

The Unveiling of the Mystery

by Lamar Price

Paul wrote to the Romans, "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the *revelation of the mystery* which has been kept secret for long ages past, but *now is manifested*" (Rom. 16:25-26).

The apostle's special commission was to make known to all a tremendous mystery concerning Jesus Christ which had been hidden for ages. He exulted in the fact that this secret was now made manifest. Though he was the one to make this knowledge widely understood, particularly among the Gentiles, it was not a separate gospel from that which Jesus proclaimed, but rather a further *unfolding* of Christ's message.

Notice that Paul's gospel centered on the preaching of Jesus Christ as He had now been revealed. In Colossians, he explains that the mystery is "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*" (Col. 1:27). Of all the inheritance that is ours by faith, the greatest aspect is simply to really know the true God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and to experience His life lived through us on a moment by-moment basis through our being joined as one with Christ.

In Christ, God revealed Himself plainly to mankind. He was "*the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature*" (Heb. 1:3). Previously, God had been known in portions (verse one); now He was plainly revealed, indwelling the human Jesus.

Just as Jesus was a living representation of God, so we manifest God when Christ dwells in us. John tells us that "*as He is, so are we in this world*" (I John 4:17). When we are joined to Christ, we are in the kingdom of heaven and live as God's representatives here on earth.

Jesus Himself explained this mystery in His parables of the kingdom. We read that "*what was spoken through the prophet*" was fulfilled in His ministry. I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been *kept secret* since the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13:35). Though it was not given to the masses to understand, there was a growing revelation in the minds of the disciples, finally culminating in the manifestation of this secret in the ministry of Paul. Today, we can look back upon the parables of Jesus and see how they dovetail perfectly with the plain teaching of the apostle to the Gentiles.

The mystery of Christ in us reveals that when we become joined to Christ we are a new creation — a new man. There is neither Jew nor Gentile any longer, but only this new, spiritual man who is a member of the heavenly kingdom.

It was concerning this new man that John wrote in his first letter. He wrote to "little children," "young men," and "fathers." Little children tend to be self-centered, rules-oriented, unable to take care of themselves, and delight in things. (But they are still heirs!).

Youth is a time of development. It is a time of transition from childhood to adulthood — a time when there is little patience for the childishness of the children. Though youths are largely able to take care of themselves, they are still dependent to a degree, and they are still self-centered. They delight in strength — dramatic power. They have yet to learn that God comes to us in a "still, small voice," with gentleness. They are characteristically power-oriented, and not yet "fixed" as mature individuals.

Spiritual fathers and mothers are mature. They are not only capable of taking care of themselves, without need for constant counseling, but can be counted on to reach out and care for the little children as well as the youths. They are not self-centered, and neither are they rules-oriented. They are led by the Spirit – both free from law and free from the flesh. They delight simply in knowing the Father – not externally, but within.

Spiritual childhood, or youth, or adulthood have no relationship to chronological age. Some are born into the kingdom of God and zip into adulthood almost immediately. On the other hand, one may remain a spiritual babe all of his life. This was Paul's heartache with the Corinthian church.

Do you know what our calling is? We have been called to be free from law, free from rules – these things are for children. And we have also been called to be free from the power-oriented self-centeredness of youth. Our freedom is not to become an excuse for letting our physical desires enslave us (Gal. 5:13). We are to go on to fatherhood, whereby God is fully manifest in our flesh! True, God indwells us even as children – but He wants us to press on through youth, and into fatherhood.

Philip asked Jesus, "*Show us the Father, and it suffices us.*" Jesus' reply was, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father, Philip." Philip missed the revelation of the Father because his expectations were different from what he actually saw. He had childish perception. He didn't realize that God is manifesting Himself in ordinary human beings like you and me!

That is glory.

Through us, God is showing Himself to the world, just as He did in Jesus, for those who have the eyes to see Him.