

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

THE CONSTERNATION OF THE SUN AND MOON

Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously. *Isaiah 24:23*

The greatest of mysteries are those which are hidden in plain sight. The skill of the author of such mysteries is manifested by the inability of men to solve the puzzle until such time as he is pleased to reveal it. To be a true mystery, it must be kept hidden in this fashion and when it is revealed, its solution is so clear that one stands in awe at its unveiling.

Paul speaks of just such a mystery which the LORD has kept hidden from the foundation of the world. *"Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."* Rom 16:25-26)

There are several "mysteries", which are in reality various aspects of the main "mystery", which was hidden in plain sight from the very beginning of creation. It is necessary to an understanding of the nature of Kingdom of GOD, to behold these "mysteries".

We read of the general mystery (secret or hidden meaning) of the unfolding of the Kingdom of GOD, which can only be seen by those to whom the LORD is pleased to give eyes to see it. *"And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables."* (Mar 4:11) This is the exact truth which the LORD showed to Nicodemus when HE said, *"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* (John 3:3) The spiritual blindness of men by nature, is contrasted with the skill and holiness of the AUTHOR of this "mystery".

Paul speaks of the wisdom of GOD in the hiding of HIS purpose, until such time as HE, alone, was pleased to reveal it. *"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."* (1Cor 2:7-8)

Then there is the "mystery" of the "resurrection and glorification" of that people which HE has loved from before the foundation of the world. *"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."* (1Cor 15:51-53)

Many do not believe that man can ultimately die. Just about every natural religion teaches that men in general shall all live on even after they pass from this present world. The hope of most natural men is that they can continue on in some idyllic environment where they will enjoy eternal bliss in the fulfillment of their carnal desires. Paul speaks of a "mystery" which is presently revealed concerning the nature of the Kingdom of GOD.

He said that some who are alive at the return of CHRIST shall not even taste of death, but whether those sons of GOD are taken from this world without dying or are raised from the tomb,

they must and shall all be "changed". It is this "change" which is a "mystery" hidden from the wise and prudent (i.e.; those of a carnal mind) and revealed to those whose longing is to be rid of these carnal bodies which are the very source of their corruption. Thus the LORD taught that *"flesh and blood could not inherit the Kingdom of GOD."* A "change" is required for men to enter there. This is that "change" which is not according to the will of the flesh but that of GOD.

Then there is the "mystery" of marriage. *"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. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."* (Eph 5:31-32) While the LORD created Eve as the perfect companion (i.e. an help, meet) for Adam, and surely Adam and Eve and their offspring have benefited greatly from the institution of marriage, it was not an end in itself, but was rather given to mankind in order to demonstrate the relationship of the church to CHRIST. Just as Eve was taken from the side of Adam, so too is the bride of CHRIST taken from HIS side. *"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."* (Eph 1:4)

We read also of the *"mystery of the faith"* which is demonstrated in those whom the LORD is pleased to call. Those who would be the followers of CHRIST are affected by the SPIRIT which is sent to dwell in them. The "faith" of the saints is not simply adherence to the dogma of sound doctrine or a decision to adopt some religious practice, but is that which results in a desire to walk in accordance to the precepts of CHRIST. *"Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience."* (1Tim 3:9) *"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* (Php 1:20-21)

Then we find a mention of the *"mystery of Godliness"*, which is the very definition of the gospel as it has been unfolded unto men. *"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."* (1Tim 3:16) To see this "mystery" revealed is to be brought to the faith once delivered to the saints. What more could be added.

This brings us to the summation of the grandest of all mysteries of which all mysteries are given to unfold the purpose of GOD. As Paul says; *"Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."* (Eph 1:9-10) This "mystery" is that *"He is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."* (Col 1:17-20)

To this end it is revealed that HE would gather HIS people from among all nations of the earth, that every knee should bow and every tongue confess. (see Rev.5:9) Thus Paul declares this mystery to be *"That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."* (Eph 3:6) This is quite a revelation in light of the understanding which the Jews had, that the natural sons of Abraham were the inheritors of GOD's promise. Yet now the mystery is unfolded, though it was quite clearly recorded throughout the pages of the Old Testament. *"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."* (Psa 2:8)

Isaiah's prophecy is full of this declaration which he said would confound even the Sun and Moon in all of its glory. *"And the LORD shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the LORD, and perform it. And the LORD shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the LORD, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them."* (Isa 19:21-22) mam