

The Book of 1 Corinthians
1 Corinthians 1:17b-31
Session Seven: The Wisdom of Men

We left off looking at 1 Corinthians 1:20, where Paul is putting forth some questions which come out of Isaiah 33.

1 Corinthians 1:20 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?

Now, compare this with Isaiah 33:18.

Isaiah 33:18 Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where *is* the scribe? where *is* the receiver? where *is* he that counted the towers?

For Isaiah, the point is that the enemy has been so defeated, that you must recall the terror from your memory (meditate). Where is the scribe, the receiver and the counter of the towers? These all have to do with areas of oppression by Assyria when it was at the gates. It has to do with the accounts of tribute paid to the oppressors and the limiting of defensive towers available to Judah. Isaiah is saying, “Where is the one who sought to terrorize us? Where is the one who calculated our overthrow? Where are the tribute collectors now? They are nowhere to be seen because the Lord has so defeated Sennacherib that they are gone.”

Bring that back to 1 Corinthians, where the context is not the attack from an outward enemy (like Assyria) but the enemy is human wisdom that rejects and replaces God’s wisdom. So, Paul asks, “Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer?” The implied answer to all three is “Nowhere to be found.”

The commentaries are full of attempts to identify precisely what each of these three are referring to. Is one of these a reference to the Greeks, another to the Jews and a third to some specific Corinthian infatuation? As far as our edification goes, it doesn’t matter. Whoever is represented by these three categories, they would be considered to be “experts” in their fields of learning; people full of this

world's wisdom. These are the ones whose wisdom has been destroyed and their intelligence frustrated. They have been outsmarted and have nothing more to offer.

So, what is Paul doing in vs. 20? He is reminding us that Christian members of the elite (counselors, lawyers, philosophers, etc.) must be vigilant concerning the danger of adopting the prevailing paradigms for their work. The wisdom of the Cross judges the values of the world, and Christians in every walk of life must live in a way that consistent with it.

Verses 19-20 indicate that Paul thinks the Corinthians have a problem with pride, and this becomes very clear in chapters 3-4.

So what about the fourth question?

1 Corinthians 1:20 *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?*

It is framed so that we expect the answer to be in the affirmative. In the light of the Cross, God has manifested the foolishness of a wisdom which drives us to lust, greed or pride; those things which are contrary to God's wisdom.

1 Corinthians 1:21 *For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

God, in His wisdom, knew that man, in his wisdom, would never come to know God. So, it pleased God to make Himself known by the "foolishness of preaching." He did not say, "by foolish preaching" or that "preaching is foolish." The "foolishness of preaching" is the preaching of the Cross, which was considered foolish by the world.

What was God's plan? To save them that believe in Jesus. This was God's plan. And it is not foolish as it is the only means of saving men because it alone sets forth God's only plan of mercy, and reveals the way in which lost sinners may be reconciled to God.

The world, in all its wisdom, would never find God. God solved this problem through the preaching of the Cross.

1 Corinthians 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, **it pleased God** by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

I want us to step aside for a moment to look at this phrase, “it pleased God.” This phrase is used elsewhere in the NT to refer to great things God does against all expectation, and...**they are all in connection with His Son!**

For example, at His baptism, God was pleased with His Son.

Matthew 3:17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom **I am well pleased**.

God is pleased to give the kingdom of His Son to the little flock.

Luke 12:32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your **Father's good pleasure** to give you the kingdom.

God was pleased to reveal His Son in Paul so he might preach to the Gentiles.

Galatians 1:15-16 But when **it pleased God**, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in the Son.

Colossians 1:19 For it **pleased the Father** that in him should all fulness dwell;

God was pleased to make known the mystery of His will.

Ephesians 1:9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to **his good pleasure** which he hath purposed in himself:

God was pleased to predestine the saved for adoption to sonship through His Son.

Ephesians 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the **good pleasure of his will**,

And here in 1 Corinthians, it pleases God to save them who believe in His Son.

1 Corinthians 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it **pleased God** by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

Now, let's move to vs. 22.

1 Corinthians 1:22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: ²³ But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; ²⁴ But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.
²⁵ Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Summary Statement: The Cross Outsmarts Human Wisdom and Overpowers Human Strength.

Don't lose track of the edification pattern. When Paul says the Jews require a sign, that should have rang a bell with the Corinthians, as they had "sign" gifts. They did not understand the purpose of their gifts (like witnessing to the Jews next door). And, as we will see in chapter 13, they did not understand the temporary nature of those gifts.

Notice, that the word "but" in vs. 23 sets up a contrast with "requiring a sign" or "seeking after wisdom." Paul isn't giving a third alternative, but a single alternative to the other two. So, what is wrong with the other two?

Let's start with the Jews requiring a sign. They are demanding proof, miraculous proof that God is at work. That is what a "sign" is. **They are insisting on a powerful confirmation of God's deliverance that renders faith unnecessary!** Kind of reminds you of the "blessed are those who have not seen and believed."

John 20:29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

But, getting back to the verse, while the Jew is hoping for some irrefutable and impressive sign, Paul preaches Christ crucified! How unexpected! This is like hearing “I have good news, the market has collapsed” or “Good news, the holiday has been cancelled.”

Think about it. **Christ is the king who is destined to rule. To announce His demise seems to brand Him as a failure and hardly seems to constitute a “gospel” (good news).** The Jews were looking for a victorious Christ, heralded by angels, who would restore the glory of the kingdom of David and Solomon. Paul does not preach a gospel revealing Christ as a conqueror or as a great philosopher. Instead, Christ “humbled himself...even to death on the cross.” This was a quality lacking in the Corinthians.

So, the Gentiles thought this message of the Cross to be foolish. The Jews found it hard to believe, and so Paul’s message becomes a “stumblingblock.”

Paul’s message, however, is that Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Paul closes out with vs. 26, insisting that his gospel confounds the wise and overcomes the strong.

1 Corinthians 1:26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*:

²⁷ But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; ²⁸ And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: ²⁹ That no flesh should glory in his presence.

In vs. 26, Paul cites his 2nd of three arguments to prove the gospel is not from human wisdom.

Not only is the message unimpressive in the world’s estimation (vv. 18-25), **so are the members of the church in Corinth (vv. 26-31)!** Paul asks the Corinthians to reflect a moment on their own worth by human standards.

In the world's eyes, the church in Corinth was made up primarily of plebeians as opposed to the elite and those of influence in society - a fact that confirms the gospel is not of human wisdom, else it would be the other way around.

1 Corinthians 1:26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that **not many wise** men after the flesh, **not many mighty, not many noble, are called:**

These three attributes are just the kind of speakers the Corinthians wanted in their house-churches. That way, they also could be considered such by emulating their teachers. But Paul pops their balloon by saying that they are not wise, mighty or noble, at least the vast majority of them.

And just to put the bow on top, not only is Paul saying that most of the Corinthian believers are not in those three groups, but he tells them what they are...

1 Corinthians 1:27 But God hath chosen **the foolish** things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen **the weak** things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

Oh, boy! Now, they are "foolish" and "weak." But, before they can get bent out of shape over that statement, Paul insists that God has repudiated the world's wisdom in choosing people like those who make up the Corinthians' assemblies.

1 Corinthians 1:28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

Since there is no period at the end of vs. 27, the two verses go together. God has chosen the foolish over the wise (the world's perspective), the weak over the influential, and the lowly over the noble. The "low born" were regarded with disdain, on the bottom rung of social hierarchy. But God has chosen them over the others. He prefers nobodies over somebodies. This way, the Cross turns the values of the world upside down.

And why all this? To preclude all human boasting. The exaltation of the foolish and the lowering of the proud is so that no one can sing their own praises in the

presence of God. All praise is to be reserved for God, for it is because of Him that you are in Christ.

Now we come to the instruction in righteousness; vv. 30-31.

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Those four terms in vs. 30 (wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption) tells us that to be in Christ is to enjoy a secure status before God and present a new model of existence in solidarity with other believers – the body of Christ. These all characterize Christ and are imparted by Christ. We have them only by virtue of the fact that we are “in Christ.”

Paul’s solution to spiritual pride and divisions is to focus on something worth celebrating, namely, God and His salvation in Christ, rather than on individual groups and their supposed superiority over other groups. Paul ends the chapter by taking us back to two places: Jeremiah 9:24 and 1 Samuel 2:10 and the lesson from both is this: the Corinthians should not evaluate themselves by human criteria before God. They should consider themselves in the light of the salvation plan of God in Christ.

In Jeremiah, those who claim to be wise are going to suffer judgment (put to shame) because they have rejected the word of the LORD.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD.

The connection to 1 Samuel 2:1-10 and the song of Hannah underscore the reversal of status, which is exactly what Paul is preaching to the Corinthians.

The Book of 1 Corinthians
1 Corinthians 2:1-5
Session Eight: Excellency of Speech

In chapter two, Paul continues to talk about the power of the gospel of Christ and the wisdom of God. The Corinthians had several problems which Paul is writing to correct. First, the Corinthians put too much emphasis on the sign gifts (tongues) and not enough on prophesying (preaching the mystery). Second, there were some at Corinth who admired the philosophies of men and they thought the church would be more successful if they used man's wisdom and philosophy to win converts rather than the message of the cross.

In chapter two, Paul will compare and contrast three sets of opposing views: two wisdoms, two spirits and two types of people. As Paul contrasts the two wisdoms, he will show God's wisdom to be superior to man's wisdom. By this he is saying that the plain preaching of the cross and the mystery are more powerful than persuasive philosophical oratory.

In contrasting the two spirits, Paul compares God's Spirit with man's spirit.

In contrasting two types of people, the natural man is contrasted with the spiritual man. In accordance with this, Paul reveals how God defeated Satan, His eternal purpose for the body of Christ and how He has equipped us with the mind of Christ.

The Corinthians were saved, and as such, their sanctified position in Christ was secure. The problem was with their practical sanctification. They were carnal and fleshly. They were spiritually useless to God.

Romans 8:13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

The Corinthian teachers and preachers sought to be popular. They cared about the wisdom of men and the fashion of this world. As a result, they were living

contrary to who they were in Christ. What part of the doctrine was missing in them? Romans 6-8; the part about their practical sanctification.

By the time Paul is writing this epistle, he had only written three other inspired letters:

- Paul wrote
Galatians (Acts 15:35) from Antioch.
- Paul wrote 1
Thessalonians (Acts 18:5) from Corinth.
- Paul wrote 2
Thessalonians (Acts 18:11) from Corinth.
- Paul writes 1
Corinthians (Acts 19:10) from Ephesus.

In chapter two, Paul continues his pattern of edification: vs. 1 is the reproof.

1 Corinthians 2:1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

Paul begins by describing the way in which he declared the “testimony of God?” It was not with “excellency of speech or of wisdom.” But what is “the testimony of God?”

According to Paul, the testimony of God includes two things: 1) Jesus Christ, and 2) Him crucified. So, here is what the testimony of God includes:

- God’s plan for the
virgin birth (avoid Adam’s sin nature)
- Christ’s
unblemished life (qualifying Him as the Lamb of God)
- Christ’s work on the
Cross (taking the sin of the world and the wrath of God on Himself)
- Christ’s victory over
Satan (while being nailed to the cross)

- Christ's resurrection
(as prophesied)
- Therefore, all who
believe will be forgiven and have His righteousness imputed to them
(positionally)
- Not until Paul do we
find out that Christ died for our sins (Gentiles in the DoGG) apart from the
agency of Israel.

Where did I get this definition? From vs. 2; which we shall see shortly.

What Paul is saying in vs. 1 is that when he came to them, it was not like what was going on in their house churches where the whole emphasis was on professional preachers who impressed everyone with their speaking skills.

Paul declared the testimony of God by the plain preaching of the gospel. Do you see what he is doing?

Paul is reminding them of how they got saved. When they heard the gospel from Paul, it was the plain preaching of the cross without all the “excellency of speech and wisdom” which they were now using in their churches. Paul is saying, “What you are doing is not how you got saved. It worked for you, why are you changing it?”

That is the rebuke, the reproof.

Now, let's turn our attention to the correction portion of the doctrine.

1 Corinthians 2:2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

Verse 2 gives us the definition of “the testimony of God.” As I said earlier, it has two parts to it: 1) Jesus Christ, and 2) Him crucified.

The Jesus Christ part of the testimony is his birth and life (earthly ministry), qualifying Him to be the Redeemer. The “Him crucified” part is the cross and what Jesus was accomplishing by it.

When Paul says that he “determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” he is talking about when he first showed up at Corinth, before they were saved. The point he is making is that the message of Christ and the Cross was Paul’s only point of preaching to them. What else do the unsaved need to hear?

1 Corinthians 2:3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

Firstly, let’s talk about the “weakness” aspect of vs. 3. This “weakness” is not a spiritual weakness, for Paul previously has talked about the “power” of the gospel. This weakness could be referring to Paul’s physical appearance.

2 Corinthians 10:10 For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but **his bodily presence is weak**, and his speech contemptible.

In what way are we to understand that Paul’s presence was “weak?” The Greek word for weakness in vs. 3 means “feeble” or “sickly.”

Could there be some hint about all this in his name? He was named after Saul, the first king of Israel, a man who towered head and shoulders above everyone; but his Roman name, “Paul” means “little” or “small.” When Paul says his bodily presence is “weak” maybe he is saying that he looks small and puny.

The word “weakness” in 1 Corinthians 2:3 is the same Greek word that is translated “infirmity” in Galatians 4:13.

Galatians 4:13 Ye know how through **infirmity** of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. 14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, *even as Christ Jesus.*

There was some physical problem with Paul, which he refers to as “an infirmity of the flesh” in vs. 13 and “my temptation which was in my flesh” in vs. 14.

Whatever this infirmity was, it was obvious to everyone who Paul preached the gospel to.

Some commentators view Paul's "temptation" as a physical incapacity due to some trial that Paul suffered. This could have been from the stoning at Lystra which could have left a physical disability. Or, as others suggest, it could have been damaged eyesight from his "blinding" on the road to Damascus. Whatever it was, it was obvious by looking at him.

1 Corinthians 2:3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

There are two ways of looking at the "fear and trembling." Either Paul means he was afraid because of the violence and threats against him, or his fear was for those to whom he preached, lest they reject the truth of the gospel and be condemned before God.

While Paul is moved to tears over the spiritual condition of both Gentiles and his own "kinsmen according to the flesh," while Paul is certainly gripped with their lost condition and the seriousness of the consequences for them if they reject his ministry, I think vs. 3 is primarily talking about Paul's fears about what may happen to him.

I know it is more noble to act like Paul never feared for his own safety, that his fear and trembling was only for those to whom he ministered, but that is not the case. Paul had fears, just like any man. Paul had many enemies. They seriously despised Paul and wished to do him harm.

Let me give you a few examples:

Acts 9:29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

Acts 13:50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

Acts 14:5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone

them,⁶ They were ware of *it*, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:

Acts 14:19 And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, **having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.**

Acts 16:20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,²¹ And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.²² And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat *them*.²³ **And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast *them* into prison**, charging the jailor to keep them safely:²⁴ Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made **their feet fast in the stocks.**

Acts 18:12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the **Jews made insurrection** with one accord against Paul, and **brought him to the judgment seat,**

Acts 21:30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.³¹ **And as they went about to kill him**, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.³² Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.³³ Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded *him* to be **bound with two chains**; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

Acts 22:22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for **it is not fit that he should live.**

Acts 23:10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest **Paul should have been pulled in pieces** of them, commanded

the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.

Acts 23:12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and **bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.** ¹³ And they were **more than forty** which had made this conspiracy. ¹⁴ And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing **until we have slain Paul.**

2 Corinthians 11:23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. ²⁴ Of the Jews **five times received I forty stripes** save one. ²⁵ Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶ *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own countrymen*, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; ²⁷ In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

Sometimes Paul's request for the saints to pray for him is that he may continue to preach the truth in the face of his enemies.

Romans 15:30 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; ³¹ **That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea;** and that my service which *I have* for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; ³² That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

Paul is not asking for the bad guys to leave him alone, he is asking for prayer that he not change or stop his message.

2 Thessalonians 3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: ² And **that we**

may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all *men* have not faith.

The prayer is that wicked men will not stop Paul's ministry and that he will be delivered from the effects of their attacks.

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,
²⁰ For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

When Paul prays about his enemies, it is so that he is not affected by them, to water down his message. I would say that Paul has plenty to fear. Put yourself in his shoes and ask yourself if you would have some trepidation, some fear and trembling.

When is the last time you were stoned to death?

When is the last time you had to be sneaked out of town (in a basket over a wall) because people were planning to kill you? When is the last time over 40 people took an oath not to eat or drink before they killed you?

When was the last time your enemies followed you everywhere you went in order to drive you out of that city too?

When Paul came into Corinth, he had to be encouraged by the Lord, not to be afraid.

Acts 18:9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, **Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:** ¹⁰ For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. ¹¹ And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

God would not tell Paul to "be not afraid" unless he was. He would not tell him to "speak, and hold not thy peace" unless there was a temptation to do so because of the fearful circumstances. And that is what Paul's prayer requests were about.

Philippians 1:19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,²⁰ 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.

Look, Paul is my hero. I love the man, even though I have never met him. But Paul, no doubt, has fears. He has the doctrine working in him, but he is still a man who experiences physical pain. And even though he knows that his sufferings are working together for his good, he is not looking forward to the physical effects. The doctrine is for his inner man which sustains him under persecutions and sufferings, but the sufferings are real.

To me, while I do think Paul trembles over those who reject his gospel and he fears for their eternity, it is my opinion that Paul, in vs. 3 is talking about being with the Corinthians in the midst of a physical debilitation and emotional fear of his adversaries – neither of which kept him from faithfully declaring his message.

1 Corinthians 2:4 And my speech and my preaching was **not with enticing words of man's wisdom**, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

Not only was Paul's presence not very impressive, but his speech and preaching were not using the wisdom of men to persuade them. It is possible, that by appealing to the emotions and by use of the right background music one can persuade people to do things. Paul had no such intention. Instead, he used the word of God to convince men of their need of the Savior.

1 Corinthians 2:5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Paul knows that if a man is converted with enticing words of man's wisdom, then that is the place where his faith stands. Instead, Paul wants his faith to stand in the power of God. All the tactics of men cannot produce the power of God.

What does Paul mean by their faith “standing in the wisdom of men?” He means “sustained” by the wisdom of men. If men are persuaded because of an emotionally charged presentation, then that persuasion cannot be expected to

last. But if men are persuaded by the truth of the gospel, the power of the gospel, then that truth, that power will sustain them throughout.

Paul knows the power of the gospel.

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.

It is the power of God to the Greek who viewed it as foolishness and to the Jew who viewed it as untrue, hence, a stumblingblock. The gospel has the power within it to change anyone who responds to it properly. Paul's preaching was in that kind of power. The Corinthians may have wanted the show, the glamorous, the ostentatious display, but Paul preached the unvarnished truth of the gospel and he did so unashamed of the comparison with the more culturally correct teachers in Corinth.

I want to finish this session with an observation: the degenerative cycle of the Corinthian assemblies. When Paul led these people to Christ and started their assembly, it was all founded on Paul's preaching and doctrine.

In the time between the founding of the church during Paul's 2nd apostolic journey, and the writing of this letter when Paul is at Ephesus for three years, the church has, in less than a decade, degenerated in every way. Some have abandoned Paul's message. Some of them no longer like Paul's style of preaching. They are oblivious to the lack of power in their churches. They have integrated the worldly culture and motives into their churches. They are even critical of Paul's appearance.

In the years since the church was founded, it has not moved forward, it has moved backwards. It has moved away from everything Paul established it in. Let there be a lesson here for us.

The Book of 1 Corinthians
1 Corinthians 2:6-3:4
Session 9: The Wisdom of this World

Let's look at the pattern of edification for this next form of doctrine:

Reproof – 2:6

Correction – 2:7-16

Instruction in Righteousness – 3:1-4

In this section, Paul is correcting their ungodly thinking that we do not have a wisdom that is anything like the world's; that our wisdom is somehow inferior to the world's wisdom.

1 Corinthians 2:6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect:
yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

Paul is speaking to those who are spiritually mature and will understand what he says.

1 Corinthians 2:6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect:
yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

The wisdom that Paul is going to present is not the wisdom of this world. The people that follow the wisdom of this world are set in contrast to "them that are perfect." Evidently, there are some who have not abandoned Paul or his doctrine, but they have increased in the faith. Paul says his wisdom will be comprehended by these believers.

1 Corinthians 2:6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect:
yet not the wisdom of this world, **nor of the princes of this world**, that come to nought:

The "princes of this world" are not referring to men, but this will be qualified by vs. 8, where we understand that these are referring to the principalities and

powers who have aligned themselves with Satan. These are the “princes” that have been influencing the people in the world and shaping the wisdom of the world.

Paul ends verse 6 by saying that the wisdom of this world will come to naught. We may take time to run the references on this, as it is very interesting, but for now just know that God will one day destroy all competing wisdoms. This is not talking about wisdom in the sense of understanding mathematics or how to build a house, or how to perform a surgery, or any of that. This is talking about wisdom in the sense of our life philosophy, how we think and how we live our lives.

1 Corinthians 2:6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: ⁷ But **we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom**, which God ordained before the world **unto our glory**:
⁸ Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Now we come to one of the most fascinating subjects in all the Bible; the mystery. The hidden wisdom of God was a secret that was not mentioned in the Bible until God revealed it to the apostle Paul.

Paul ends the book of Romans with a reference to the mystery and then he picks it back up in the book of 1 Corinthians.

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, ²⁶ 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:

Before we continue, let me stop here to explain something about Romans 16:25-26. We have looked at vs. 25 a couple of times for the purpose of demonstrating that God kept the mystery a secret since the world began. But we need to look carefully at both verses just for a moment.

What is Paul talking about at the end of Romans? He is talking about how believers are “stablished.” Paul mentions three things that stabilize the believer in the faith: 1) Paul’s gospel, the gospel of the grace of God, 2) the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery (which was secret but now is manifest), and 3) by the scriptures of the prophets, which is a reference to the OT. There is a comma and an “and” in vs. 26.

Some read the verse by omitting the word “and.” This would create a contradiction, for it would make the revelation of the mystery be the scriptures of the prophets, which it is not.

By the way, guess where else we run into the comma and the “and?” Romans 8:17.

Romans 8:17 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.

Since we have come over here, let me take a minute and advance our thinking on the issue of the suffering.

Romans 8:17 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. ¹⁸ For I reckon that **the sufferings of this present time** are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

What is this present time? If Paul is speaking dispensationally, and I believe he is, then he is referring to the “but now” when God has revealed the mystery during this DoGG. I know we say that a dispensation is not a period of time, but it happens during a period of time, so we really cannot separate the two. The dispensation is actually a “dispensing” of something like the law, or grace.

Technically speaking, a dispensation has to do with the way God has arranged the things He is doing and how He has chosen to do them; the action of administering, ordering or managing. Today, we are living in a dispensation of grace. Keith Blades often referred to it as the Dispensation of Gentile Grace (DoGG), emphasizing its unique application to Gentiles apart from Israel and their

program. Even though that exact wording is not found in the Bible, the teaching of it is found there, and so I use that term almost exclusively to speak of the administration of the mystery that was revealed by Paul for us members of the body of Christ.

But what I am really after is to advance our definition of the sufferings of this present time (SoPT). I have told you in the past that these are the sufferings that come from living in a fallen world, as opposed to attacks of the Sufferings of Christ (SoC). But, are these kinds of sufferings restricted to the DoGG (this present time)?

What makes these sufferings different today from back in the prophetic program? It seems like Paul's comments have a dispensational flavor to them when he calls them the sufferings of "this present time."

Since we label these sufferings as things like health issues, our finances (as to employment and jobs) the economy itself, and things like that, think about how these worked back in the prophetic program. If they kept the law, they had good health for themselves and their family, their herds increased, their crops got rain when they needed it, and they were victorious over their enemies.

Leviticus 26:3 If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; ⁴ Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. ⁵ And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. ⁶ And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make *you* afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. ⁷ And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword.

Leviticus 26:9 For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you. ¹⁰ And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new.

If they broke God's law, they might get the diseases and sicknesses which other peoples had, their herds diminished, their crops were subject to famine, flood or locusts, and their enemies had success against them (the extent depending upon the CoP in play). It was the very opposite of the blessings.

In a sense, if they kept God's law, God protected them from the sufferings of this present time. If they did not, they got those sufferings to an enhanced degree. For example, we may have the occasional person who is attacked by an animal and killed, but for Israel under the law, if this was the curse they were under, that happened so much that their population dwindled and their highways were desolate as people were afraid to travel.

Leviticus 26:22 I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate.

But Israel's material blessings are not the kind of blessings that God has promised to us as members of the body of Christ. Instead of keeping us from disease, instead of victory over our enemies, instead of a promise of good weather and plenteous crops and healthy children and increase of our substance, God is working to produce the life of His Son in our inner man.

Therefore, in this present time, we are subject to all kinds of sufferings "of this present time." But those sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

That glory is yet future in eternity when our exaltation will reveal the extent to which the life of Christ was formed in us, but it was also the glory of Christ in you, the hope of glory, which takes place in this life. When it does, we go through the sufferings of this present time in a way that glorifies our heavenly Father by our godly, patient endurance.

For us our shoes wear out. It is the SoPT. It is the nature of things for us today. But for Israel, in their wilderness wanderings, God made a provision that their shoes did not wear out as they were on their long wilderness journey.

The point I am after is that there is a dispensational meaning in view in the SoPT. Now, maybe I am wrong. But, I am not convinced that the SoPT are limited to the sufferings associated with preaching and practicing the mystery.

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,²⁶ 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:

Notice that when Paul talks about establishing the saints, he does not stop at his preaching of Jesus Christ (which is according to the revelation of the mystery), he includes the rest of the scriptures – the scriptures of the prophets. This is a correction for anyone who wants to throw away everything except Paul’s epistles. By the way, Paul alludes to the OT over and over throughout his epistles.

This dovetails right back into what Paul wrote in Romans 15.

Romans 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written **for our learning**, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

The scriptures of the OT are for our learning, which means we ought to know them. There is a benefit to knowing them – especially when you are living in a time when the mystery epistles are not complete. Someone may ask, “in what way are they a benefit?” Paul answers this question in 1 Corinthians 10.

1 Corinthians 10:1 Moreover, brethren, **I would not that ye should be ignorant**, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;² And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;³ And did all eat the same spiritual meat;⁴ And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.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

usted. ⁷ **Neither be ye idolaters**, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. ⁸ **Neither let us commit fornication**, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. ⁹ **Neither let us tempt Christ**, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. ¹⁰ **Neither murmur ye**, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. ¹¹ Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. ¹² Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

When we read the OT, we can learn some things.

We got off on this from looking at the wisdom of the princes of this world.

1 Corinthians 2:6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, **nor of the princes of this world**, that come to nought: ⁷ But **we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom**, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: ⁸ Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Let's talk for a few minutes about how the princes of this world influence people. To look at this, let's turn to the gospel of John.

In John 12, the time of the cross is near. This is what is commonly referred to as "Palm Sunday" when Jesus came into Jerusalem.

John 12:12 On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³ Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. ¹⁴ And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, ¹⁵ Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. ¹⁶ These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and *that* they had done these things unto him.

Dropping down in the chapter, we have an account of something Jesus says about his impending death on the cross.

John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.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 vs. 31, when Jesus alludes to “the judgment of this world” and “the prince of this world be cast out” he is looking ahead to the time when He is “lifted up from the earth,” signifying His own death. What Jesus says in these verses is letting them know that what He is going to accomplish at the cross will destroy the prince of this world, Satan.

John 14:28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.²⁹ And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.³⁰ Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.³¹ But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

What does He mean by “the prince of this world” (Satan) cometh?” He is referring to Satan’s entering into Judas to betray Jesus and have Him put to death. Jesus says that He is not going to “talk much with you” because He (Jesus) does not want Satan to know that there is something Jesus will do on the cross that will defeat Satan. Again, looking back at 1 Corinthians 2, if Satan and his minions had known, they would not have crucified Jesus.

John 16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.⁸ And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:⁹ Of sin, because they believe not on me;¹⁰ Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;¹¹ Of judgment, because **the prince of this world is judged.**

What I want us to see is that Jesus calls Satan “the prince of this world.” After His death on the Cross, Jesus is the legal “Prince of this world” even though He has not yet taken actual possession of it. He will do that at the climax of Israel’s prophetic program.

When John writes that “the prince of this world is judged” that judgment is going to happen through the cross.

1 Corinthians 2:6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, **that come to nought:**

The background to this I think most of us are familiar with. God created spirit beings of different sorts to attend to/care for His creation. In accordance with that, God would share His thinking with His heavenly host. At the same time, God would entertain counsel from members of the heavenly host. Obviously, this was not because God needed some fresh ideas, but because God is not always thinking that only He should have input. We have talked about this in our Bare Bones Series on The Divine Council.

In view of the rebellion among the angelic hosts, God created the “one new man” to replace them in the positions of authority in the heavenly places (HP) and in His divine council.

The Book of 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 2:6-3:4

Session Ten: The Mystery

We are going to turn to Job 1 and take a look at this. Let me express to you just how important this is. Paul has told us in 1 Corinthians 2:8 that this issue is so important that if Satan had known about it beforehand, he and his minions would have never instigated the death of Jesus. This issue is so important that now that the mystery is being made known, Satan is doing everything he can to keep it from being known and he has been largely successful. This issue is so important that Satan will attack any assembly that dares to preach, teach and fellowship around the mystery to shut them down. Today, in this DoGG, this is what the spiritual battle is about; it is about the mystery and the proclamation of it by the church, the body of Christ. So, keep that in your mind as we go through this.

Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.

The book of James tells us (chapter 5) that Job is a picture or type of the Lord's little flock out in Daniel's 70th Week as they also will be persecuted by Satan.

Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.

Satan, as the prince of this world has, for all intents and purposes, the throne of the earth. He has usurped the possession of the earth by Adam's fall. Remember what we said earlier, that members of the heavenly hosts are assigned the task of watching over the creation. In Job 1, all of these "sons of God" have come to present themselves to the Lord God. As the prince of this world, which is not a title of derision which Jesus used in John 16:11, but was an accurate description of how Satan is perceived, Satan must also present himself before the Lord. What is taking place here is a meeting of the divine council.

Job 1 becomes, along with I Kings 22, Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1-10, Jeremiah 23, Daniel 7, and Revelation 5, a classic passage that speaks of the divine council.

Job 1:7 And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. ⁸ And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

¹⁰ Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. ¹¹ But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. ¹² And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath *is* in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

What does Satan wind up doing? He takes away Job's flocks, Job's servants and Job's children. But notice that Satan did not take Job's wife. Can you guess why?

Job 2:1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to **present themselves before the LORD**, and Satan came also among them to **present himself before the LORD**.

Satan is responsible to give an account just like the other sons of God.

It is the princes of this world that are influencing men to evil. So, God is going to replace them with the body of Christ, who are “sons of God” and corporately, the one new man. With the mind of Christ, we can be counsellors to the Lord. Again, not because he needs us; but He is entering into a real relationship with us as sons – sons involved in the family business.

Instead of what has been going on in the heavens, the body of Christ will facilitate God's will in the heavenly places. Take for example when Daniel was praying about the 5th CoP and what would happen now that the 70 years captivity has ended. God sends an angel to give the answer to Daniel's prayer. Let's pick it up in Daniel 10.

Daniel 10:1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.

Daniel 10:5 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz:

Daniel 10:11 And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.¹² Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.¹³ But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.¹⁴ Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision *is* for many days.

The point here is that the angel had to actually make the trip through enemy territory, and he was withstood for 21 days until Michael showed up to fight. But we are going to return righteousness to the HP and deliver the creature from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Not only will all those paths and ways be open to the messengers of God, but I believe that in the millennial kingdom, when Christ sits on the throne of David, that the veil between heaven and earth will be lifted and people will be able to look up and see the things going on in the heavenly places. We'll study that in 1 Corinthians 13, but I just mention it for now. Now I think we have the necessary background to understand the mystery.

1 Corinthians 2:6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:⁷ **But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:**

It is at this point that I want to step away from the text for the remainder of this session so that we might understand what the mystery is. My fear is that while we know a lot of things about the mystery...

- We know it was called a mystery because God kept it hidden; God kept it a secret
- We know why God kept it a secret, which is given in I Corinthians 2:8
- We know that God revealed the mystery first to Paul, who is our apostle; he is the apostle to the Gentiles
- We know that the mystery was given in connection with the DoGG
- We know that God planned it before the foundation of the world
- We know that the mystery is set in contrast to the prophetic program given to Israel

...we might have a difficult time defining what the mystery is. If I asked you to tell me what the mystery is, could you do it? This is an important question because our “great commission” is to make this mystery known!

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: ¹⁰ To the intent that now **unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places** might be known by the church **the manifold wisdom of God**,

But even those verses do not tell us what the mystery is, only that we are to make it known. So, what is the mystery?

In a nutshell, the mystery is the overall description of the unique ministry and message given to our apostle Paul.

At its core, it is what God is doing today in this DoGG, but it contains multiple aspects. But even knowing this, we still need to understand what those unique aspects of Paul's ministry and message are.

Last week we saw how God has a divine council with which He consulted to carry out His business in the world. The point of bringing that up is to say that before God created the angelic hosts, before He created the heaven and the earth, God had a secret which was "hidden in Himself."

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:

God did not reveal this secret to His council. Only God knew about this mystery. After God created the angelic hosts, He said nothing about it. After God created the heaven and the earth, He said nothing about it. Hence, it was kept secret since the world began.

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**,

That means that no OT prophet revealed anything about the mystery of Christ.

Ephesians 3:4 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;

God kept that secret until He revealed it to the apostle Paul.

Ephesians 3:3 How that **by revelation he made known unto me the mystery**; (as I wrote afore in few words,

This seems like the perfect place to define the mystery. The mystery consists of two parts: 1) Paul's unique apostleship ministry and 2) the message that was given to him in connection with what God ordained before the foundation of the world.

The overall mystery is comprised of subpart mysteries. In other words, there is more to the message of the mystery than just one thing.

1 Corinthians 2:6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: ⁷ But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: ⁸ Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

There is some disagreement about who the “princes of this world” are. Some say this refers to people, while others maintain that this is a reference to principalities in HP who have influence upon men and upon the world. While I lean in the direction of these being principalities in HP who orchestrated the crucifixion, when it comes to the point that “no one knew about the mystery of Christ,” it makes little difference, for neither of these two groups knew.

But if we are talking about “why” they would not crucified Jesus, now I think our choice has considerable difference. And that difference has to do with what Satan knew about what Jesus was doing at the Cross and what he thought would be the impact on his usurped possession of heaven and earth.

Just to state it concisely, Satan, before the Cross, was the de facto possessor of heaven and earth. Satan knows that Jesus has rejected his offer of the kingdoms of the earth at the outset of Jesus’ ministry. He has watched Jesus’ earthly ministry and, I believe, Satan knows about the death of Jesus in the OT.

Psalm 22:1 To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David.
My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

To affirm the humanity of Jesus does not deny His deity. This cry which Jesus will make on the cross (Mark 15:34) is a genuine expression of His isolation in the spiritual battle that will take place on the Cross. But again, this does not nullify His deity any more than Jesus “not knowing the day or the hour” of His coming (Mark 13:32).

Mark 13:30 Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. ³¹ Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. ³² But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

Returning to Psalm 22...

Psalm 22:11 Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. ¹² Many bulls have compassed me: strong **bulls of Bashan have beset me round.** ¹³ **They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.** ¹⁴ **I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.** ¹⁵ **My strength is dried up like a potsherden; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.** ¹⁶ **For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.** ¹⁷ I may tell all my bones: they look *and* stare upon me. ¹⁸ They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. ¹⁹ But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me. ²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. ²¹ Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

Bashan is in the area of the tribe of Dan, the northernmost area of the land of Israel. Remember, it was in Dan that Jeroboam sent one of the two golden calves for the worship of God, (I Kings 12), but in reality, this was a Baal cult.

Hosea condemned this action...

Hosea 13:1 When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died. ² And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, *and* idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.

There are three stages to this “sin more and more.” Under Jeroboam, they worshipped calves of gold. Under Ahab, the worship of Baal was enlarged. Now,

the multiplying of other idols (See 2 Kings 17:9-10) which penetrated into the private lives of the people, even those who were not wealthy. So what is the “kiss the calves” phrase about? You have to recall what Jeroboam said,

1 Kings 12:28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

²⁹ And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan. ³⁰ And this thing became a sin: for the people went *to worship* before the one, *even* unto Dan. ³¹ And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.

Kissing was a sign of homage, whether to an idol or to God.

1 Kings 19:18 Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

Psalm 2:12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

If there were an object of worship that could not be approached, (such as the sun or the moon) kissing one’s hand would stand as a symbol of worship, as if sending the kiss toward that object.

Job 31:26 If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; ²⁷ And my heart hath been secretly enticed, or **my mouth hath kissed my hand:** ²⁸ This also were an iniquity *to be punished by the judge:* for I should have denied the God *that is above.*

But even though we have all of this with the calves and Baal in connection with false worship in the northern kingdom, there is actually more to it than that. That is not to say that we went over here for nothing, the point is to establish that there is an association with the underworld in play.

Bashan, as in “the bulls of Bashan,” was understood to be a place of the dead, of departed spirits and the entrance to the underworld. It was a satanic stronghold of the adversary on the earth. Satan had been at work there for a long time.

Turn to Psalm 68...

Psalm 68:15 The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill as the hill of Bashan.

Psalm 68:22 The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea: ²³ That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of *thine* enemies, *and* the tongue of thy dogs in the same.

You can read the whole psalm on your own, but what is going on here is the declaration that God is going to take for His own, this area that had been considered a stronghold for Satan and those beings who rebelled against God. And guess where we get the fulfillment of that? In Ephesians! With Jesus! In Ephesians 4, Paul is going to quote Psalm 68, and the topic he quotes is the conquest of supernatural beings! And Paul quotes that in connection with the conquest of Bashan from Psalm 68.

Ephesians 4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

Who did Jesus lead captive when He ascended up on high after His resurrection from the dead? Those “bulls of Bashan” that Jesus encountered when He was on the cross: those supernatural beings who rebelled against God. They are present at the crucifixion of Jesus. They are reveling in the death of the Savior. They are taunting Him and ridiculing Him.

And just as a side note: That is what makes it all the sweeter when, at His resurrection, Christ is given all power in heaven and in earth, stripping it away from those supernatural rebels. Ephesians says he led His enemies captive, and Colossians says...

Colossians 2:15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

In His ascension, Christ is parading right through their territory, openly and purposefully showing them His triumph over death, hell and the grave, and them! God said He was going to take back everything from the Adversary and those who rebelled against God, and that is what He did in Christ! Christ's successful death on the cross, functioning in accordance with the first mandate of the Davidic Covenant as Israel's Redeemer was the fulfillment of prophecy.

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But what else He did in His redemptive work, in addition to reclaiming all satanic territory on the earth and stripping away Satan's power over the earth, but that He would also reclaim all of the HP to His Father and that was the part that was kept secret from the foundation of the world. Christ not only provided for the fulfillment of prophecy, He provided for Satan's power to be broken in heaven and earth.

By His death and resurrection Christ broke Satan's power; at the revelation of the mystery He put His Father's plan into action and in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He will physically reclaim every inch of heaven and earth!

In a similar manner, when we trusted Christ, the power of sin was broken. Sin wasn't gone, but its power was. When we get our new bodies at the blessed hope (BH), and occupy the HP, then the presence of sin will be broken, done away with. That is the same way God is dealing with His adversaries: He strips away their power and then, at the appointed time, He will remove them completely – total victory.

But Psalm 22 is not the only passage Satan is aware of. He also knows about Isaiah 53.

Isaiah 53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

There may be a question about how much Satan actually knew from passages like Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. What did Satan know when John the Baptist said of Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world?”

I have seen the arguments that Satan knew enough to know he might ultimately lose possession of the earth, but, in his mind, he would keep the heavenly places, thinking that Israel had no way to inhabit or reclaim the HP. But that is where the mystery comes in.

What Satan did not know was all that Jesus Christ was providing for in His death on the Cross and His resurrection from the dead.

We are talking about the mystery of Christ. Most Christians today have never heard of the mystery and if they have, they have no idea what it is about. That is due to the lack of preaching and teaching on the subject.

For those who have heard something about the mystery of Christ, they often dismiss it by saying that Paul isn't really teaching anything differently than Jesus taught in His ministry or that was taught back in the OT.

You will hear some of them say, “Paul isn't the only one to talk about the mystery. There are several mysteries talked about in the bible.” And that is true, there is more than one “mystery” in the Bible. For example:

In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which he asked his wise men to interpret. They could not. But Daniel inquires of the Lord...

Daniel 2:19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

The point here is that this is not referring to the mystery of Christ; this is referring to the king's dream and its interpretation.

But we are referring to the mystery of Christ which was revealed to the apostle Paul.

Turn with me to Mark 4. In Mark 4, Jesus is speaking to the people in parables. In vs. 10, some of them come to Jesus and ask Him why He is speaking in parables. What follows is the first part of His answer.

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:

Is the “mystery of the kingdom of God” the same thing as the mystery that was revealed to Paul? It is not. What is the mystery of the kingdom of God? This refers to things, details which were not yet revealed about the kingdom which would be set up on the earth. These details are only pertinent to those members of the little flock, therefore, Jesus teaches a mixed group in parables, so that the details of God’s kingdom are not revealed to apostate Israelites.

But the mystery of the kingdom of God is not the same thing as the mystery revealed to Paul.

But do not think that everything Paul mentions is part of the mystery. For example, Paul talks about Jesus’ death on the cross and His resurrection. This is not the mystery, as these were prophesied. But what is part of the mystery is an element in His death on the cross and resurrection that did not pertain to God’s program with Israel and was not known.

So the death, burial and resurrection are not part of the mystery. But, there is something Christ provided for in His death, burial and resurrection which was part of the mystery, get it?

Let’s amplify our understanding of the mystery, and I want to do this by looking at some specific verses in Paul’s epistles. What we will be looking at is the breakdown of the mystery. In other words, the mystery has more than one component to it. There is more than one mystery that makes up the whole mystery which was revealed to Paul. Accordingly, we will find the word “mysteries” from time to time.

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 fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

What does that mean, that “blindness in part is happened to Israel?” There is some debate among grace preachers about what the “blindness” is, and what the

“in part” means. Some think the blindness is to the truth of salvation. They think the ‘in part’ is saying that only some of the Jews have been blinded. Therefore, they think the Jews who are blinded will reject Christ as Savior, and the ones who are not blinded will trust Christ as Savior in this DoGG. I do not believe that view is correct for a number of reasons, one of which being that it smacks of Calvinism.

I think they are mistaken about the “blindness” and the “in part.”

I agree with those who see the “in part” as pertaining to a partial period of time in which Israel has been blinded in the sense that God’s prophetic program with Israel has been temporarily interrupted. It is “in part” in the sense that it is not permanent. They are “blinded” to their program, not the gospel. They are blinded in that they can’t see it working – because it is not working right now. Now, we are in the DoGG. God isn’t picking winners and losers of who will be in the body of Christ.

That blindness (the interruption of the prophetic program) took effect at the stoning of Stephen in the book of Acts. And that cessation of the outworking of prophecy will remain in effect until “the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” You will know when the fulness of the Gentiles is come in because the Blessed Hope will have taken place and we will be gone.

I want to pick up on where we left off about the interruption of the prophetic program as being the explanation for Romans 11.

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 fulness of the Gentiles be come in.²⁶ 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:²⁷ For this *is* my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

Verse 26 tells us that after the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, “all Israel shall be saved.” That does not mean that every single Israelite will be saved. We know from other scriptures that most Israelites will reject the truth of salvation. What is being said here is in reference to all of believing Israel; the remnant.

This is just to realize that there will be a time when God will resume His program with them and bring it to a conclusion under the New Covenant (vs. 27 – my covenant).

So, what are the component parts of the mystery?

Romans 11:25 – Israel has suffered blindness in part

Romans 16:25 – It is part of our establishment (the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery) as the body of Christ

Romans 16:25 Now to him that is of power to establish 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,

Paul is preaching Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery. He was preaching this message since it was revealed to him and finally, Paul begins to write the message in letters which are inspired by God.

The first book Paul writes is Galatians. Galatians is not written until about 53-54 A.D. Since Christ is crucified in 30 A.D. and following is the one-year extension of mercy, then Paul gets saved sometime around 31 A.D. That means that Paul has been preaching for over 20 years before he wrote his first inspired book.

So, how are people being edified? By what means are they growing in grace, seeing as they don't have a Bible? By the preaching of Paul and other men (apostles and prophets), who were given mystery truths supernaturally by the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 4:1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

There is an overarching revelation given to Paul which is called the mystery, but that is broken down into component parts called “mysteries.” We will see more about the details of this when we get to chapter 4.

This issue of mysteries (plural) gives us an opportunity to make an important point. Taking Paul's exhortation seriously, I want to “warn every man.”

As important as the mystery is, and as glad as we may be to be a part of it, and as much as we may make that mystery known, do not get to thinking that the reward of the inheritance is based solely on understanding the mystery and remaining faithful to it.

What I fear is happening is that some of us, in a well-meaning attempt to obey the doctrine, have made the mystery the object instead of the means.

We can rejoice in the truth of the mystery, we can understand the various parts of the mystery, we can make known the mystery, but those things are not the sum total of what God is looking for. In other words, the mystery is not an end it is a means to an end. The mystery is not the goal it is the vehicle to get us to the goal.

Just like right division is not the end, but a means to an end. God's purpose was not to have a mystery, but God had a purpose in having a mystery. Are you following?

Let me make my point in 1 Corinthians 13.

1 Corinthians 13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

² And though I have *the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries*, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. ³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

In vs. 2 we see that word "mysteries" again. But my point here is to say that even if you understand all about the mysteries, if God's word (in Paul's epistles) has not effectually worked in you to produce godly love and charity, then all that insight and knowledge and faith and whatever else you may have or do, will profit you nothing.

The portion of God's word which produces the five core features of godly love and charity is sitting back in Romans 12:3 – 13:7. We have that doctrine because there is a mystery which allows us Gentiles the privilege. But those features of godly love cannot be generated in us by simply knowing about, standing for or

defending the mystery. It is because of the mystery that it is possible for us to be transformed in our inward man, so that we take on the very life of Christ, but we must not confuse the two.

If Paul's doctrine is not working in us to produce a love for God, a love for our fellow saints, a love for the members of the body of Christ outside of our local assembly, a love for our neighbor and even a love for our enemies, then Christ is not being formed in our inner man – and THAT is the goal, not the mystery. The mystery is the vehicle God has chosen by which Gentiles may be saved apart from the agency of Israel and by which we Gentiles are given the opportunity to be conformed to the image of God's Son.

Another of the mysteries is found in I Corinthians 15:51.

1 Corinthians 15:49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. ⁵⁰ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 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. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Before we read 51 lets back up to verse 50 for a little context.

1 Corinthians 15:50 **Now this I say**, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

There are two things about this opening phrase: 1) this is Paul's way of introducing some profound statement of significance, and 2) what he is about to say is unique to Paul. No other writers will say what he is about to say. How can this be?

Because Paul is speaking dispensationally. Paul is describing an element of the mystery, which he will say in vs. 51.

In the DoGG, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. But, in the prophetic program, flesh and blood does inherit the kingdom which is on the earth.

Matthew 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: ³² And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: ³³ And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, **inherit the kingdom** prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Our bodies will be like that of the Lord Jesus' resurrection body which is not flesh and blood and flesh and bone.

Luke 24:39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

We will have a body but it will not be like the body we have now where the "life of the body is in the blood." We will have a celestial body, capable of functioning in the kingdom of God out in the HP. The life of our celestial body will be by the Spirit of God, whereby we will be sustained forever. No more death or aging after we get our resurrection bodies.

1 Corinthians 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; **neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.**

That last phrase is saying that just as flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God in the HP; neither will our corruptible bodies be adaptable to a realm where everything is incorruptible. In other words, you cannot go to the HP in the body you have now.

1 Corinthians 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

⁵¹ **Behold, I shew you a mystery...**

This introduces another component to the mystery which now from vs. 50 concerns the resurrection for members of the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:51 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.

When Paul says we shall not all sleep, he is not presenting a doctrine of soul sleep, like Jehovah Witnesses believe. When someone died, in the Bible, it often describes it as “they fell asleep.” The reason for this is because a body which is dead appears as one which is asleep and vice versa. The “sleep” is always a description of the physical body and never the soul. Your soul does not sleep.

There are examples of this in the Bible: Luke 16:19-31 (which is not a parable, as its elements are inconsistent with every parable Jesus ever gave) and Revelation 6:9-11 where the saints in the Tribulation are killed and they are crying out to God for vengeance and justice.

Revelation 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:¹⁰ And they cried with a loud voice, saying, **How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?**¹¹ And white robes were given unto every one of them; and **it was said unto them**, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they **were**, should be fulfilled.

Soul sleep is a belief that when the body dies, the soul goes to sleep until...it gets another body at the resurrection. But there will be a body given before the resurrection. Take a look at Revelation 6:11 again.

Revelation 6:11 **And white robes were given unto every one of them;** and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled.

Why are they given white robes if they have no kind of body? What is a robe for? It is to cover the body. I don't want to get too far off track with this, as we will cover this when we get to I Corinthians 15.

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1 Corinthians 2:6-3:4

Session 12: The Mystery

There is something else I want us to see about the mystery. When Paul says we will not all sleep, he is talking about an event which will take place at the end of the DoGG which will concern every member of the body of Christ from the first member, Paul, to last member saved, whoever he or she may be.

This is a part of the overall mystery. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul is saying that there is an event in the mystery – which no one knew but God – that will affect every member of the body of Christ. We will not all sleep means we will not all die (physically).

1 Corinthians 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

⁵¹ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, **but we shall all be changed,**

That change is in reference to what Paul said back up in vs. 50, where flesh and blood (which is a reference to what?) This whole section is about the redemption of the body at the resurrection. Our body; not our soul cannot enter into the HP. Our corruptible (mortal) bodies cannot be the kind of body we have when we are taken into the heavenly kingdom. It is not capable of functioning up there. We will need another kind of body, one that is incorruptible.

OED: **Incorruptible** means incapable of undergoing physical corruption; that cannot decay or perish, everlasting, eternal.

In what way will we be changed? Our bodies. For those who have already died, they will be raised incorruptible (vs. 52).

1 Corinthians 15:52 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.

What about those who are alive at the coming of the Lord? They shall be changed. In what way? Their bodies. The companion passage to this is found in 1 Thessalonians 4, which we will look at when we get over to I Corinthians 15.

There are several places in the book of Ephesians where we will have the opportunity to look at details of the mysteries which are within the overall mystery. For now, let me briefly outline what all is contained in the mystery and we can take a closer look when we get there in our studies.

- The mystery concerns the full meaning of the cross, in that we have redemption through “faith in his blood” without any works required to manifest our faith.
- The mystery includes God’s program with Gentiles during the time Israel’s program is in abeyance.
- The mystery includes the Blessed Hope; the catching away of the body of Christ at the end of the DoGG.
- The mystery reveals the union between Christ and the church; He is the head and we are His body.
- The mystery reveals the equality of Jews and Gentiles, that we are fellowheirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ.

Continuing with the component parts of the mystery, do you know what is at the heart of the mystery? This next component part is found in Colossians 1:25-28.

Colossians 1:25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; ²⁶ **Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations,**

but now is made manifest to his saints: ²⁷To 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:** ²⁸Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; **that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:**

The purpose of the mystery is so that we Gentiles might have Christ formed in us so that we may be presented “perfect” in our practical sanctification, just as we have been made “blameless” in our positional sanctification in Christ. Why? Because that brings glory to our Savior and to the Father. If our practical sanctification is working, that is all because of what God (all three members of the Godhead) has done, and not we ourselves. The only way to bring our functional sanctification up to the level of our positional sanctification is to have a positional sanctification (Father), to have an inspired word to generate that practice in us (Spirit), and by Christ actively living His life in us (Son).

What does Paul mean by “Christ in you...?” It means having the life of God’s Son being lived in us (edification, conformed) and through us (to minister to men and to make manifest to angels). The mystery is a wonderful and glorious thing (like grace is wonderful and glorious) but there is a purpose behind having the mystery, just as there is a purpose in dispensing grace. Grace is not an end, the mystery is not an end; they are both means to an end.

So, we should not mistake our respect for Paul as our apostle, our appreciation for the mystery, our comprehension of what God is doing with Gentiles apart from Israel, our understanding that Israel has suffered blindness in part, our excitement about going to the HP in a glorified body, our willingness to suffer for making the mystery known, our joy at being part of the body of Christ – don’t mistake those things for the life of Christ being formed in your inner man.

Because we can do/have all of those things – which, by the way, we should – but we cannot do/have all of those things without living out of the forms of doctrine given to us by our apostle. As pastors, we have to set the example of how this works.

And the way we talk, and the things we do, indicate – make manifest – whether we have been/ are being transformed by the doctrine or not. For example, when we discredit and speak evil of those that disagree with us on some point of interpretation, even though we agree with them on the vast majority of other

points that is an indicator that certain important parts of the doctrine are not working in us.

Now, if I have misread what I am looking at, then that is my mistake and we are all on the same page. I love my brothers in Christ who preach the mystery. I thank God for them and I have learned a lot of what I know from them. And I hope to continue to learn from them. But I am just sounding an alarm so that we do not confuse these two issues.

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**:

Let's talk just for a minute about that final phrase, "unto our glory." Glory is one of those words we use or hear a lot but we may not know exactly how to define it. Let me give you a list which you should hang on to for future reference.

Joseph's glory was his exalted position in Egypt.

Genesis 45:13 And ye shall tell my father of **all my glory in Egypt**, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.

Glory is used in a similar way for David...

Psalm 21:1 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! ² Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah. ³ For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head. ⁴ He asked life of thee, *and* thou gavest *it* him, *even* length of days for ever and ever. ⁵ His glory *is* great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.

In the sense of possessions, Jacob's glory was his servants and animals.

Genesis 30:43 And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses.

Genesis 31:1 And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory.

This is the idea of glory being wealth, of whatever sort it is.

Psalm 49:16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when **the glory of his house** is increased; ¹⁷ For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: **his glory** shall not descend after him.

Glory can also refer to physical strength or endurance.

Proverbs 20:29 **The glory of young men is their strength:** and the beauty of old men is the gray head.

Glory sometimes refers to the long life of the righteous.

Proverbs 16:31 The hoary head is **a crown of glory**, if it be found in the way of righteousness.

There is a glory which has to do with aspects of human character, such as overlooking the faults of others.

Proverbs 19:11 The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is **his glory** to pass over a transgression.

There is an inherent glory which comes from being created in God's image.

Psalm 8:4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? ⁵ For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast **crowned him with glory** and honour.

1 Corinthians 11:7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as **he is the image and glory of God:** but the woman is the glory of the man.

The word "glory" is also used to describe the pride of those who are living contrary to God.

Isaiah 10:12 Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish

the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and **the glory of his high looks.**

Proverbs 25:27 It is not good to eat much honey: so for men **to search their own glory** is not glory.

The most significant way in which glory is defined is in connection with God and His majesty. In connection with this, glory is used as a manifestation of God's being.

Exodus 16:10 And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, **the glory of the LORD** appeared in the cloud.

Or it may refer to an external manifestation of God which is revealed, as in Isaiah speaking of the millennial kingdom.

Isaiah 40:5 And **the glory of the LORD shall be revealed**, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Glory may refer to God's power when it can be seen.

Numbers 14:22 Because **all those men which have seen my glory**, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

There is another sense in which God has glory which is not connected to any external manifestation of it. This is to say that God's glory exists apart from any manifestation of it.

Exodus 33:18 And he said, I beseech thee, **shew me thy glory.**¹⁹ And he said, I will make **all my goodness** pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be **gracious**, and will shew **mercy** on whom I will shew mercy.²⁰ And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.²¹ And the LORD said, Behold, *there is* a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock:²² And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by:

²³ And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.

This is similar to the kind of glory which Christ had with the Father before the world was.

John 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with **the glory which I had with thee** before the world was.

Glory can refer to God's kingly rule.

Psalm 145:11 They shall speak of **the glory of thy kingdom**, and talk of thy power;

God clothes Himself with glory, which I take to be honor.

Job 40:10 Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself **with glory** and beauty.

Glory can be God's presence.

Psalm 8:1 To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm of David. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast **set thy glory** above the heavens.

Psalm 113:4 The LORD is high above all nations, and **his glory** above the heavens.

Psalm 148:13 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; **his glory is above the earth and heaven.**

God's glory (presence) is sometimes manifest as in the pillar of cloud or as a devouring fire.

Exodus 16:10 And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, **the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.**

Exodus 24:17 And **the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire** on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

God's glory can be His majesty and greatness.

Deuteronomy 5:23 And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire,) that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders; ²⁴ And ye said, Behold, the LORD our God hath shewed us **his glory and his greatness**, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth.

There are scriptures which attribute God's glory in the above sense at Mt. Sinai, in the tabernacle, in the fire of the sacrificial system, in the Ark of the Covenant, and in the temple of Solomon.

When the Bible speaks of giving God glory, it does not mean that we add to His glory, we merely recognize it and acknowledge it.

Glory can be brightness of light, as in 1 Corinthians 15.

1 Corinthians 15:41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

- Glory can mean to trust in, as in 1 Corinthians 3:21.
- Glory can mean to boast or exult in, as in Corinthians 9:16.
- Glory can be praise or exaltation, as in 1 Corinthians 10:31.

What is the meaning of "glory" in 1 Corinthians 2:7? It is this final definition of glory, exaltation.

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**:

Paul says that the mystery which God ordained before the world had our exaltation in view.

The next component part is the mystery of Christ in Colossians 4:3.

The mystery of the faith in 1 Timothy 3:9.

Next, the mystery of godliness in 1 Timothy 3:16.

In our next session, we will look at 1 Timothy 3:16, just to make sure we understand the mystery of godliness. Godliness itself was not a mystery, but there is a mystery component to it.

To finish off this session, let's say this: In the mystery, God has a plan to exalt His Son in the HP. We, members of the body of Christ, will be seated in those HP where we will fill up that heavenly portion of the kingdom.

1 Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. ¹⁰ But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.