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Ephesians 1:8 – 9  
The Mystery of His Will

Today we're going to continue with our study of the book of Ephesians. I want to emphasize again that Paul never preached from Ephesians. Ephesians was a letter that came out of Paul's view of truth as it is in Jesus. So, as we study this book, it is not really our goal that we understand the book of Ephesians. Our goal is to see, by the Spirit, what Paul saw in the writing of this letter. Our goal is to comprehend, with spiritual wisdom and revelation, the REALITIES that are herein being described, so that we can be transformed into the image of Christ. So that we can become the fragrance of the true knowledge of Him in every place.

Its so important that we understand this. We are not trying to understand a book of the Bible. We are trying to come to faith. We are trying to come to the mind of the Lord so that we, like Paul, can live and speak in the Truth. That our very soul's would become the evidencing of the truth as it is in Christ.

I say that because sometimes I fear that in studying a book verse by verse like this we can walk away with facts, but not truth. We can walk away with a correct natural understanding of spiritual things, but with no spiritual understanding. We can put verses into little compartments of theology and doctrine and still have nothing of the mind of the Lord working in us. That is always my concern.

Paul wrote Ephesians out of a spiritual understanding, that is, the Spirit's understanding working in him. We must learn, not the words and doctrines of it, but must come to have that same understanding, that same reality, revealed by the Spirit, working in us. We must come to God's view, the faith of the Son of God, or we have come to nothing.

So we finished last week with Ephesians 1:7, and we might have gone on to read Ephesians 1:8 last week because it completes last weeks thought. Last week we looked at this verse – "In Him, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace". And then verse 8 says "which He made to abound to us in all wisdom and prudence.

I won't say a whole lot about this abounding grace because we spent two weeks talking about it when we started this study. But suffice to say that this grace whereby we bear His death and are found in His life ABOUND towards us in Christ. He says the same thing in Romans 5 – where sin did abound, grace did abound all the more. This is the great gift of God in Christ. Grace, abounding toward us in all wisdom and prudence.

But where I want to focus our attention today is on the next verse where it reads "having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself". He goes on to describe something of that mystery in the next verse.

But today I want to focus in on this word mystery. What was the mystery? Why was it a mystery, in other words, how was it hidden? And then when and how is this mystery revealed? That will probably fill our plate today.

Lets just start with this word mystery. Biblically speaking, a mystery isn't like a puzzle or riddle that you need to figure out. This mystery isn't something you solve or piece together, like a detective novel. Biblically speaking, a mystery is simply something hidden that must be revealed.

A Bible scholar named David Chilton says this of the word mystery. "A very cursory study of the New Testament use of the word 'mystery' shows that it does not there carry its usual modern sense of the word 'puzzle'. It is indeed something hidden, but not in such a way that you can follow a series of clues and eventually find it out; rather, it is a truth which you either know or do not know, depending on whether or not it has been revealed to you."

I liked that definition. The mystery of God that is referred to in the New Testament is simply His eternal purpose for which He created all things. That mystery was hidden in God before the foundation of the world.

[Eph 3:9](#) the mystery having been hidden from eternity in God,

That mystery was demonstrated, though not comprehended, through creation and through God's dealings with Old Covenant Israel, and there is where it is hidden. And that mystery HAS been revealed in the Person of Christ.

Now we'll look at this in some more depth. But I wanted to just start by demonstrating from Scripture that the mystery of God is no longer hidden. It may still remain a mystery to you and I, but if that is the case, it is only because we have not seen the reality of it in the Person of Jesus Christ.

I say that because I have heard a lot of teaching with regard to the mystery of God as though it is still a mystery. As though it is something that God has not disclosed, or something that you will come to know when you die, or something that God will unleash at some future event. That is nonsense, and completely contradictory to all New Testament references to this word.

We'll define the mystery more fully in a moment, but my first point here is simply to tell you that there is not another mystery that God has other than the one He has demonstrated and revealed in the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son. That mystery must also be revealed in you and I by the Spirit, but it is finished and opened up to all who will turn to see. And as it goes on to say in chapter 3, the mystery is not only supposed to be known by us with spiritual understanding, but is supposed to be MANIFESTED to the world by the church.

It is a bit disturbing to think that we, the church, are supposed to be manifesting the reality of a revealed mystery and yet we're often being taught that it remains unknown. No, if it is unknown it is not because God continues to hide it, but because we have failed to allow the Spirit to remove the veil of the "Stoicheion" - that is, the basic principles of the earth. We have not turned the heart to look beyond the veil. We'll get to that too.

Let me first prove my point that this mystery, though previously veiled in time past (old covenant) is NOW revealed in Christ. Lets look at some verses.

(Rom 16:25) Now to Him *who is* able to establish you according to my gospel, and the proclaiming of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of *the* mystery having been kept unvoiced during eternal times, 26 but now has been made plain

(1Co 2:7) But we speak *the* wisdom of God in a mystery, having been hidden, which God predetermined before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age has known. For if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; 9 according as it has been written, "Eye has not seen, and ear has not heard," nor has it risen up into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those that love Him. *Isa. 64:4* 10 But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit

(Eph 1:9) [our verse for this morning] making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,

(Eph 3:3) that by revelation He made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief...which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy (set apart) apostles and prophets.

(Eph 3:9) and to bring to light all, what *is* the fellowship of the mystery having been hidden from eternity in God, the *One* creating all things through Jesus Christ, with the intent that NOW the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

(Eph 6:19) *Pray* also for me, that to me may be given speech in *the* opening of my mouth with boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel,

(Col 1:26) the mystery having been hidden from the ages and from the generations, but now was revealed to His saints; 27 to whom God willed to make known what *are* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, who is Christ in you, the hope of glory;

(Col 2:2) that their hearts may be comforted, being joined together in love, and to all riches of the full assurance of the understanding, to *the* full knowledge of the mystery of God, even of *the* Father and of Christ,

(Col 4:3) praying together about us also, that God may open to us a door of the Word, to speak the mystery of Christ, on account of which I also have been bound,

My objective here is not put you to sleep reading countless Bible passages, but simply to prove beyond question that the mystery of God does not await a future unveiling or a future event. But, in fact, it is a mystery that was hidden but HAS been made plain, and can be known, experienced, and made manifest through the Spirit revealing Christ.

Again, it may remain a mystery to you and I, but that is only because we have not truly seen and known the One in whom the mystery is revealed.

So what is the mystery? Well if I had to encapsulate it in a single word, I would say Christ. It is multifaceted because God's giving of Christ accomplishes many things, and is experienced in many ways, but it all speaks of the same thing. If I were to sum it all up in one sentence, I might use the verses that we have already looked at in Ephesians – namely God's eternal, predestined plan and desire to have a people living in and by the Life of His Son, before Him, accepted, adopted, redeemed, in the Beloved. That might be a good summary of it.

Or I could make it even more brief and simply quote Colossians 2.

**Col 1:27** to whom God willed to make known what *are* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, who is Christ in you, the hope of glory;

Later on in Ephesians chapters 2 and 3 Paul makes reference to it again, and deals with the same mystery with reference to how it effects Jew and Gentile becoming one body through death and having fellowship, brought near, in the one Son.

You see, its multifaceted, but it all speaks of the same thing. It is quite simply, God dwelling in you in the Person of His Son, revealed in you by His Spirit, and manifested through you as His body. That's the mystery of God.

Apply that to you as a body, and you have Christ in you the hope of glory. That is, the prophesied hope of glory. Not Christ in you as a future hope or ticket to glory. But all of the glory of the testimony, the prophecies, the promises, the blessings, now realized through this. Through what? Through CHRIST IN YOU. Christ in you is the glory that God had promised and demonstrated in clouds and pillars of fire and all the ways He manifested and proclaimed His desire to dwell in the midst of a people. That's if you apply this mystery to you as His body.

But what if you apply this mystery revealed to Jew and Gentile? Well the reality of Christ in you breaks down the enmity between the flesh, and between God and man and reconciles us both to God in one body. That's Ephesians 2 and 3. Same mystery, (Christ in you) different outworking.

What if you apply this mystery to the church as a bride? Well, then this becomes a picture of union. This is Paul's reference to the mystery in Ephesians chapter 5. Here we have the picture of the life of one being used to make another. A wife or suitable companion. As in the garden, the life of Adam, the rib, taken out of his side, being used to make someone he called "bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh". She was called woman, for she was taken out of man. We are called the wife of the lamb because we were taken out of and share His life. Same mystery, (Christ in you) different outworking.

So again, its not like God has 5 different mysteries in each of these verses. Its just one mystery, that has multiple effects. It's a mystery that is so colossal in its scope that it takes 2000 years and thousands of Old Testament pages to create the types and shadows of it. And now we're getting into how the mystery was hidden or veiled.

Many of the verses that we just read refer to the mystery having been hidden but now revealed. How was the mystery hidden? How was it veiled? Well, you could say it was hidden in the heart of God as His eternal plan, but I don't think that that is what these verses are primarily referring to. I think the "hiding" that these verses are referring to is the reality that the eternal plan of God was hidden in innumerable types and shadows in the Old Covenant.

The book of Hebrews, as well as Colossians 2 and Galatians 4 say that explicitly - that Old Covenant Israel was serving a natural copy, a shadow, a preview of the things that were to come in Christ. The prophets were aware that all of this pointed to something, or Someone rather, but couldn't comprehend it.

God had a great judgment in His heart from before the foundation of the world. He testified to it in time past, but did so in a natural flood and a great destruction of man. He did it by causing one man to enter into an Ark and be raised up and seated high above the death and destruction, coming out to a new creation under covenant. It was there in testimony, but the reality was hidden. The fulfillment in Christ, in Spirit and Truth, could not yet be seen.

God had a deliverance in His heart from before the foundation of the world. He testified to it in the Old Covenant by parting the Red Sea, and bringing Israel out of sin and death through the death of a lamb. He did it by opening a door through His blood. It was there in testimony, but the reality of it was hidden.

God had a desire to dwell together with those who would share the life of His Son. He had that desire from before the foundation of the world. He testified to it in the Old Covenant by making Aaron dress up like a High Priest and taking all of the tribes of Israel on his breastplate and on his ephod with Him, through death, into the Holy Place. He did it by showing a people brought into the presence of God in the person of a high priest. It was there in testimony, but the reality was hidden.

God had a desire to manifest the reign of His Son in the very soul of people, Christ formed in them. That desire was in His heart from before the foundation of the world. He testified to it by raising of a king named David and establishing in a Land a rule that was the cutting off of the flesh, the uncircumcised heathen nations. He did it by causing Solomon to reign in wisdom and understanding and knowledge. Here is a testimony, but the reality was hidden.

The natural creation bore witness of it. Israel testified to it. The prophets spoke of it. All of these longed for it, hoped for it, but as to its substance, and nature, and reality, it was hidden. This is what 1 Peter speaks of.

[1Pe 1:10-11](#) About which salvation the prophets sought out and searched out, prophesying concerning the grace for you; (11) searching for what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ made clear within them, testifying beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow.

Hidden in a testimony, but accomplished and unveiled...all gathered up in the very person of Jesus Christ. Now I'm getting ahead of myself, but if you'll look down to the last part of this verse (vs. 9) and then the next verse, that the unveiling of this mystery had to do with something He had purposed **in Himself** wherein He would sum up everything, gather together everything, comprehend everything (all translations of that Greek word) in Christ. We won't get to that until next week. But

I'm simply saying now that that kingdom, that priesthood, that deliverance, that judgment, guess where they all come to be reality? Guess where the mystery is revealed? All revealed in Christ.

So we're answering our questions. What is the mystery? Its Christ in you. Do you realize what a big deal that is? First of all that God even wanted a living tabernacle! That God even wanted to dwell in human beings. Let me just give you a sneak preview of a verse we'll get to in a few months. But look at Ephesians 2:21-22 for a minute.

Eph 2:21-22 in whom the whole building being fitted together grows into a holy temple in *the* Lord, (22) in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in *the* Spirit.

There's the mystery. The eternal, transcendent God living finding His permanent resting place in the human soul. Finding His expression in the human soul. Finding His increase in the human soul.

[Isa 66:1-2](#) So says the LORD: Heaven *is* My throne, and earth the footstool of My feet. Where then *is* the house that you build for Me? And where then *is* the place of My rest? (2) My hand has made all these things, even all these things exist, declares the LORD. But I will look toward this one, to the humble, and *to* the contrite of spirit, the one trembling at My Word.

The mystery of God. God finding a house, a temple, a habitation, a sanctuary, a temple, and a vehicle of expression and increase in the human soul. That is the mystery which was hidden in his heart, testified to in the old creation and Old Covenant, and come in the Person of Jesus Christ.

How was the mystery veiled? It was veiled through multiple types, shadows, hints and previews of coming attractions.

When did the mystery come into reality? In other words, when did God pull the veil off of it? Well you all know when God rent the veil, don't you? He rent the veil in the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son. Isn't that where the veil between the first and the second came down? Isn't that where the testimony became the witness, the shadow became the substance, the prophecy became the fulfillment, the promise became yes and amen, the law became the Spirit, and a people were gathered up in that eternal Son. Isn't that where everything of promise turned into BUT NOW IN CHRIST. Isn't that why the entire New Testament is taken up with proof after proof, demonstration after demonstration, of how Christ is, and has finished, everything that was part of the testimony. Yes, as all of these verses have plainly said, the mystery that was formerly hidden, HAS NOW been revealed, and is to NOW to be made manifest by the church.

There's just one more thing I'd like to cover, and we're running out of time. And that is how this works in the believer. As always, there is the finished work of God in Christ wherein the veil has been rent, the heavens have been opened, the door stands there with blood on it for whosoever will come. And yet, all that God has objectively accomplished, must be subjectively revealed, realized, and known for you and I to bear the image of it.

In other words, though the Lord has rent the veil, that veil can still remain on our hearts if Christ, our life, has not been revealed in us. We can still read the Old Testament and see nothing but types and shadows, see nothing but a hidden mystery if we don't come to know its fulfillment in the Person of Jesus Christ. And that is where imaginations abound.

And this is exactly what 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians chapter 3 is all about. I would like to read and unpack the entire chapter of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 3. That would be ideal. Because of time, I can only briefly summarize the first 13 verses, and we'll pick up reading in verse 14. The first 13 verses have to do with the contrast between the glory of the first covenant and the glory of the New Covenant in Christ.

The glory, which is the manifestation or expression or exhibition of God, in the first covenant was a glory that did express something of God, but only in natural things, and only in temporal, passing ways. God shook a mountain. That mountain is not shaking now. God parted a sea, that sea is not parted now. God created a tabernacle, that tabernacle was destroyed. Etc. There was glory in that covenant. There was a demonstration of God's salvation in Christ, but it was natural, material, and passing. And it doesn't compare to the glory which followed it. It doesn't compare with the glory that we have as Christ in us. In fact, vs. 10 says that compared to the exceeding glory that we have come to in Christ, the former glory is nothing at all. You can read that on your own time.

Look down verse 14

**2Co 3:14-18** But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. 15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, the veil lies on their heart. 16 Nevertheless when it (the heart) turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty 18 But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Now there is much here that we could discuss, and I would thoroughly enjoy it. But I quote these verses now only to show that what God has taken away – the mystery, the veil of type and shadow – can remain on the heart. As Paul says here, the greater glory has come, AND YET to this day, He says, some still have the veil upon their heart when the Old Testament is read. God has fulfilled that testament in His Son. God has unveiled the hidden mystery. And yet, still there are hearts who have not seen beyond the veil. There are hearts who have not seen the mystery unveiled. Why? Because the veil is taken away in Christ.

These people continue to relate to God in an old covenant mindset. In works of the Law, works of the flesh. And I'm not just talking about Jews here. I'm talking about Christians who have come out of the Old Covenant, but the Old Covenant has not come out of them. I'm talking about those who have, in God's view, come through a torn veil, and still have it lying on their hearts.

Because though it was taken away suddenly and completely by God through His finished work, Paul tells us here that it is not taken away suddenly and completely from the human heart. How is it taken away from the human heart. How are we being changed from the former glory of the old to the now-glory of the new? Here's

the key – verse 18. But we all, with unveiled face are beholding as in a mirror (a true seeing of ourselves in Him, a true seeing of the One who is our life) the glory of the Lord.

Listen, we're looking in the mirror and seeing that it is not I but Christ that lives in me. We're looking in the mirror and seeing Christ in us, the glory of the living God. Not a natural mirror, but a true image of our salvation. We're seeing by the eyes of the Spirit of God. As Paul is about to see in Ephesians 1:17-19, God is giving us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the true knowledge of Him.

And what's happening? We're being transformed. How? We're being transformed because the mystery that has been unveiled by God in Christ, is now being removed from my darkened understanding. Is now being taken off of my blinded carnal mind. How are we being changed? We're being changed, as Paul says "through the revelation of the mystery". We're being transformed as God reveals the things that eye cannot see, ear cannot hear, nor have entered the natural mind of man. We're beholding. We're seeing. Seeing what? Seeing the mystery of His will accomplished in Christ. We're seeing beyond the veil.

What's happening in me? Ephesians 3:9 – God is bringing to light what is the mystery having been hidden from eternity in God. Colossians 2:2, I am attaining to the full assurance of understanding, the full knowledge of the mystery of God.

Beholding more and more, with an unveiled face, the mystery of God revealed in Christ, I am beginning to bear that image in my soul. Not the image of an improved Jason. But the image of Christ in me, the promised glory of God. I am being transformed from glory to glory.