The Mystery of Godliness

“God works in a mysterious way His wonders to perform” true words that flowed from the pen of the prolific hymn writer William Cowper. Cowper showed the revelation of God’s mysterious secret through his hymns, as did, and still do, many other men and women who have filled countless hymn books with their glorious songs of thanksgiving, worship and praise. However, the Bible was, and still is, the inspired source of their poetic revelations and, in similar fashion, every Christian today may also praise the Lord according to the psalmists command.

- Psalms 150:6 Let everything that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

These praise-worthy revelations contained in the gospel had been hidden from when the world first began, until the revealing of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

- Romans 16:25 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.

God, through the prophets and psalmists, revealed many words of stunning significance regarding His hitherto hidden plan. It is a fact that the Old Testament is brimming over with prophecies relating to our Lord Jesus Christ. In Isaiah chapter nine verse two, we read, “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light” – that great light is Christ. Further along in the chapter we read,

- Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

It was revealed that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, would save His people from their sins.

- Matthew 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

The mystery of godliness and the unravelling of it is an enigma to the uninitiated, something once unknown, which had been carefully concealed by the divine providence of God. It is rather like an enormous jigsaw puzzle which defeats all attempts to finish it, because vital pieces are missing and there is no available and completed picture from which to work. We ought to pray as did David and say,

- Psalms 119:18 Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

However, that which was concealed in prophecy in the Old Testament is revealed in all its fullness in the New Testament to those who have ears to hear and eyes to see. This mystery reveals God’s will to His saints.

- Colossians 1:26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints
- Ephesians 1:9-11 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
And what precisely is this mystery of Godliness, which was hidden since the foundation of the world? It is – ta dah! – Christ in us by His Holy Spirit; He is the hope of glory and that which encompasses the whole of the Gospel message of salvation and the Kingdom of God.

- Colossians 1:27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory

Our Lord Jesus Christ explained to His disciples that the mystery of the Kingdom of God was not going to be revealed to everyone; therefore, to some it will always remain unfathomable.

- Mark 4:11 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

The Apostle Paul explained that the Jewish nation would be blinded to the Gospel mystery until the very last days of earth.

- Romans 11:25 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 fullness of the Gentiles be come in.

The Gentiles, meaning all non-Jewish peoples, nations and tongues are where the Gospel is being preached today as per the commandment of Jesus when He said,

- Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

When the Word is preached, we should bear in mind that it is the wisdom of God in a mystery.

- 1 Corinthians 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

Both Jesus, and John the Baptist, preached the same message revealing the mystery of the Kingdom of heaven:

- Matthew 3:1-2 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

When the Holy Spirit quickens God’s Gospel message to a person, suddenly they get that ‘light bulb’ moment, repentance follows and the mystery is revealed to them that Jesus is their Lord and Saviour, and so they are joined in the fellowship of that mystery becoming members of His body, which is the church. The newly saved have been ‘removed’ from the domain of the powers of darkness into the Kingdom of God and the promised inheritance of the saints.

- Colossians 1:12-15 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In
whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

Paul asked the Ephesians for their prayers so that the mysterious Gospel message could be made known through him:

- Ephesians 6:19 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.

In order that all men may ‘see’, that is understand, and hear it;

- Ephesians 3:9 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

Even though Paul was imprisoned by the Romans, he still earnestly desired to preach the mystery of Christ, to fulfil God’s calling:

- Colossians 4:3 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:

Paul was passionate about the Gospel and also encouraged Timothy to,

- 2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

Paul also wrote to Timothy with instructions for the qualifications and behaviour expected of bishops and deacons belonging to the church of the living God, those who must be the pillar and ground of the truth. For to them is revealed the mystery of godliness, by which is meant the whole Gospel with its blessing of the revelation of God, concerning His Son Jesus Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit along with the associated blessings and eternal life in the Kingdom of heaven. The Gospel truth must not be watered down, changed or polluted by man’s traditions doctrines and commandments.

- 1 Timothy 3:15-16 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. 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.

Here we have it; the God-man Jesus was manifest in the flesh as a baby born in Bethlehem whose birth was announced by angels. God kept Him until the time of His revealing to Israel, whose established religious leaders, in the main, rejected Him. Those with blind eyes did not recognise Jesus as their Messiah but crucified Him and had a murderer set free! Yet, Jesus was the only One who could save them from their sins. As a result, after continuous rebellion against God, from the time of Moses and the giving of the commandments, the Jewish nation was carried off by their enemies, and eventually scattered and cast into the wilderness of the world. They lost their temple, their land, and their hope of truly knowing God. The Bible states that only a remnant will find fulfilment at the end of a long dark tunnel of persecution, which has already lasted over two thousand years.

- Romans 9:27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved

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1 Isaiah 10:22-23
But God, in His great mercy, has ordained a time for their restoration and salvation, which will be, as previously stated, after the fullness of the Gentiles are gathered into the Kingdom of God.

- Romans 11:25-26 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 fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

Therefore, let us;

- 1 Timothy 3:9 Hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

As a man leaves his parents in order to be married to his wife, so the ‘church’ – the body – leaves the world, to be joined spiritually with Christ, namely, the mystery of which we speak.

- Ephesians 5:30-32 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 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.

Here is another great mystery of the Gospel – in which we become the Bride of Christ, and He our Bridegroom. Jesus referred to Himself as the bridegroom several times in the Gospels

- Luke 5:34 And he said unto them, can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?

Those who are His are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

- Revelation 19:9 And he saith unto me, write, blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, these are the true sayings of God.

Jesus is revealed to us as the Lamb of God by John the Baptist.

- John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

And the analogy of Christ as our Bridegroom, together with the remnant of Israel are His bride which is revealed to us by the prophet Isaiah.

- Isaiah 62:4-5 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah (God’s delight), and thy land Beulah (married): for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

The mystery of Godliness comes to a timely end when the seventh angel sounds.

- Revelation 10:5-7 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer. But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.
It is then, at the end of time, that the marriage supper of the Lamb shall come, and we His saints, who are also His wife, will have made ourselves ready, dressed in fine white linen, which is the righteousness of the saints.

- Revelation 19:7-9 Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, write, blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, these are the true sayings of God.

There is another open invitation extended to the thirsty soul and all who will hear – to come and take the water of life.

- Revelation 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

The first invitation to take the water of life came from Jesus.

- John 7:37-38 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

Jesus also offered it to the Samaritan woman at the well.

- John 4:10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

She asked Jesus about the living water and He said;

- John 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

By this, Jesus was referring to the indwelling Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who was not at that time given, because Jesus had not completed His mission, He had not ascended to His Father's side. The Holy Spirit is revealed to us as we experience the mystery of Godliness unfold.

- Titus 3:4-6 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

We, who were once dead in trespass and sin, must be born again from above by water and the Spirit.

- John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

The definitive test of our salvation is in the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

- Romans 8:9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

The Holy Spirit is our token and seal that we belong to God.

- 2 Corinthians 1:22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.
The Christian Comforter

God’s mysterious Gospel appears as foolishness to those who think their wisdom is above the knowledge of God.

- 1 Corinthians 1:18-20 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

Atheists do not believe there is a God, nor a mystery to be revealed; however, an agnostic says there might be a God, but the truth of such a fact is impossible for either of them to determine. This is why Jesus taught in parables.

- Matthew 13:10-13 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore, speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

However, the Gospel message is simple and clear –

- John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me (Father God), hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

- Romans 10:8-9 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Hear the word of God, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for our sins and rose triumphantly from the grave on the third day, and you will be saved receiving the gift of eternal life – joy unspeakable and full of glory. It is the gift of God.

The Father has raised up Jesus into heaven and seated Him at His right hand, exalted, that we should receive the promise of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself said, unless He went to His Father, the Comforter – the Holy Spirit – could not come to us. Jesus was willing to pay the price for our sins by giving His life on the Cross so that we could have eternal life through the indwelling Holy Spirit and share in Christ’s victory.

Brothers and sisters, we are joint heirs to God’s Kingdom alongside our Lord Jesus Christ and have been adopted into God’s family. How can we be sure of this fact? I reiterate, it is certain if we have the witness of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

- Romans 8:16-17 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Jesus has already gone to heaven to prepare a place for us to be with Him.

- John 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.
Yes, He is coming back to establish His Kingdom here on earth and reign for a thousand years.

- Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Christ has made us Kings and Priests unto our God. Kings rule and priests make spiritual offerings to God, and this we will do on this earth.

- Revelation 5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

There are great things in store for God’s saints, all those who have fully understood the revelation of the mystery of godliness; therefore, I say again; 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 – 1 Timothy 3:16

Are you unsure of your current spiritual position in Christ? Ask Jesus through the Holy Spirit to open your understanding.

- Luke 24:45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,
- 1 Corinthians 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

Have you grasped this great mystery of godliness? It is not so very difficult is it? Christ in us the hope of glory – Amen!