians 3:4-9*).

We must all travel our own road to Damascus and meet Christ face to face and come to a personal relationship with Christ. This is done by faith in his finished work on the cross.

We have often heard people say, "I don't care what anyone says you can't go to heaven if you commit a sin."

This statement is heard many times when we tell someone about salvation by faith in Christ. When they hear salvation is free, it seems to upset many folks.

Frankly this statement is made by those who are ignorant of the Bible and those who are relying on their own good works for righteousness.

What they are really saying is "I don't care what you or the Bible says trusting Christ alone is not enough. I really must do or not do something. I want part of the credit."

Just as the Nation of Israel, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. They need to do what Paul did submit themselves to the "righteousness which is of God by faith."

The church began on the day of Pentecost when Christ sent the Holy Spirit to indwell all born again believers. When this takes place, every believer is

sealed with the Holy Spirit forever (*Ephesians 1:13-14*).

Every believer becomes fellow heirs with all other believers (*Ephesians 3:6*).

Every believer becomes part of the body of Christ (*Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27*).

The Holy Spirit will give every Christian the ability to learn and understand all things concerning Christ and the word of God (*Matthew 13:11; John 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:13-15; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16*).

Therefore, just as the church age had its beginning on the day of Pentecost, so also the church age must come to an end.

If every believer is sealed **forever** by the Holy Spirit, then what happens to God's church when this dispensation ends?

If the church and the church age this dispensation was a mystery, then the **end of the church age was also a mystery**.

All things as you and I know them must come to an end.

Our physical life must end kings and kingdoms must come to an end. This earth as we know it must

come to an end according to God's word (*Isaiah 28:22; 2 Peter 3:10-13*).

God and his word, however, will never perish (Psalm 102).

Psalm 102:27-28 - ²⁷ But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. ²⁸ The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.

Isaiah 40:8 - ⁸ The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

God the father, God the son, God the Holy Spirit are eternal. The word of God is eternal. The **children and their seed shall be established before thee AND continue.**

There is one other thing That will never pass away and that is the Church of Jesus Christ. The church is not a building or an organization or a denomination. The church is people.

People who have trusted Christ as their savior. When a person trusts Christ, they are sealed with **the Holy Spirit of promise.**

When a person trusts Christ, they are promised eternal life. Not temporary or partial life but eternal life (John 3:15-16,36; 5:24; 6:47).

Remember, we said the church age must come to an end. Well, that is absolutely correct. The church age the age of grace must end BUT: **THE CHURCH WILL NEVER END.**

When Christ sent the Holy Spirit who was the promise of the father, he kept a promise he made personally.

John 14:16-17 - ¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; ¹⁷ Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Please notice some very important truths God has pointed out in these verses.

The Comforter spoken of here is the Holy Spirit. He is referred to as a person and he is. He is the third person of the Trinity. He is the promise of the father and the prayer of Christ.

Notice some of the things he is doing for those he indwells.

1. He is a Comforter to God's people.
2. He abides with us **forever**.
3. He is truth. Satan is a liar, but Christ is truth.
4. The world does not know him, the Christian

does.

5. He dwells **with and in all Christians.**

Notice the present tense “dwelleth with you and the future tense “shall be with you”.

Since the day of Pentecost, the holy spirit dwells IN all Christians. Christ said the Holy Spirit would **“abide with you forever.”**

He abides with and in all Christians, and it is forever.

MYSTERY OF THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

Soon God will usher in another dispensation. This will be the seven-year tribulation or the time of Jacob’s trouble. This will be the final heartache for the Nation of Israel. This is not the time of the church's trouble but the time of Jacob’s trouble.

Before this seven-year catastrophic event takes place, another important event must take place. This is called the rapture of the church, or a better term would be the translation of the saints.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 - ⁵¹ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Here then is a mystery revealed to Paul concerning the church. Paul uses the Greek word *idou* as behold which means to pay attention.

He is calling their attention to a mystery which was previously concealed but is now revealed to the church. The Lord wanted them as well as you and me to know what the future holds for the church.

When the rapture takes place we will not all be asleep (dead) but we will all be changed. We will all (the entire church) be changed. Whether dead or alive, every Christian will be changed at once and we will ALL MEET THE LORD IN THE AIR.

Again, please bear with us as we repeat ourselves. The word mystery in the Greek means a truth concealed until the time revealed. It was now time to reveal the mystery concerning the end of the church age.

God chose to reveal this mystery through the Holy Spirit to Paul the apostle. Then God recorded it in his word the bible.

God has preserved his word throughout the centuries for all Christians to read and understand. Now please pay close attention to this. The mysteries of the New Testament are written to you and me so they will no longer be a mystery.

“BEHOLD I SHOW YOU A MYSTERY”

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 - ¹³ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

As we close this chapter with these verses, please notice, if you will, some very important truths God has set forth for you and me to dwell on.

First of all, and most important, God said in verse 13 **“...I would not have you ignorant brethren.”**

God does not want us to be ignorant concerning our future or any other matter. Therefore, God said

I do not want you to be ignorant concerning them who are asleep (dead).

Why does he not want us to be ignorant concerning those who have died in Christ? So that we sorrow not.

The church was a mystery. It has been revealed. The rapture was a mystery. It has also been revealed. God has unraveled the mystery for us and has recorded it in the Bible So we will not be ignorant and sorrow not.

Not one Christian will be left behind at the rapture, we will **“all be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye.”**

Every Christian will receive a brand-new incorruptible body instantly in the twinkling of an eye (*1 Corinthians 15:51-52*).

The Lord will descend from heaven with a shout. Those who have died in Christ will come with him (the only way they could come with him is, they **must already be with him**).

The dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive at the time, will be caught up **together with them**. We will meet the Lord together in the clouds.

We will have new incorruptible bodies which shall never perish.

The church will be spared the agony of the tribulation which is the time of Jacob's trouble.

“And so shall we ever be with the Lord.” How long will the church be with the lord? **FOREVER!**

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

God is a mighty and gracious God. He does not want his church to be ignorant or uncomfortable. He does not want our future to be a mystery. Therefore, he has revealed the mystery.

All of this was made possible at the CROSS OF CALVARY. LOOK TO THE CROSS.

CHAPTER TEN

THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY

2 Thessalonians 2:7 - ⁷ For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

As we prepare ourselves for years to come, many of us are looking forward to the rapture.

I am sure many feel as I do, that at the rate things are going, the Lord's coming must be soon. We are not trying to set dates for we know **“that day and hour knoweth no man.”**

However, we are told to look forward to his coming (*Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 3:1-4 Titus 2:13*).

As we survey the world around us, some may wonder why God allows things to go on as they do. God is ridiculed cursed and slandered.

We must remember God is righteous and just and is in complete control. He has a plan which must be fulfilled and only he can complete that plan.

God is allowing Satan to run amok and manipulate men and nations. Even this is in the overall plan of God and is only temporary. Satan will ultimately “meet his maker” so to speak and God is his maker.

We know Satan was created by God, he dwelt in heaven, and he was the anointed cherub until iniquity was found in him (*Ezekiel 28:14-15*).

Adam and Eve fell in the garden because of Satan's influence (*Genesis 3:1-24; Romans 5:12-14; 1 Corinthians 15:22*).

Therefore sin or iniquity has been in the world since its inception in the garden when Satan who is

the originator of sin induced man to follow him to destruction.

With this in mind, we may ask the question why would God call iniquity a mystery in two Thessalonians 2:7?

In our attempt to answer that question, we must make 2 distinctions concerning the mystery of iniquity. The first is the church or those who are saved. The second concerns those who are not members of the church, or the lost.

INIQUITY REVEALED

Iniquity is sin. In many places in the Bible, it is translated unrighteousness, and all unrighteousness is sin (*1 John 5:17*).

In order to be saved, one must do a very important thing period he must admit he is a Sinner. How can anyone trust Christ as a savior unless they admit their need for a savior.

When we admit our sinful nature, and our need to be saved, we are then acknowledging the existence of sin that is in us.

This is the meaning of the word repent (change your mind). Change your mind about sin and the need to be saved. Personally many of the things I did before I was saved, seemed natural to me.

Today, as I look back, I realized those things were against the will of God. They were iniquity.

As the Christian studies the word of God and grows in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, he will learn to understand the working of iniquity. They will understand how Satan influences the world into rejecting Christ (*2 Corinthians 4:3-4*).

We will understand how Satan works to destroy the lives of Christians. We will understand how Satan influences our government into rejecting the principles of God. This has been the downfall of every government since the beginning of time.

Through his word, God will also give the Christian a glimpse into the future. We may therefore, if we continue in the word, have a complete understanding of the workings of Satan in days past present and future.

Follow along with us as we do a study on 2 Thessalonians chapter two.

We would encourage the reader to read 2 Thessalonians chapter two verses one through twelve, before going any further period then together we may understand the mystery of iniquity.

Apparently, a letter had been written to the church at Thessalonica by someone other than Paul the apostle. Paul's name had been forged to the letter (vs 1 and 2).

The letter stated they had missed the rapture and were about to go into the tribulation (vs 1-3).

NOTE: The words *DAY OF CHRIST* are a mistranslation and should read the *DAY OF THE LORD*. The day of the Lord refers to the seven-year tribulation

In verse 2, Paul encourages them, **“be not shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ (the Lord) is at hand.”**

Paul was telling them not to worry. The day of the Lord was not yet present.

Then in verse three, Paul said, “let no man deceive you by any means;”

The letter they received was not the word of God. Many have been deceived by the words of men. There are no new revelations.

Paul reminded them of certain things that must take place before the day of the Lord. They are...

1. vs 3 **“for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first,”**
2. vs 3 **“and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition,”**
3. Vs 7 **“only he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way.”**

Please note these three things. The falling away must come first, then he who now letteth will be taken out of the way, THEN will the man of sin be revealed.

I know many will not agree with me, however this writer believes the falling away is the rapture of the church. Many believe the “falling away” which is the Greek word *apostasia* means a defection from the truth.

The root word in the Greek means (departure, defection, to depart, etc.). Whether it means a departure from the truth, or a departure from the earth, this will take place first. We are not being controversial; we are just stating our view.

“Our gathering together unto him” of course is the rapture of the church. The “falling away” (apostasia) which means departure, is also the rapture of the church.

The day of the Lord will not come until this event takes place. AND THEN will the man of sin be REVEALED.

2 Thessalonians 2:7 - ⁷ For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

The HE WHO NOW LETTETH, we believe is the Holy Spirit. He is the one who “WITHHOLDETH” in verse six.

The only thing holding back the forces of Satan and his demons, is the Holy Spirit of God, which is the promise of the Father in Acts chapter two.

When the with-holder, the restrainer, who is the Holy Spirit, is removed, the church will be also be removed.

Christ said the Comforter would dwell with and in all Christians. He will “ABIDE WITH YOU FOREVER.”

The Holy Spirit will be taken out of the way. The church will be taken with the Holy Spirit because Christ said he would abide with us forever.

The Holy Spirit and the church are removed, **“And then shall that wicked (one) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume...”** verse eight.

The wicked one in verse eight is the son of perdition of verse three. However, he will not be revealed until after the church is taken home.

2 Thessalonians 2:1 – ¹ Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

Paul begins chapter two with a reminder. When Christ comes for his church, we will be “gathered together unto him.”

The church will be taken home and the Holy Spirit will be removed, then will that wicked one be revealed. The Christian will not even see the son of perdition. We will be spared the “**wrath to come**” (*1 Thessalonians 5:9; Revelation 6:8-17*).

INIQUITY CONCEALED

to those who have never trusted Christ as Savior a day of reckoning will come. They may be good moral people. They may attend church, give tithes, be deacons or song leaders or even Sunday school teachers. All of this is meaningless without the saving faith in Jesus Christ.

They may know the difference between right and wrong, abhor evil, yet without the knowledge of Christ through the Holy Spirit, it is stale air to an empty lung.

In second Thessalonians chapter 2, the Lord reveals future events. The church will be taken home along with the Holy Spirit. Then that wicked one will be revealed. He is called the Antichrist and the son of perdition and the man of sin.

And the church will be looking down from heaven.

“Now we beseech you brethren... That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled...” The Christian today has no excuse for being ignorant of Bible prophecy. Neither did those in Thessalonica.

2 Thessalonians 2:5 - ⁵ Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

The Lord revealed his word to Paul, Paul told them in Thessalonica, and it was recorded in the word of God.

2 Thessalonians 2:8-12 - ⁸ And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: ⁹ Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, ¹⁰ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: ¹² That

they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Those who have not trusted Christ will be left behind to go through the tribulation and face the man of sin. They did not see sin and iniquity and their need of a Savior. They did not acknowledge the cross of Christ.

The question was why would God call iniquity a mystery? If we know that iniquity is sin, and we know what sin is, then it should not be a mystery.

Please pay attention as we try to give the answer. If you will remember in 1 Timothy 3:16, we read that the mystery of godliness is **“God was manifest in the flesh.”**

The mystery of godliness is, God was manifest in the flesh. His name is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ **revealed God.**

When a person acknowledges Christ as he really is, they are also acknowledging God. God took on human flesh and was made manifest.

Iniquity is the opposite of godliness. Therefore, just as God was manifest in the flesh, so also will Satan be made manifest in the flesh.

The mystery of iniquity is Satan revealed. Satan will indwell a man. This man will be the **son of perdition and the man of sin.**

The mystery of iniquity should be no mystery to the Christian period after all God has recorded it in the Bible. It is a mystery to those who have never trusted Christ.

To those who have never trusted Christ as savior, the mystery of godliness is a mystery to them. The mystery of iniquity is also a mystery to them (*to them it is not given*).

Someday however they will meet the man of sin face to face. They will be sent a delusion and believe the lie. After they have accepted the lie, God will judge them according to his word.

When God judges them according to his word, the mystery of iniquity will no longer be a mystery. For them, however, it will be too late.

The mystery of iniquity is Satan manifest in the flesh. He is the man of sin, the son of perdition, and the Antichrist (*2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 1 John 2:18; Revelation 13:1-18*).

CHAPTER 11

THE MYSTERY OF BABYLON

As we draw closer to the fulfillment of the word of God, two things should be in the hearts and minds of the children of God.

One is the excitement of seeing world events

unfold to meet future prophecy. The other is the anticipation of the coming of Jesus Christ for his church.

Consider what this world will be like when Christ comes and takes his church home and the Holy Spirit of God is removed.

The Holy Spirit, who is the restrainer of sin, will no longer be on this earth to hold back the working of satan. Immorality, wickedness and all the things that make up iniquity will be free to take over the thoughts of mankind.

It would be unsafe to leave home at night (it already is).

Murder rape theft pre version of all kinds and these things will be done in broad daylight and even condoned.

There will be no restrainer or withholder.

Almost everyone believes in God, or at least a God. However, most people try to create God or a God in their own mind. A God who suits their own lifestyle and their own needs.

They reject the God of the Bible. The God who became manifest in the flesh and died on the cross for the sins of man.

It is convenient to create a God of my own liking and desire. In doing so, I would have no reason to admit my need of a savior.

Then there are those who acknowledge Christ and God, yet never yield themselves over to salvation by grace through faith. They feel they must do something in order to be saved.

In either case, it is a religion based on self. Any religion based on self is a works righteousness. This attitude, which rejects salvation by grace through faith, is founded on self and works, and is the **spirit of Antichrist** (*1 John 2:22-23*).

John 14:6 - ⁶ Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Salvation is by faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross; plus nothing. Every false religion since the beginning of time is founded on a works righteousness, and it does not work.

Any other way than faith in Christ, to God the father and eternity in heaven, is the lie of Satan and is anti-God and Antichrist. The idea of a works salvation had its origin with Satan and manifested itself in the garden when Satan told Eve she could be as God.

False religion makes people think they can be as God.

Satan told Eve she could **“be as God knowing good and evil”** (*Genesis 3:5*).

Man thinks he may know good and evil and knowing the difference he may choose the good over the evil and therefore be good. If I worship in a special way he thinks or institute a form of religion or form a denomination I will be as God.

However, God says there is none good, and all our righteousness is as filthy rags (*Psalms 14:3; Isaiah 64:6*).

When the church and the Holy Spirit are removed, there will be a multitude of people left behind, who thought they were good people. There will be extremely religious people left on this earth to face Satan.

They will be left behind because they trusted in something other than Christ. They ignored the **“mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.”**

God was manifest in the flesh, died on the cross and rose again for the forgiveness of sin. Man must trust in God's payment for his sins. **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”**

Because they rejected that message, they will be left behind to face the future coming Antichrist. He will be a man who will be **indwelt by Satan**. The mystery of iniquity is future prophecy.

Satan will be manifest in the flesh. He will be revealed in the flesh.

In case the reader has been wondering what this has to do with the “mystery of Babylon”, please bear with us as we begin our study of Babylon.

Revelation 14:6-10a - ⁶ And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, ⁷ Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. ⁸ And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. ⁹ And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, ¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God.

During the tribulation, and in the face of God's judgment, the gospel will be preached. Once again God will be offering salvation to all mankind.

NOTE: Not only is the gospel dispensational, it is everlasting. The gospel of the Kingdom was

preached by John the Baptist, and it was rejected. The gospel preached by the angels will be the gospel of the Kingdom preached again (*Matthew 24:14*).

Notice if you will, in the verses just quoted in Revelation, we have the beast, who is Satan manifest in the flesh (*mystery of iniquity*).

then in verses six and seven, we have the gospel presented. In verses nine and ten, we have the judgment of those who reject the gospel. Nothing changes, just a different dispensation.

Then right in the middle of the gospel presented and the gospel rejected, we have the coming doom of Babylon.

THE TWO BABYLONS

BABYLON THE PLACE : BABYLON THE IDEOLOGY

1 HISTORICAL BABYLON

Babylon began as an idea, soon became a city, and over a period of time grew into a Kingdom. Over the centuries as the rulers came and went, so did the borders and boundaries.

Historically, Babylon played a major role in world affairs. Prophetically, the empire of Babylon played a much larger role as any student of the Bible knows.

One of the best historical accounts of Babylon is recorded by John Ridpath in his encyclopedia of universal history. He dates Babylon as far back as 2600 BC under the rulership of Sargon 1.

Babylon was also the capital of king Hammurabi. Some date his Kingdom as far back as 1900 BC. He was known for a law he instituted called the Code of Hammurabi.

Babylon is most remembered by the student of the Bible, as the nation that took Israel captive, during the reign of the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar.

During his reign, Nebuchadnezzar invaded and took Israel captive, and fulfilled much Old Testament prophecy (*2 Kings 24:1-20; 2 Chronicles 36:10-21; Jeremiah 25:9-11*).

During the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, the city of Babylon became one of the wonders of the world. He built a literal mountain inside the city walls for his wife who missed her native homeland.

He also built along the walls what became known as the hanging gardens. According to records these gardens were magnificent.

The Greek historian Herodotus gave an eyewitness an elaborate description of the once glorious city. His life was some 100 years later than the occupation of Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar.

He described the city as being fourteen miles

square. That would be one hundred and ninety-six (196) square miles. The walls were eighty-five (85) feet thick and almost three hundred (300) feet high.

Today we have many beautiful cities throughout the world however this writer does not think any of these cities would compare to the once glorious Babylon.

Herodotus must have stood in awe as he gazed across the vast streets and gardens of this city. The fourteen-mile walls must have seemed endless.

If all of this seems amazing, consider the fact that the river Euphrates ran right through the middle of this metropolis. The city was connected by a three thousand (3000) foot bridge across the river.

Herodotus noted there were two hundred fifty (250) towers and one hundred (100) gates along the exterior walls of this city. A large moat surrounded the city and through each gate was a bridge connecting Babylon to the outside world.

Under the protection of the mighty walls of Babylon were the temples of the many gods they worshiped. There were temples to the god of the sky, the god of the sea and so on.

The most notable of these was the temple to the God of Bel, which was known by the Greek as Belus. This god was considered the “father of gods”

and the “supreme god”.

This was the temple of Bel that held prominence among the many temples of Babylon.

Some fifty miles south of present day Baghdad in Iraq, the traveler may find a series of mounds. These mounds are piles of sand and soil, deposited by the winds of time. Underneath all of this earth is what was once mighty Babylon.

Wars, turmoil and **God's prophecy** have taken their toll on the once great city of Babylon.

Jeremiah 50:1-3 - ¹The word that the Lord spake against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet. ²Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces. ³For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast.

Isaiah 13:17-21 - ¹⁷Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. ¹⁸Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they

shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eyes shall not spare children. ¹⁹ And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. ²⁰ It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. ²¹ But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there.

Th Nebuchadnezzar was conquered by Medo-Persia. Medo-Persia was conquered by Greece and Greece fell to Rome. Alexander the Great promised the Babylonians he would rebuild the temple Belus, which was partially destroyed by Xerxes in 539 BC.

However God had already prophesized against Babylon. He said it "would be desolate" and "not inhabited."

After two months and ten thousand men, Alexander the Great could not keep his promise. He finally gave up to a lost cause. They could not even clear away the rubble.

God will not be denied. His words have and will come to pass.

Please notice in these two passages of scripture concerning Babylon, Isaiah said, “the wild beasts of the desert shall lie there.” Jeremiah said, “they shall depart both man and beast.”

There is no contradiction here. This writer believes that the prophecy against Babylon was given in two parts. Only half of the prophecy has been fulfilled. The other half will be fulfilled during the seven-year tribulation.

Where is the mighty Babylon today? She is a pile of rubble beneath the sands of Iraq. The walls and temples are gone. False gods are no longer worshipped there.

The God of Israel has fulfilled his prophecy once again. Soon, God will fulfill the rest of the prophecy. Where will you be?

Revelation 14:8 - ⁸ And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Revelation 16:19 - ¹⁹...and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

Revelation 17:1-6 - ¹And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew

unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: ² With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. ³ So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: ⁵ And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon The Great, The Mother Of Harlots And Abominations Of The Earth. ⁶ And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

Where is Babylon today?

The city and the nation of Babylon are history. God predicted the fall of Babylon some twenty-five hundred years ago. That prophecy has come to pass.

If the Book of Revelation is talking about a literal city, then the city of Babylon will have to be rebuilt. If the rapture of the church takes place today, then

the city of Babylon will have to be rebuilt during the seven-year tribulation.

Present day Iraq is situated in most of the old Babylonian empire. The ruins of the old city are covered with sand and dirt. They are just a pile of rubble some fifty miles South of Baghdad.

Saddam Hussein, was quoted as saying he would rebuild Babylon and set up his capital there. He hinted he would bring Babylon back to its glory and fulfill prophecy.

God said he would send the Medes against Babylon. It would fall and never be inhabited. God kept his word. The Medes conquered Babylon and Babylon began to decay from that time forward. Today nothing remains of Babylon the place.

Alexander the Great could not alter God's word and neither would Saddam Hussein.

Someday, God will fulfill the rest of his prophecy against Babylon and that is Babylon the ideology.

BABYLON THE IDEOLOGY

In our study of the two Babylons you will remember we said Babylon began as an idea, soon became a city and grew into a mighty nation.

Everything in the word of God has a meaning. God said Babylon came in remembrance before God. In

Revelation 16:19, it is time for the final judgment of Babylon, Babylon the ideology.

This prophecy is yet future and will be consummated during the seven-year tribulation. However just as it is with all things, the idea of Babylon had a beginning. Therefore we will begin at the beginning. In order to do that, we will use the first law of mention.

We will go to the Bible. We will see the first mention of Babylon and its significance in final prophecy.

Genesis 10:8-11 - ⁸ And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. ⁹ He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. ¹⁰ And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. ¹¹ Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah.

Here then is the record of the beginning of Babylon. It began with Nimrod and his Kingdom of Babel. It was an idea. Please read on and see how the idea grew.

As man began to multiply, he naturally followed a leader. In this case the leader was Nimrod. They all spoke one language. Together they journeyed east

to the land of Shinar, and dwelt there. They decided to build a tower that would reach towards heaven (*Genesis 11:1-4*).

They decided to stick together and build a name for themselves so they would not be scattered throughout the earth.

This was contrary to God's word. In Genesis 9:1, God told Noah and his sons to, **"Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth."**

Genesis 11:5-9 - ⁵ And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. ⁶ And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. ⁷ Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. ⁸ So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. ⁹ Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

God said replenish the earth. They rebelled against God and decided to band together and form a

religion of works. Does that sound like the religious leaders who “came together” against Christ?

In the land of Shinar, they came together and built a tower that would reach to heaven.

The Lord confounded their language and scattered them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

In chapter ten verses ten and eleven, we are told that the beginning of Nimrod’s kingdom was in the land of Shinar. And out of that land were all the other kingdoms started.

The beginning of Nimrod’s kingdom was Babel, in the land of Shinar.

Originally, the word babel, meant gate to God. However, God compared it to the Hebrew word *balal*, which means confusion (*Genesis 11:7-9*).

Can you imagine how they must have been literally confused, when suddenly, they could not understand one another. They were talking and laughing at God one minute, as they built their, “gate to God” then the next instant it was “confusion.”

God scattered them abroad, but they were still out of that land. They were sent out of the land, but the idea still remained in their hearts and minds. Babylon is a works religion and the ideology of Babel still remained and began to flourish. The only

is it remained in different languages. God however was not surprised and neither should you and I be.

Babel, and the kingdom of Nimrod, remained and flourished. It would soon be inhabited by many kings and kingdoms. Israel would be taken captive by one of the kings of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. God proclaimed that Babylon would fall. Babylon the place is a pile of sand, never to be inhabited. In the book of revelation, God has prophesized that Babylon the ideology will also fall.

In the land of Shinar, in the kingdom of Nimrod, known as Babel, God saw that the people were one. Once again, the world will band together against God and try to become one. When they do, Babylon will come into remembrance before God.

As John the Apostle looks on in amazement, as God reveals the future to him, he sees things he cannot comprehend. In revelation chapter seventeen, he sees what he describes as a harlot (17:1).

she is sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast (17:3). She is clothed in purple, like royalty and rich with gold and precious stones (17:4).

⁵ And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. (17:5).

As John looked on and wondered, an Angel said, **“Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns”** (17:7).

The angel then explains the mystery of the woman and beast (17:8-18).

The beast, as any student of the Bible will recognize, is none other than the Antichrist. He will allow the harlot to have a free rise as he takes control of the earth.

Satan will allow the entire earth to have a form of religion. This will probably be the one world church, which will allow everyone to worship as they see fit.

God said the harlot would sit upon many waters (vs 1). The angels said, **“The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sittest, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues”** (17:15).

In the kingdom of Nimrod, which was Babel in the land of Shinar, the people were one. They built a tower which they called the “gate to God.”

Once again, the world will unite to form another Babel. The many nations and tongues will ride the beast. The one language that God confounded so

many centuries ago, has become many nations and tongues. Yet, they come together.

Revelation 17:18 - ¹⁸ And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

Babylon the place is buried in the ancient dynasty of Babylon. Babylon the ideology is still alive, and it flourishes in the minds of men today. It is false religion founded on works and self. It is apart from God, and it is antichrist.

The word city literally means a walled dwelling place and a place of refuge. People have always fled to false religion for refuge and safety (*Isaiah 28:14-15*).

It seems you may take man out of the land of Babel in Shinar but cannot get Babel out of man.

After the harlot has ridden the beast and has gained influence and has become a one world religious system, the beast will destroy her. He will use the rulers of this earth to accomplish this task (*17:16*).

When they do this, they will unknowingly be fulfilling the word of God (*17:17*).

If you are a student of the Bible, that should amuse you because God will use mankind to fulfill his word. Man will unwittingly, be his own destruction.

You will also notice; the kings of the earth will give their kingdoms unto the beast (17:17). A world that rejects salvation by grace and denies Christ will give themselves over to the Antichrist, who is the beast of Revelation.

What a fitting end for those who reject the sign of the cross.

It is not our intention to do a discourse on prophecy. We are only trying to explain the mystery of Babylon. We believe we have done so, since Babylon is simply false religion founded on works. However, before we close this chapter, it is only fitting we give an illustration.

Babylon is called the whore or harlot. This implies a prostitute. A prostitute is one who sells herself, or himself, for financial gain.

Prostitution was a normal thing in the ancient temples of the false gods. In Greece, prostitutes were in all levels of society and dressed according to their class so people could tell which class of prostitute they were engaging.

In Corinth, during the time of Paul, prostitution was practiced in the temple of Aphrodite.

Governments condoned this behavior because there was money to be made in taxes. Slaves were bought and sold and forced into illicit practices.

Finally, especially during the sixteenth century, disease began to spread through all levels of society. It was not considered a problem until it began to kill innocent people.

Prostitution has been part of every society throughout history. God does not like that activity but allows man to destroy himself.

Prostitution has always been a moral, financial and physical threat to our society.

Wherever there is whoredom, there is decay and loss. Loss of life and physical well being through disease.

There is loss of family life through infected spouses and loss of money through care and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases.

Babylon is rightfully compared to a harlot. One who sells herself for gain and profit, feeding on the lusts of others. False religion feeds on men's souls. Men will always be in spiritual Babylon feeding their religious desires and lusts on a works salvation. It will never work.

Someday, Babylon will come into remembrance before God and it will be destroyed.

Today, Babylon the place is not inhabited by man, but is inhabited by wild beasts and fowls. When God destroys Babylon the ideology, there will be

nothing left to inhabit.

The wild beasts will not even be there.

God said she will be, **“found no more at all”**
(*Revelation 18:21*).

When this takes place, the **“heaven will rejoice”**
(*Revelation 18:20*).

Those who are saved by faith in Christ, we may go to the Bible and see how God will deal with Babylon. To those who have never trusted Christ, Babylon will remain a mystery until the prophecy is fulfilled against her during the tribulation. It will be too late.

Out of Shinar came Babylon the ideology, the MOTHER OF HARLOTS, which is false religion. It spread throughout the world and the world has been found guilty of fornication with the harlot.

There is no refuge in false religion. There is no refuge in Babylon.

There is only refuge and safety in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is only refuge in the Cross of Calvary. The cross is a reminder of God who shed his blood for the sins of man.

However, **“for the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness;”** (*1 Corinthians 1:18*).

MYSTERY: A truth concealed until the time revealed.

Babylon, the ideology, is a truth concealed to those who reject salvation by grace through faith.

The truth will be revealed during the seven-year tribulation. That is why God calls it the Mystery of Babylon. It should not be a mystery to the child of God. God has recorded it in the Bible and **“to you it is given.”**

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

REPONSE AND REPONSIBILITY

1 Corinthians 3:19-4:2 ¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. ²⁰ And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. ²¹ Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are your's; ²² Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's; ²³ And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's. ¹ Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. ² Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

In these verses, Paul reminds those at Corinth, that our goal and motivation in life should be to please God and not man.

No matter how powerful or influential the man, or the organization is, we should never put them above God. No matter how smart the man, (Paul, apollos, or our pastor) they are never wiser than God or his word.

If we desire to serve Christ, then we are held accountable, not only to Christ, but to other men also. The word steward in the original Greek means, *a manager of a household*.

We are, therefore, managers of the household of God, and Christ himself is the head of that house.

As the comma **“ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God,”** it is, **“required that a man be found faithful.”**

There is nothing wrong with being faithful to our church and our pastor. However, if we put our faithfulness to men and to a denomination before God, we are not faithful stewards.

We are required to give account of ourselves in our lives, and in our actions. Therefore we must be faithful stewards of Christ, and that means defending the word of God, not a man.

How can we be faithful stewards of the mysteries of the New Testament, if we do not understand them?

Someone will always say, "God works in mysterious ways" then hint that we cannot understand the working of God.

Paul said we are, "stewards of the mysteries of God". How can we be stewards of something we cannot understand?

It is true there are many things we will never know about God until we leave this earth and enter eternity. Nevertheless, we are in charge of the household of God, and we are held accountable for the word he has given us. That word includes the mysteries of the New Testament.

A RESPONSIBLE GOD

God holds himself accountable to no man. He is accountable only to himself. God holds himself accountable to his word.

Numbers 23:19 - ¹⁹ God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

"And shall he not make it good?"

If you have ever heard someone say "you have my word on it", then you should consider how much it

means to have the word of God.

Consider also how much it means to have God's word written in a book, (Bible) that we may know him and his reality.

Because of the fact God is who he is and cannot lie, we should rejoice in the many promises God has made in his immutable word.

He has promised that every word he has spoken, has, or will come to pass (*Isaiah 48:3*). He has promised us that his word will never pass away (*Isaiah 40:8*). His word will never return void, it shall be accomplished and it shall prosper where he sends it (*Isaiah 55:11*).

He promised a Savior and kept his word (*Isaiah 45:21-25*). This Savior would be the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace (*Isaiah 9:6*). He would bear the iniquities (sins) of mankind (*Isaiah 53:4-6*).

The word responsible means *expected or obliged to account answerable*.

the word responsibility means *the state of being answerable or accountable as for an obligation*.

God has fulfilled his responsibility to his word. God who cannot lie has made himself responsible and accountable for his word. He has fulfilled his word in Jesus Christ the Lord.

ISRAEL AND RESPONSIBILITY

Romans 3:1-3 - ¹What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?

² Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. ³ For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

The Old Testament as well as the New Testament is the word of God. Through the Old Testament prophets, God revealed his word to Israel.

Even though the nation of Israel did not believe God and did not uphold their responsibility of preaching the word, does not mean God will not remain faithful to his word.

Luke 24:44-48 - ⁴⁴ And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. ⁴⁵ Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶ And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: ⁴⁷ And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ And ye are witnesses of these things.

The word of God was given to the nation of Israel. They were responsible for getting it right, they failed.

Moses, the psalms, and the prophets, all spoke of the death burial and resurrection of Christ.

Acts 7:37-39 - ³⁷ This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. ³⁸ This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: ³⁹ To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, Israel was responsible for the word of God, which was the gospel of Jesus Christ. They would not obey the gospel or listen to Moses and turned into a spiritual Egypt.

Finally in Matthew 23:37 to Matthew 24:1, The Lord Jesus Christ gave the final condemnation to his beloved Israel.

He said, **³⁷ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how often would I have gathered thy children together...ye would not! (Matthew 23:37).**

Then he said, **³⁸ Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. (Matthew 23:38).**

Then in chapter twenty-four verse one, he departed from their temple.

John the Baptist came and preaching the Kingdom was at hand. Christ sent his 12 apostles preaching the gospel of the Kingdom in Matthew chapter ten. All on deaf ears and the word of God was fulfilled once again. They rejected him.

After all this was said however, let us not be too hasty to condemn Israel. They are after all God's chosen people and his elect nation. Christ will gather his people together once again, when he finally sets up his Kingdom sometime in the future.

OUT OF EGYPT INTO BABYLON

The Lord took Israel out of Egypt and placed them in Sinai. From Sinai they were to go into the promised land. Instead, they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Finally, after forty years, God allowed them to cross over Jordan into the promised land of Canaan (*Exodus 1 through 40; Numbers 16 through 36*).

Israel remained in the land of promise for about nine (900) years. During that time, they defied God, refusing to obey him, they began to worship idols. Soon wicked king after wicked king ruled in Israel until doom was at the door.

Finally, the door was opened and around 586 BC Israel was taken captive into Babylon. This was all according to prophecy however in Israel refusing to listen to their

prophets met with their God who demanded to be listened to (*Jeremiah 25:9-11*).

Egypt is a type of being in bondage to Satan and sin. In this condition of being without Christ, everyone is a lost Sinner.

When a person puts their trust in Christ as their savior, they are taken out of Egypt into Sinai. Cyanide is the wilderness of testing. As new Christians we are given the chance to serve and witness for Christ. He asks only that we trust him.

If we grow in our Christian life, and lean on our savior, we will cross over Jordan into Canaan, the promised land.

Canaan is not a type of eternity, as some have supposed. It is the victorious life of the dedicated child of God. Israel is our example. We are told to consider the outcome of Israel. The consequences of Israel's failure are recorded in the Old Testament and often repeated in the New Testament as a warning for the Christian (*ref 1 Corinthians 10 and Hebrews 3 and 4*).

No one ever goes back to Egypt. After we are saved by grace through faith, we are taken out of Egypt, never to return. Salvation is forever. We may reject salvation by not accepting Christ and remain in Egypt but once we are saved out of the bondage of sin we never return.

Israel was saved out of Egypt and into Sinai. They could have entered into Canaan, the land of promise. Instead, because they refused to trust in God and rebelled, they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. After forty

years, Israel crossed over Jordan into Canaan. However, they were so rebellious, God finally led them captive into Babylon.

NO REMEDY

2 Chronicles 36:14-17a - ¹⁴ Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. ¹⁵ And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: ¹⁶ But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. ¹⁷ Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees...

God said Israel were his people and his dwelling place (vs 15). When God sent messengers to warn them, they were mocked and misused. They despised the words God sent them until “there was no remedy.”

Israel was an example of the New Testament church. The New Testament Christian is the dwelling place of God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 2 Corinthians 6:16-17; Ephesians 1:13).

When one trust Christ as savior, he is taken out of Egypt, and placed in Sinai, the testing ground. He may go on and serve Christ, with trust and obedience, crossing Jordan into the promised land.

Or he may stay in the wilderness, wandering about aimlessly.

Once we are in Canaan, the land of blessing, we may put the Lord first, and serve him, or rebel. We may listen to the messengers God has sent, study his word, be obedient and remain in Canaan.

On the other hand, we may, through a lack of study of God's word, and a lack of church attendance, fall into false religion, or sin, and suffer the wrath of God.

“Therefore, he brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans.”

The life of the Christian is important to Jesus Christ. He wants to bless us. He wants us to remain in Canaan and receive his many promises.

If however we refuse and become as the Hebrew children, “there is no remedy.”

2 Chronicles 36:20-21a - ²⁰ And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: ²¹ To fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah...

There are two things waiting for those who fall into false religion and transgression against God. The sword which would be physical death or captivity in spiritual Babylon.

To those who were carried away into Babylon, by the king of the chaldeans, God said **“they were servants to him and his sons.”**

Once we are saved by grace through faith, we are eternally saved. However, God expects us to act like responsible Christians. We are given the responsibility of being stewards of the word of God. We are given the responsibility of being faithful to Christ and defending our position in him.

If we fail to do so we are in danger of being servants to Satan and his sons. Satan is the spiritual father of all those who reject Christ and God. They are his children (*John 8:44*).

therefore God will give his child over to be held captive by Satan in spiritual Babylon.

God has fulfilled his responsibility. He expects us to be responsible with his word. He expects us to live a life that would reflect our salvation in the new life in Christ.

If we do not, we stand in danger of the same perils that overtook Israel. We have a choice. Crossover Jordan, wander in the wilderness, remain in command, or captivity in Babylon.

Once we are in Canaan, God expects us to remain faithful to him and his word. He expects us to be responsible. If we are faithful stewards, there will be a response from others.

The Lord gives us chance after chance to be faithful. He gave Israel 900 years. They failed. They listened to their religious leaders, and followed other gods, and would not listen to their God.

Because Israel was not responsible, “there was no remedy.”

MYSTERY OF THE SEVEN STARS

Revelation 1:12-13; 16; 20 - ¹² And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; ¹³ And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. ¹⁶ And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. ²⁰ The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

THE WARNING

Before we attempt to give our interpretation of the seven stars, allow us to paint a picture of the events portrayed in these verses in Revelation chapter one.

John the Apostle was on the Isle of patmos. He was banished, or placed there, because of his testimony and witness for Jesus Christ (1:9).

While he was there, on his own personal Alcatraz, he received the vision we know as the Book of Revelation.

NOTE: it should be interesting that John was placed in remote patmos because of the word of God, yet it was there we get the last book of the Bible, the complete word of God.

John was in the Spirit of the Lord's day when he heard a voice saying, "I am alpha and Omega, the 1st and the last (1:10-11).

When he turned and looked, he saw the glorified Jesus Christ (1:12-18).

He also saw the seven stars and the seven golden candlesticks, and the sharp two-edge sword (1:12,16).

The Lord told John to write what he saw, past present and future and send it to the seven churches (1:11,19).

The reason he was to do so is because the Lord was sending a warning to the churches. Revelation 1:4 through Revelation 3:22 is the warning.

It is not our intention to give a commentary on the Book of Revelation however we need to point out some very important things found in these verses. It is necessary to see what the mystery of the seven stars is.

When John looked he saw Christ in the midst of the seven churches. He was not far off and distant, he was in the midst.

The seven stars were in the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a sign of divine protection.

He also saw out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. This is the word of God (ref Revelation 19:15; Hebrews 4:12; Isaiah 34:5-6).

John saw the alpha and Omega, the first and the last. The one who was dead but is alive for evermore. He saw the everlasting Lord and King of Kings, Jesus Christ.

In his right hand he saw the seven stars, but who, or what are the seven stars? Verse twenty tells us they are the angels of the seven churches.

The word angels in verse twenty is translated from the Greek word *agellos* and it means messenger. The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches.

Whether one believes they are literal angels, or men, is not important.

The important thing, at this point, is where they are, and what they are doing.

Let us look at three of the things John saw. He saw the seven stars, who are messengers, in the right hand of the Lord. He saw seven lamp stands, which represent the seven churches. He also saw the most important thing, and that was the sharp two-edged sword.

Every Christian, everywhere, at all times, is a messenger. The message we should have is the word of God. God's word is a sharp two-edged sword (*Isaiah 34:5-6; Revelation 19:15; Hebrews 4:12*).

The word of God is a two-edged sword. The Church of Christ is responsible for spreading the word. Our responsibility is getting it right.

2 Timothy 2:11-13 - ¹¹ It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: ¹² If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he

also will deny us: ¹³ If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

If we deny him?

Notice if you will, in the verses just quoted our past which is dead with Christ, and our future, when we shall also live with him. There is also the present. When we trust Christ as Savior our past is dead with him because we are born again, into the family of God. Someday we will be with him forever. In the meantime, we live in the present.

If, in this present life, we deny Christ, he will deny us before the Father in heaven. That is for our divine protection in the life we live today; the present.

“Yet he abide faithful.” The Lord will never take away our salvation. Even if we “deny him he cannot deny himself.”

Christ is true to his word. He said we are saved when we trust him as savior, and it is eternal. He does not perform spiritual abortion.

Why is our past dead? Because someone gave us a message. A messenger of Christ gave us the message, which was the word of God, the gospel. That message is sharper than any two-edged sword. When I heard the message, and believed in the message, I was born again into the family of God.

Now I become the messenger!!

The seven churches throughout Asia not only represent seven literal churches, but they also represent churches throughout history. To every church the Lord said, “I know thy works.”

It does not matter which church you belong to, or where that church is located, Christ “knows our works.”

In Revelation chapter two verse one through chapter three verse twenty-two, is the warning to the churches. The warning to every church had to do with their message. The warning today has to do with the message. What will you do with the word of God? What will you do with the gospel? Will you pervert the gospel with man's words and man-made traditions?

The churches in Asia were being filled with false doctrine. There was the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, the doctrine of the Balaam, the doctrine of Jezebel. Satan was infiltrating the churches with false doctrine.

The only two churches the Lord was happy with were the church at Smyrna and the church at Philadelphia. However, the Lord even warned them to be faithful and to hold fast.

The Lord is in the midst of his church. He protects those who preach the gospel. He does not want his gospel mixed with the false works of Satan.

The warning is recorded in the word of God and preserved for all Christians to read. We cannot lie and hide from Christ. He said, “I know thy works.”

Revelation 1:5 - ⁵ And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

The gospel is that Christ died, was buried, and rose again for the forgiveness of sins according to the scriptures (*1 Corinthians 15:1-4*).

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” Whosoever believes in him shall have eternal life (*John 3:15-16; 5:24; 6:35,47; Acts 16:31*).

Nothing else will work. Only simple faith in the finished work of Christ will forgive my sins. Anything else is false doctrine.

We are washed from our sins by his own blood. We do not wash ourselves by some religious act, such as, forsaking our sins, or kneeling at an altar in some church. We are not saved by moving our feet or our knees. We are saved by making a decision, it is mental.

We make that decision according to the message we hear. After we have heard the message, we are confronted with the reality of Christ and our need of a savior.

NOTE: Personally, this author has never seen the blood of Christ at any altar; only wood, metal, fabric, and a little dust the vacuum cleaner left behind.

The last church mentioned was the church at Laodicea. They represent the church which will be on earth when

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the Lord returns at the rapture. The Lord said they are lukewarm and he will spew them out of his mouth. Even though there are many Christians with a testimony for Christ, the church as a whole was, and is, lukewarm.

We are lukewarm because we have mixed the word of God, which is sound doctrine, with false doctrine. We think we are on fire. In our zeal to please God and our fervor to prove our faithfulness to him, we have perverted the gospel.

We have mixed believe with things like, “ask Jesus into your heart” and “ask Jesus into your life.”

The mystery is not who they are. They are messengers of the seven churches the mystery is where they are and what they are doing.

As a newborn child of God, he expects me to live a life that would reveal my new self. He expects others to see something in me they never saw before.

Even more than that, the Lord expects me to defend his word. He is not happy if I compromise the simple gospel for man-made religion. It was Christ who shed his blood for me.

It was not a man or a religion. It was not a denomination or an organization that died for my sins. It was Christ.

If I am faithful to his word, I will be on his right hand. I will be divinely protected.

The word of God is sharper than two-edged sword. As a Christian, I have the sword of God at my disposal.

Let us then, “be faithful unto death,” and “hold that fast which thou hast.”

Remember an empty cross in the blood of Christ. If we preach anything else, who will protect us?

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

MYSTERY OF THE MARRIAGE

Genesis 1:27-28 - ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.²⁸ And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Genesis 2:18; 21-25 - ¹⁸ And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.; ²¹ And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; ²² And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. ²³ And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. ²⁴ Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. ²⁵ And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

When God created man and woman, he instituted the marriage. When he did so, he gave some basic principles. These principles, if followed, will lead to a happy relationship with our mate.

The first principle is that God has a right man and a right woman. Not a right woman and a right woman, or a right man and a right man, but man and woman.

God said it is not good for a man to be alone. Loneliness is very depressing and God does not want us to be depressed. So, he created a man for woman and a woman for a man.

God said he would make a help meet for him. The word help means fulfillment. The word meet means counterpart. Therefore God created the woman so she would be a fulfilling counterpart.

Principle number two is the right time. God made the woman and brought her to Adam at the right time. We should not marry because of pressure or loneliness or because we think it is the “social thing to do.” We should wait for the right man and the right woman.

Principle number three is do not compare your mate to others. When God brought Eve to Adam there was no one to compare her to. There was no comparison. They were literally made for one another.

There is danger involved when we begin to compare our mates to others. Someone else may seem more attractive or more exciting but we are obligated to see the best in our mate because they are our fulfilling counterpart.

The fourth principle is that Adam did not seek the approval of mom and dad.

Neither did he seek the approval of his buddies in choosing a mate. Eve did not ask her children if this relationship was okay with them. She did not go to her parents for their approval.

of course you are saying, “wait a minute, there was no one else!”

that is exactly the point. There should be no one else. The marriage relationship should involve man woman and God.

Principle number five is they relied on one another. There was no outside influence on the marriage. They were “one flesh.” When we go to others outside the marriage, without the consent of our mate, it shows a lack of respect and consideration for their opinion. The man and woman, like Adam and Eve, need to depend and rely on one another.

In principle number six, We see they are not ashamed of one another period they were not ashamed of each other's appearance, either spiritually or physically. Of course we read in Genesis 3:7-11, they knew they were naked and hid from God, but that does not say they were ashamed of one another.

We should never be ashamed of our mate, either in private or in public.

The seventh principle is the concept of conceiving children. They knew, since God said a man and a woman shall leave mother and father and be one flesh, they

must be the mother and father.

They are the mother and father, and the children must leave home and live their own lives.

The children will leave home and start their own family.

We should never put the children ahead of our mate.

Raising the children is a joint venture.

These are the seven basic principles in the marriage and we know there are many more to be considered. To the Christian, these basic truths should have more meaning, because Christ is at the center of the relationship.

In Genesis 1:26, God said, "let us make man in our image after our likeness."

It sounds like God is talking to himself, its because he is talking to himself. Rather, we should say he is talking within himself. God is a trinity. He is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Gohst (*Matthew 28:19*).

We are told that Christ was in the beginning with God, he was God and he is the word of God (*John 1:1; 1:3*).

The world was made by him (*John 1:10*). He created all things and by him all things exist (*Colossians 1:16-17*).

Therefore, if Christ created all things, he created Adam and Eve. He brought Eve to Adam. It was Christ who walked in the garden calling out to Adam.

Ephesians 5:30-33 - ³⁰ For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. ³¹ For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. ³² This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the

church. ³³ Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

In Ephesians chapter five versus 22 through 33, we have some of the New Testament guidelines concerning marriage.

As you may have noticed in verse thirty-one, there is a direct quote from Genesis 2:24.

Notice also in verse thirty-one it says, “for this cause shall a man leave...” For what cause? The answer is in verse thirty.

We are members of his body. His flesh and his bones. Then in verse thirty-two, Paul said, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

It was a mystery. However, Paul said, “I speak.” Paul spoke and it is no longer a mystery. The marriage is a type of the church and its relationship to Christ.

Christ created Adam, then he made Eve, and brought her to Adam. Adam accepted her and they were one. The right man and the right woman at the right time period Christ is the right savior who was nailed to the cross at the right time period his time. The time to accept him as savior is when we hear the gospel presented at anytime.

When we accept him as savior, we become part of his church. It is a marriage that cannot be broken. We are part of his body, his bones, and his flesh.

There is no comparison. There is no other savior. We cannot be compared to the world's gods.

Only Christ died, was buried, and rose again for the forgiveness of sins.

The word of God gives us the answers. Most preachers and denominations do not have the answer, but the Bible does.

The Bible says Christ created and he is God in the flesh. In the marriage we are supposed to rely on one another, and we are to rely on Christ to nurture our marriage.

We are told to love our wives and reverence our husbands because that is the way Christ feels about his church. We are told not to be ashamed of our mates and not to be ashamed of Christ; he is not ashamed of us.

The mystery of the marriage is that marriage is a type of the church. Marriage is being one, just as having Christ as Savior is being one in him. It is trusting him, relying on him, not looking for something else when Christ is all I need.

Marriage is a type of salvation. Marriage is a union, just as faith in Christ is a union. Marriage is one, the church is one (*Ephesians 3:1-9*).

This chapter would not be complete without one final point. In Genesis 1:28 God blessed Adam and Eve, and said, "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth."

The marriage is a type of the church. The family is an outgrowth of marriage. We are supposed to be fruitful

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and have children. The church is supposed to multiply. The Christian is supposed to be fruitful and “replenish the earth.”

The fruit of the Christian is more Christians. God wants his church to be fruitful and multiply and grow as a family. God wants his church to replenish the earth. This will not happen unless we obey Christ and witness for him (*Acts 1:8*).

Christ said to be witnesses unto the uttermost part of the earth. The fruit of the Christian is more Christians. This is the fruit of our mouth (*John 15:1-8; Hebrews 13:15*).

When we open our mouth and make known the gospel, we bring forth fruit. We replenish the earth and are fruitful and multiply. The family of Christ is increased.

The marriage is a type of the church. If we consider how much Christ loves us, we should consider how we should love the one we have chosen as a mate.

In the marriage we should continually LOOK TO THE CROSS and be fruitful.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Lord Jesus Christ has a plan. That plan cannot be altered by time and circumstance. He has also given us an outline of that plan in his Word, the Bible. He has not given us a time period so we can set dates, but we still have the whole complete plan.

Mankind is part of that plan. Actually, without mankind there would be no plan.

The plan or rather the outline was not complete until the New Testament was completed. Without the New Testament, the Old Testament prophets did not understand that plan. It was a mystery to them (*Ephesians 3:1-9; 1 Peter 1:9-12*)

They did understand however the plan involved God, man and salvation.

ISRAEL AND THE PLAN PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

The Bible is inexhaustible, yet we will try to sum up Israel's history from Isaiah chapter sixty-five, compared to other select scriptures.

God chose Abraham to be the father of the nation of Israel (*Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-6; 17:1-8*).

Abraham was not only to be the father of the Nation of Israel, he was to be the father of many nations (*Genesis 17:1-6*).

To Abraham was born Isaac, and to Isaac was born Jacob, and Jacob had twelve sons who became the twelve tribes of the Nation of Israel.

Soon, the nation of Israel was captive in Egypt. God sent Moses, and Moses delivered Israel out of Egypt. Once out of Egypt they were to go into the promised land of Canaan. Instead of entering Canaan, because of lack of

faith and disobedience, they wandered in the wilderness for forty years.

Finally, after 40 years, Israel crossed over Jordan, and entered the promised land. They remained in the land of Canaan for about 900 years. During this period of time, in the beginning, there was no king in Israel (*Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1*).

Israel was ruled by a mediator who was some sort of spokesman for God. These men were called judges. The last of these men was Samuel (*1 Samuel 7:15*).

The trouble for Israel really began while they were being judged by Samuel, and is recorded in 1 Samuel chapter eight.

The leaders of Israel came to Samuel asking for a king (*1 Samuel 8:4-5*). Samuel was unhappy with their request, but the Lord said to honor their request, however he must warn them about the king they would receive (*1 Samuel 8:8-9; 21-22*).

The Lord told Samuel, **“Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.”** (*1 Samuel 8:7*).

Samuel obeyed the Lord and told the people what kind of king they would receive. However, they would not listen. They rejected God and wanted a man to rule over them (*1 Samuel 8:10-20*).

Israel had many kings after that. However, none of the kings was the one Samuel warned them about.

The Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of the king and the Kingdom to Israel. However, the king mentioned in 1 Samuel chapter eight is not the king of Israel. This king is yet future.

The real King of Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ, came almost two thousand years ago, just as prophesized. When he spoke of his death, burial, and resurrection, they rejected him.

The promise of the father in the Old Testament, the Kingdom, will have to wait.

Presently, Israel is set aside, as Christ is calling out his church. When that is complete, Israel will meet the king mentioned in 1 Samuel chapter eight. This king is the Beast of Revelation and the Antichrist. He is the man of sin, and the son of perdition (*mystery of iniquity = Satan manifest in the flesh 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12*).

Isaiah 65:2 - ² I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts;

Isaiah 65:3a - ³ A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face;.....

Israel was a religious nation. The problem was, as with most religions, it was false religion. It involved religious acts of worship which did not include God. It involved sacrifices, incense, abominations (*Isaiah 65:3-4*).

Things have not changed. Then and now, false religion does not include God. It is founded on self-

righteousness. It produces a bad attitude of self-salvation.

Israel was, and is, God's chosen nation. They are his vineyard (Isaiah 5:7). They are his elect (Isaiah 45:4; 65:9). The word of God was given to and through the prophets of Israel (Isaiah 9:8; Romans 3:1-2).

The Lord pleaded with his people. He said, **"I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people."**

Until finally, Israel became...

Isaiah 65:3a - ³ A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face;

Isaiah 65:5 - ⁵ Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

Israel became holier than thou. False religion is founded on works and produces a holier than thou attitude. When we become holier than thou there is no remedy.

Israel began to rely on their own self-righteousness and ignore the righteousness which only God can give (Romans 10:1-4; Philippians 3:7-9).

Because they would not accept the righteousness of God, and set about to establish their own righteousness, they have been cut off (*mystery of Israel's blindness, Romans Chapter 11*).

However, God is not unrighteous. He will not cast his people away forever. After the seven-year tribulation has ended, Christ will establish his Kingdom just as promised, and he will be Israel's long-awaited King.

Isaiah 65:18-19 - ¹⁸ But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. ¹⁹ And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

Someday the Lord will gather his people together once again, and there will be joy and rejoicing. The Lord is not unrighteous.

THE CHURCH AND THE PLAN PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

The church began almost two thousand years ago on the day of Pentecost, immediately following the Lord's ascension into heaven. Just prior to that historic event, Christ was gathered with his disciples in Jerusalem.

The events surrounding that momentous occasion are recorded in Acts chapters one and two.

Due to space, we will only quote those portions of scripture that are necessary. However we suggest you read the entire portion.

NOTE: THE NATION OF ISRAEL, WHILE IGNORING THEIR SINS, AND LOOKING FOR THEIR KING, OVERLOOKED THEIR SAVIOR.

THE CHRISTIAN, WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THEIR SINS,

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AND ACCEPTING CHRIST AS SAVIOR, AUTOMATICALLY RECEIVES THEIR KING.

After his resurrection, Christ was forty days with his apostles, teaching them about the Kingdom of God (*Acts 1:3*).

He told them to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the father, which was the baptism of the Holy Spirit (*Acts 1:4-5*).

They did not listen. In verse six they asked him, **“Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?”**

Once again Christ reminded them of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8 - ⁸ But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

It takes time to witness for Christ “unto the uttermost part of the earth.” They still did not get it.

After Christ spoke these words in acts chapter one verse eight He was taken up in a cloud (*Acts 1:9*).

As the disciples watch their Lord being taken up out of their sight, two men stood by them in white apparel (*Acts 1:10*) And gave them this admonition.....

Acts 1:11 - ¹¹ Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Why stand ye gazing? How can you be a witness for Christ while you are gazing? **They were still looking for the Kingdom.**

All of this was a strange new thing to them. This was a brand-new time period in God's plan. This will be called the age or the dispensation of grace. The church age. Israel, as a nation, and the Kingdom has been set aside.

They were not aware that during the church age, everyone who trusts Christ as savior will be...

1. Indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Jew and Gentile alike will be indwelt by God the Father and God the Son, through the Holy Spirit (*John 14:6; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 3:6*).
2. The church is one body and the head of that body is Christ (*1 Corinthians 12:1-31; Ephesians 3:6; 4:1-6; 5:22-33*).
3. The gospel of the church is to be preached, the gospel of the Kingdom will be preached again during the tribulation (*Ephesians 6:18-20; Colossians 4:1-3*).

Someday, the church age will end. When it does, Christ will come and take his church home. This is the mystery of the translation of the Saints (*1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*).

In their attempt to prepare for the Kingdom, the apostles made two big mistakes. They chose Matthias as an apostle, and they misquoted Joel chapter two. The

charismatics have been abusing Acts chapter two ever since.

Joel chapter two, is yet future, and will not be fulfilled until the end of the seven-year tribulation. In the meantime Christians, why stand ye gazing. Preach the gospel!

Isaiah 65: 15-16 - ¹⁵ And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name: ¹⁶ That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.

Here then is the mystery concealed in the Old Testament. The servants by another name is the church. The mystery is revealed in the New Testament.

Peter finally realized this truth in Acts chapter ten when he was sent to Cornelius. The Jew and gentile alike are being called to trust Christ as savior (*Acts 15:7, 11; Romans 9:24; Ephesians 2:19-3:9*).

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE PLAN PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Each and every individual is part of the plan of God. Christ died on the cross for all mankind (*John 1:7,29; 3:16; 1 Timothy 1:15; 2:4-6*).

Christ had already ordained he would die for the sins of man long before the world began (*2 Timothy 1:9-10; 1 Peter 1:19-20*).

When Christ came in the flesh, he revealed the God of heaven and earth. God became manifest! (*The mystery of godliness 1 Timothy 3:16; 2 Timothy 1:10; 1 Peter 1:20; 1 John 1:2*).

The Lord has done his part.

The Lord Jesus Christ died, was buried, and rose again. He has done his part period now it is up to those who have trusted him as their savior to do their part and that is to preach the gospel, and make it known.

If we do not, it will remain a mystery.

Then, it is up to those who hear the gospel to do their part, and that is to believe. To believe means to believe that Christ paid for my sins.

All men are sinners and need sins to be paid for (*Romans 3:9-23; Romans 6:23*).

Christ has paid the price, man must believe the price has been paid for him, and we as Christians, must spread the message.

To those who never trust Christ as Savior, a dismal future awaits. They will die in their sins and spend eternity in hell, or, if the rapture takes place they will be faced with the Antichrist. Finally they will stand before Christ at the great white throne judgment.

Finally, there are those in danger of Babylon. Babylon is false religion founded on works and self.

THE SAVED: Like Israel, the Christian is in danger of being captive in Babylon. The child of God may fall into false religion. He may become self-righteous and begin to cloud the gospel with works. He may belong to a denomination and believe everything he is taught. He may tell others to believe in Christ and add a little here and a little there. (*Examples are: the sinner's prayer, Romans road, repent, etcetera.*)

It seems we are not intent to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved.” We tell people how easy it is to be saved, then we make it difficult. This edition is false religion and is Babylon.

Like Israel, we become “holier than thou,” and there is no remedy. We cannot lose our salvation but we may not enter the land of Canaan, which is the blessings of God, or may be captive in Babylon, which is religion.

THE LOST: Babylon and Egypt are synonyms. Both are captivity in sin. The lost person who is religious, and thinks his religion will save him is relying on works. A works religion is Babylon. The Christian may add works to his salvation as a form of righteousness and lose the blessings of God. The lost may add works to his life, and try to attain salvation, which is also Babylon.

In either case, God is not happy with false religion. Christ will destroy Babylon when it comes in “remembrance before God” (*Revelation 16:19*).

The cross of Christ has cast its shadow on the Old and New Testament. There is no escaping the shadow of the cross. When it is all said and done, no one will have an excuse for rejecting Christ as savior.

John 12:32 - ³² And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

Christ was lifted up and nailed to the cross. The cross is empty because he is a risen savior. Look to the empty cross and look to a risen savior. Trust him and him alone for salvation.

This book has been adapted for a correspondence
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For more information

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