

Lesson Four – Finally...

Day One – Maturity
Day Two – The Church at Ephesus
Day Three – The Mystery, Part I
Day Four – The Mystery, Part II
Day Five – The Mystery, Part III

By now you should have an understanding about this battle we are in. We've learned about Satan and his angels, the extensive way he has used and still uses deception, our war against him, the world and the flesh, and the focus of this warfare—the Seventh Day. Our foundational Scripture from Ephesians 6:10-17 gives much detail on *how* we are to battle: wearing the full armor of God. But before we delve into that, we will need to set the context of this passage within the Book of Ephesians. This week we will look at the background and context of Paul's letter, and why it is necessary for us to be of the same mindset as the original recipients of this letter. *There is much we need to have in place before we can put on the full armor of God.*"

This description of the full armor of God is given in Ephesians 6:10-17. Because it's in chapter six, it is contextually necessary to read and understand chapters one through five to see and grasp the entirety of what Paul is talking about.

In addition, the Book of Ephesians is the forty-ninth book of the Bible, out of a total of sixty-six books. It would not be hermeneutically sound to jump right in to the last two-thirds of the Bible and attempt to understand its meaning in an isolated manner. We must know what comes *before* the forty-ninth book of the Big Book. The Bible is not only a chronological historical account of "time" as we know it; it is a progressively revealed account of God's truth, laid out in a manner that man can understand. We must begin in the beginning (Genesis) as God did, and end at the end (Revelation), as God did.

This is why we have spent three lessons reviewing the basic truths of Scripture, truths you may or may not have learned thus far in your Christian walk. This study on spiritual warfare is about solid food and maturity. It's about understanding *why* you've saved. It's about Christ's kingdom in the heavens and His kingdom on earth, all of which takes place on the Seventh Day. It's about Satan's tactics to disqualify you and the present-day prevalent deception around us. It's about suffering and overcoming and rejoicing.

It's all about Jesus Christ.

And once you understand that, there is a huge target on you.

Study well this week, and study prayerfully. Open eyes and open hearts are a must.

Day One – Maturity

Begin your study time today in prayer.

Read through this Ephesians passage a few more times to become familiar with it.

Ephesians 6:10-17

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of this wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The word “finally” from the beginning of our Ephesians passage is the Greek word *loipon* (3063), which literally means “something that is yet remaining to be done.” Paul’s use of this word is not to simply express his final words on the matter. Rather, the word *loipon* is used here by Paul in a manner of him telling the people of the Church at Ephesus that after they have understood and *done* all he has spoken about (in the preceding chapters), the last thing they need to *do* is to put on the armor. In other words, after settling in their minds what it is they are fighting for and why, and pressing on to maturity, they need to arm themselves. This is an important concept to grasp, so make sure you understand this paragraph before moving on to the next.

Did you know that God expects every Christian to press on to maturity? Do you know what a mature Christian is? Do you consider yourself a mature Christian? Think about this for a minute. How long have you been a Christian, and are you any different now than you were then? What is different; what is the same? Do you have a greater knowledge of God’s Word than you did before? Why or why not?

The truth of the matter is that not every Christian moves on to maturity. Some do. They move on to solid food. Some do not; they remain on milk. The author of Hebrews explains it like this:

Hebrews 5:11-6:1, 3

¹¹ Concerning him [Melchizedek, contextually referring to things regarding Christ’s return] we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary [Lit., beginning] principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to [Lit., unskillful in] the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food

**is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.
¹ Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity... ³
And this we shall do, if God permits.**

According to v. 12, what should the recipients of this letter be “by this time”?

From v. 12, had they already been taught the “elementary principles of the oracles of God”?

Why did they need to be taught this again?

What is the solid food, and who is it for?

How is the mature Christian described (v. 14)?

Let’s compare this thought with something Jesus spoke about during His earthly ministry. Do you remember the parabolic sequence in Matthew chapter 13 that we briefly looked at in Lesson Two? Jesus started speaking in parables because those who *should have* understood what He was talking about did **not** understand. Jesus spoke to His own people things about the kingdom of the heavens, and He was rejected and crucified for it. Of these people Jesus said, “the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes” (Matt. 13:15).

The connection with our passage from Hebrews is this: *Many* of the redeemed people of God that should hear and understand the truths spoken by God Himself concerning the solid food of God’s Word DO NOT hear, nor do they understand. Many of the hearts of God’s own people have become dull, and their ears scarcely hear, and their eyes scarcely see. The sad thing is that *they did not start out that way!* They *became* that way.

Paul encountered a similar problem with the Church in Corinth. Read what he says—

I Corinthians 3:1-4

¹ And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. ² I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, ³ for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴ For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not mere men?

What does Paul compare the “babes in Christ” to?

Compare the babes in Christ in the Corinthian letter to the “babe” in the Hebrews letter.

Understanding Spiritual Warfare— Standing Firm in the Battle

Lesson Four Finally...

Paul explicitly says in v. 4 what the root of their jealousy and strife was. They were *walking* like mere men and *following* mere men rather than the Word of God.

When a Christian acts fleshly, he (or she) cannot receive solid food. This solid food is what a Christian needs in order to “grow up in respect to salvation [of the soul]” (I Pet. 2:2). This solid food must be quite important, don’t you think?

Read the Hebrews passage again. It states that there are “elementary teachings about the Christ.”

Hebrews 6:1-2

¹ Therefore **leaving** the elementary [Lit., beginning] **teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity (5047), not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.**

Using the Strong’s definitions from your Appendix, write down the definitions of each word below:

1. leaving (863)-
2. maturity (5047)-

We studied a passage in Lesson Two that uses this same word *teleios* (though in an adjective form). Here it is translated “perfect.” Read the verses again below.

James 1:2-4

² Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have its perfect (5046) result, that you may be perfect (5046) and complete, lacking in nothing...

Do you remember what you learned from this verse? Testing produces endurance, endurance brings our faith to its goal, which brings *us* to *our* goal—ruling and reigning with Christ for 1,000 years. Our Hebrews passage tells us to press on toward this goal, *to maturity*.

However, according to our passage in the Book of Hebrews, in order to mature, what must we leave?

What must we not lay again?

What does that mean? Does it mean that we can’t repent or we shouldn’t have faith? NOT AT ALL! Read the whole context of Hebrews chapter 6, but particularly v. 9—

Hebrews 6:9

But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation...

The author wants better things for the Church, things that carry with them salvation. This is obviously not talking about the salvation connected with spiritual birth, since the author is writing to the Church.

Therefore, to which salvation is this referring? The next three verses use the words “work,” “labor,” “hope unto the end,” and “inherit the promises.” The Book of Hebrews states this further on—

Hebrews 10:39

But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving (KJV, “saving”) of the soul.

The author says to leave behind and not lay again a foundation of elementary things concerning the Christ. We must not *lay again a foundation* of these things, not these things in and of themselves. Do you see the distinction? We need to move *beyond* the initial things having to do with the Christ, and *press on* with the mature things pertaining to the Christ, things that pertain to the salvation of the soul. *Things that have to do with our behavior, our obedience to God’s Word, our purpose for being redeemed.* The latter will move us toward maturity (perfection) and the former will not.

Let’s look closer at the Hebrews passage, and what exactly these elementary things encompass.

Hebrews 6:1-2

1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

What six things are mentioned in relationship to the elementary teachings?

Each one of these things listed carry with them *beginning* teachings (which build the foundation), and each one of these things listed carry with them teachings that produce maturity. .

There is a point here that needs to be made very clear. One cannot move onto the mature teachings without first having the elementary teachings. One must begin (remember that the word for elementary is *beginnings*) with basic things concerning our salvation. THEN one must move on to the mature teachings. Let’s take a look at each one of the six things mentioned in Hebrews 6:1-2, and the elemental teachings associated with each:

ELEMENTAL TEACHINGS THAT WE SHOULD MOVE BEYOND FOR MATURITY

- Repentance from dead works—A Christian can perform works, but apart from faith they are considered dead. Works of the flesh are unacceptable to God; works of the Spirit are wholly acceptable. A saved person can repent (change his mind) at any time regarding his manner of walk (behavior).
- Faith toward God—This is inextricably linked to works in the life of the Christian. A saved person must exercise faith in everything that they do. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). However, a saved person has a choice regarding whether they will exercise faith or not. Faith, *in the life of the Christian*, comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17). A saved individual must learn what God has said, believe what God has said, and then act

- on what God has said. This all has to do with the salvation of the soul, which is a progression toward maturity.
- Instruction about washings—A saved person still has need of washing, but now it is a partial washing. This washing is to be performed repeatedly, because the redeemed person is constantly being defiled by coming in contact with the world in which they live. A Christian is himself a priest, who has been completely washed once at the time of their initial justification. The Christian must then avail himself of the blood of Jesus Christ the High Priest for the continual washing of sin. Again, this is a choice on behalf of the Christian.
 - Laying on of hands—This idea of separation is linked with the teaching concerning the washing. A saved person must remain separate and clean, with sin continually being identified and separated from their life.
 - Resurrection of the dead—This teaching is all of that which surrounds the different times and circumstances that the dead are resurrected. The saved and the unsaved are resurrected at different times; the Jews and Christians are resurrected with different type bodies and at different times; and the faithful and unfaithful are separated into different groups at the judgment of the saved.
 - Eternal judgment—a.k.a. “age-lasting” judgment—This is the teaching regarding the judgment seat of Christ, the kingdom age, the salvation of the soul, and faithful and unfaithfulness on the part of a Christian. There are many judgments for God’s people and the resulting decisions differ.

The truths surrounding God’s kingdom encompass all of these teachings, and this list is by no means exhaustive! Hopefully this has allowed you to glimpse those things which we should be moving beyond—*not laying a foundation again*—as we move out of elemental things and into more and more maturity.

Take some time to write out what you have learned today.

This would be a good place to stop and take this particular message to the Lord. Spend a few minutes in prayer with Him and ask Him to show you what He means and how this applies to you personally.

See you tomorrow.

Day Two – The Church at Ephesus

Begin your day with prayer!

Today we are going to do some background study regarding the Church at Ephesus and Paul’s relationship with them. As mentioned before, the importance here is that this particular church had received *much* teaching from Paul and was pressing on toward maturity.

The city of Ephesus was a port city of Asia Minor, located on the southwest edge of the region on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Paul first stopped in Ephesus sometime around 48 A.D. while on his way to Syria, and he stayed just a short time. Two disciples were with him, Priscilla and Aquila, and when Paul

Understanding Spiritual Warfare— Standing Firm in the Battle

Lesson Four Finally...

left they stayed behind. During Paul's first stay in Ephesus, he "reasoned with the Jews" in the synagogues (Acts 18:18-21).

Sometime later, Paul returned to Ephesus and stayed almost three years. During that time, Paul did much teaching and preaching.

Acts 19:8-10

⁸ And he [Paul] entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. ⁹ But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ And this took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

What did Paul "reason and persuade" the Jews about (v. 8)?

Keeping in mind that Paul was teaching in the synagogues, what do you think that message would be about: spiritual birth by faith in Jesus Christ, or spiritual truths concerning the Messiah, Israel's King, and His coming kingdom?

(Note: the phrase "kingdom of God" is often used interchangeably in Scripture with the phrase "kingdom of [the] heaven[s]," even though occasionally the term "kingdom of God" is used to describe God's universal rule. The rule of the kingdom of the heavens over the earth exists within the absolute sovereignty of the kingdom of God—God is and always will be the Supreme Ruler. However, He is currently letting events occur that will result in the reconciliation of that which He has created. Since Scripture is dealing with those things that are in view to mankind, we can see the two phrases as synonymous as it pertains to the Christian's heavenly calling—*cf.* **Matthew 19:23-24**, "And Jesus said to His disciples, 'Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'")

According to Acts 19:8-10, who was speaking evil of "the Way"?

What did Paul do?

And because of that, what was the result (v. 10)?

What message did these people hear (v. 10)?

Paul left Ephesus, traveled to Macedonia, then to Greece, Philippi, and Troas. He then decided to go to Jerusalem for the celebration of Pentecost and ended up in the town of Miletus, which is located just south of Ephesus. While there, Paul sent for the elders of the church of Ephesus. They came to Paul, and he gave them a message. Paul probably thought that this message would be his last to them, because he expected that he would be arrested (or worse) in Jerusalem. This is what Paul said to them (remember the time frame here—Paul writes his letter to Ephesus in 60 A.D., and this even transpired in/around 58 A.D.):

Acts 20:18-32

¹⁸ “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, ²¹ solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. ²⁴ But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will see my face no more. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day, that I am innocent of the blood of all men. ²⁷ For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose [Lit., all the will, or intention] of God. ²⁸ Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

According to v. 21, what did Paul testify about?

To whom did he testify?

From whom did Paul receive his ministry (v. 24)?

According to vv. 24 and 25, what did Paul testify solemnly about and preach?

What did he declare (v. 27)?

Do you see that the *whole* purpose of God that Paul taught while in Ephesus is synonymous with the gospel of the grace of God and the message pertaining to the kingdom of God?

Keeping this in mind, let’s read a portion of the letter that Paul wrote to the Church at Ephesus—

Ephesians 1:1-4

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

Paul wrote this letter to the saints at Ephesus who are “faithful in Christ Jesus.” Many times Paul writes Christ Jesus instead of Jesus Christ, and he does so for a reason, as is true in all of Scripture, each word is written a particular way for a reason. Nothing is arbitrary or haphazard. Writing *Christ* first brings particular attention to what Christ means. The Greek word for Christ is *Christos* (5546), which means “anointed.” Jesus is not simply the Passover Lamb; He is the Promised Son of David, the Son of God, the King of kings, and the Promised Redeemer. Let’s not forget what Jesus came to the earth to do—He came to reconcile all things, in heaven and on earth, by bringing man back into the position for which he was created. He was anointed by God to fulfill all things and the title *Christ* brings particular attention to His *whole* purpose.

The word Christ then, when used first, refers to the mature teachings surrounding the Christ. The Church at Ephesus would have understood that because, as Paul says, they were faithful *in* Christ Jesus—they were faithful to (they believed in) the whole purpose of God. Read what Paul wrote about the Christ in his letter to Galatia—

Galatians 3:26-27

²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Through faith in Christ Jesus, they (and correspondingly, we) are all what?

Do you remember what we learned about sons? Initial faith in Jesus as Passover Lamb brings us into the family of God and makes us His children; we are only sons when we walk according to the Spirit and allow the discipline necessary to adopt us as sons. And do not forget, only sons will rule.

Because the Church at Ephesus was faithful in Christ Jesus, and they understood these things, it was not necessary for Paul to lay any foundation in his letter. He simply began his letter by talking about “the blessings” in “the heavenly places” in Christ, and the “adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself” (Eph. 1:5). This is an important bit of information to have when studying the Book of Ephesians.

Take a moment to think about the big picture of Paul’s teachings. Reflect on what you’ve learned so far about the kingdom and how this goes beyond the beginning teaching about Jesus as the Passover Lamb. In particular, focus on what the Old Testament teaches about Israel and their Messiah and their purpose as a nation, because Paul would have only had the Old Testament Scriptures to teach with. Take your thoughts to the Lord and spend some time contemplating the milk and the solid food. I think you may be surprised at the enormity of what there is to learn!

Day Three – The Mystery, Part I

Be still before the Lord. Seek His face with a pure heart. Ask Him for understanding. Ask Him for His truth. Share your thoughts with Him. He rejoices in the prayers of His people!

Let's pick up from where we left off yesterday, and continue reading in the Book of Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:5-9a

⁵ In love He [God] predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His [God's] will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His [God's] grace, which He [God] freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In Him [Jesus] we have redemption through His [Jesus'] blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His [God's] grace, ⁸ which He [God] lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight ⁹ He [God] made known to us the mystery of His [God's] will...

Remembering that Paul is writing to the saints who are faithful in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:1), what have we been predestined to (v. 5)?

According to what?

Why have those who are faithful in Christ Jesus been predestined to adoption as sons (v. 6)?

How did God bestow this?

What do we have in Jesus (v. 7)?

This is according to God's *grace*. God's grace is bestowed on us in order to bring glory to God, which will all be done through His Son and our adoption as sons (yet future). This, according to v. 9, is God's will.

Verse 9 also tells us that God's will is a "mystery" that is now being made known to us "in all wisdom and insight." Let's learn more about this mystery as we continue reading in Ephesians—

Ephesians 1:9-12

⁹ He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him. ¹⁰ with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him, ¹¹ also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, ¹² to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

The mystery of His will is with a view to *an administration*. How does Paul describe this administration (v. 10)?

Where are the things that are to be summed up?

Let's look at Paul's letter to the Church at Colossae to learn more about the "summing up" of all things in Christ—

Colossians 1:16-20

¹⁶ For by Him [Jesus] all things were created, both in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He also head of the body, the church; and he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; so that he Himself might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, ²⁰ and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

By whom were all things created?

What are the things that were created?

Where would *the visible* things be found?

Where would *the invisible* things be found?

Then v. 20 says that *through Jesus all things will be reconciled*. What does this mean?

What does this *mystery of God's will* have to do with? It has to do with Jesus' purpose—His whole purpose. The summing up (which literally means "the gathering together into one") of all thrones and dominions and rulers and authorities, in heaven and on earth, when Jesus rules and reigns on the Seventh Day. This is God's mystery that He has made known to us.

Let's explore how the New Testament writers describe this mystery. There are different aspects to it, but it is all one mystery. We'll finish today's study by looking at the mystery of the Gentiles being grafted into God's family. Then, we'll spend the rest of this week's lesson focusing on the suffering, death, and glorification of Christ, and how it all applies to the current offer of the kingdom of heaven to the Church. Hang in there, there's some great treasure to unearth!

Ephesians 2:11-13, 19, 3:1-11

¹¹ Therefore remember, that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands—¹² remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household...

¹ For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—² if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; ³ that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. ⁴ And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; ⁶ to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, ⁷ of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. ⁸ To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; ¹⁰ in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Why is Paul a prisoner of Christ Jesus?

What does Paul say is the “mystery of Christ” (v. 6)?

Verses 8-10 sum up what we've learned so far. Put these verses into your own words, using as much detail as you can.

Paul was called to preach to the Gentiles the “riches” of the Christ and to teach them things concerning the “administration of the mystery,” which was concealed in the Word of God from the very beginning. He said as much in Acts chapter 20, that he preached the whole purpose of God: faith in Jesus as Passover Lamb to bring about initial salvation, then on to things concerning the kingdom, which would specifically be the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to God's people. Paul brings all this together as it pertains to the nation of Israel and their rejection—

Romans 11:11-14

¹¹ I say then, they [Israel] did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. ¹² Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! ¹³ But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴ if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them.

Understanding Spiritual Warfare— Standing Firm in the Battle

Lesson Four Finally...

According to v. 11, what happened because of Israel's transgression?

Do you recall what Israel's transgression was? Their failure?

Israel *lacked faith* in God. They lacked the continual belief in God's Word necessary to receive the blessings. They forfeited their right to the kingdom of the heavens, and they killed their Promised Messiah. By their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

Reading more from Romans—

Romans 11:15-20

¹⁵ For if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? ¹⁶ And if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also; and if the root be holy, the branches are too. ¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. ¹⁹ You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." ²⁰ Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear...

Because of Israel's rejection of God's Word (in all forms—spoken, written, and in the Flesh), the world received reconciliation through the blood of Jesus. Paul likens their rejection to branches being broken off. Why were they broken off (v. 20)?

Using your Appendix, look up the definition for the following words from v.20:

1. disbelief (570) –
2. faith (4102) –

Using these definitions, rewrite v. 20.

What does Paul say about us (the Gentiles) in v.17?

Understanding Spiritual Warfare— Standing Firm in the Battle

Lesson Four Finally...

Why do we have to be grafted in to the tree (which is Israel)?

(Pull from what you've learned in Lesson One—Abraham and his promises, the God of Shem, etc.)

Continuing in Romans—

Romans 11:20-22

²⁰ **Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; ²¹ for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you. ²² Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.**

Since we are now grafted into the natural “olive tree,” God will deal with us much as He has dealt with Israel. According to v. 21, did God spare the natural branches that were unbelieving?

Will He spare us *if we do not remain faithful* (v. 22)?

What two characteristics of God does Paul point out in v. 22?

Most of us have probably seen God as merciful and loving for allowing us to be grafted in to His promises. And so He is, for it took His Own blood to make it happen. But, we also need to see the severity of God. Those who fall due to unbelief will experience His severity by being cut off.

What was the disobedient nation of Israel cut off from?

Likewise, what will the disobedient Christian be cut off from?

The mystery of the “fullness of the Gentiles” is this current dispensation where God is making a new nation to be the recipient of the kingdom of the heavens (which will be made up of mostly Gentiles). Many prophets of old knew that there was more to what they saw in the Scriptures, and they made careful search and inquiry into it. Peter writes about it:

I Peter 1:9-13

⁹ **...obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. ¹⁰ As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, ¹¹ seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of [Lit., with respect to] Christ and the glories to**

follow. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look. ¹³ Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Which salvation is Peter talking about?

According to v. 11, what did the prophets “who prophesied of the grace that would come to us” seek to know?

What was revealed to them (v. 12)?

Read v. 12 again carefully. The prophets of the Lord made careful search and inquiry regarding their prophecies of the Christ. They wanted to know what “person or time” the Holy Spirit was indicating.

The things that the prophets wrote about are now announced to us *through those* who preach the gospel to us, i.e. the whole gospel—the gospel of grace AND the gospel of the glories of Christ in His coming Kingdom. These are things having to do with the salvation of the soul (look again at the context in Peter’s letter). Please grasp the importance of this terminology.

And because of all these things, what are we to do (v. 13)?

We’ll stop here for the day. There was a lot of information in today’s study, so don’t be frustrated if some of it hasn’t clicked into place yet. All the big pieces will fall into place at some point. You just need to be patient and continue to study and continue to ask God to give you wisdom. His Spirit will guide you into all truth, so let Him. Have a good day and we’ll start again tomorrow.

Day Four – The Mystery, Part II

We’ll continue our study of God’s mystery today, paying close attention to Christ’s suffering preceding His glory, and the many things that we can learn from that as we apply God’s Word. All of the foundation we are studying would have been known and understood by the Church in Ephesus, and so we too must understand it if we want to find ourselves in a place where we can “finally” put on the full armor of God. Make sure that you begin and end in prayer today, earnestly setting your heart to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”!

Go back to yesterday’s work and write down what you learned about the Gentiles aspect of the mystery. Use as much detail as you can. (More space is provided on the next page.)

Let's begin with a passage from Paul's letter to the Church at Corinth. Here he mentions the mystery in relation to Christ's death—

I Corinthians 2:6-10

⁶ Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; ⁷ but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; ⁸ the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; ⁹ but just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him." ¹⁰ For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

According to v. 7, what is God's wisdom spoken in?

What wisdom?

To whom does Paul speak this wisdom (v. 6)?

Is this wisdom, spoken of in a mystery, of *this age* (v.6)?

Is it of the rulers of *this age*?

Did any of the rulers of this age understand this mystery, this hidden wisdom?

If they had understood it, what would NOT have happened?

According to this passage, why did God hide this wisdom in a mystery?

Jesus Christ *had to die*. But He did not come to the earth *only to die*. He first came with the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to His people (*cf.* Luke 4:43; Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15), and His people had a choice about whether they would accept Him, or not. They chose the latter, and the chief priests and leaders of Israel had their King crucified. But, as we know, the death and resurrection of the Christ sealed the fate of all—Satan and his angels would be dethroned, the Gentiles would now be able to receive God’s blessings, and Israel would one day be placed back in their land. Mankind would once again be placed in a position for rulership. Absolutely perfect.

The suffering, death, and resurrection of the Christ were events that could have been seen throughout the Old Testament by the innumerable pictures and types that were recorded. Israel should have known this, yet they remained blinded to the truth. Let’s read how Jesus rebuked and corrected the thinking of two of His disciples, on the day of His resurrection—

Luke 24:13-27

¹³ And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And they were conversing with each other about all these things which had taken place. ¹⁵ And it came about that while they were conversing and discussing, Jesus Himself approached, and began traveling with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. ¹⁷ And He said to them, “What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?” And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ And one of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, “Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?” ¹⁹ And He said to them, “What things?” And they said to Him, “The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, ²⁰ and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. ²¹ But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. ²² But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive. ²⁴ And some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see.”

²⁵ And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?”

²⁷ And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

Why does Jesus call the two disciples foolish and slow of heart (v. 25)?

The story continues with the two disciples recognizing Jesus; they then went back to the other nine and recounted to them their experience with Jesus. As they all talked, Jesus appeared in their midst. Read about it—

Luke 24:44-46

⁴⁴ “[Jesus speaking] These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day...”

Understanding Spiritual Warfare— Standing Firm in the Battle

Lesson Four Finally...

According to vv. 27 and 44, Jesus explained to them the things concerning Himself in “all the Scriptures,” i.e., “the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms.” Did He leave out any part of the Scriptures?

Is there any part of the Old Testament that is not about some facet of Jesus’ *complete* work?

According to Luke 24:46, what was written in the Scriptures?

Here are a couple of questions to ponder: Why did the Jews reject the Christ, if they had at their disposal the Old Testament Scriptures, which Jesus said was all about Him? And why, even after His death and resurrection, did most of them NOT see Him in all of their Scriptures?

Acts 3:18

But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

It was the *suffering* of Christ that threw people off track. Notice what Jesus says to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. What does He say in vv. 25 and 26?

According to Acts 3:18, what did God, through the mouth all the prophets, announce beforehand?

The nation of Israel did not understand that the Promised Son of David, the King of Israel, would suffer, serve, or be meek in any way. They expected their King to usher in the powerful kingdom that would rule all nations on earth—why would He appear lowly? But what did Jesus say? He had to *suffer* before entering into His glory!

Let’s see *when* Jesus starts speaking about His suffering, and His crucifixion. It comes right after His first mention of His “church”—

Matthew 16:13-21

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ And Simon Peter answered and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I also say that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ.

²¹ From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

Understanding Spiritual Warfare— Standing Firm in the Battle

Lesson Four Finally...

Jesus said that He will build His Church “upon this rock.” What rock is He referencing? You may want to answer Peter because the very name Peter means “rock,” but look at the context. Peter has just made a statement of profound importance—Jesus is *the Christ, the Son of the living God*. (Remember II Samuel 7:12-19, the promise to David?) The Father Himself revealed something significant to Peter, and he listened. Everyone else was saying that Jesus was someone else.

So, what will the Church be built upon?

Who will build it?

Even before Jesus is crucified, He speaks of His Church. Do you see the implication? Jesus MUST die in order to graft in the Gentiles, so He begins speaking about His crucifixion because Israel has rejected Him. Now, He will go to the cross.

But what does Peter then say? (Good old Peter...)

Matthew 16:21-24

²¹ From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. ²² And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.” ²³ But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s” ²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”

Obviously, Peter had not understood from the Scriptures that Jesus had to suffer before entering into glory. And because Peter rebuked Jesus for intimating His own death, Jesus called him “Satan” (wow) and a “stumbling block.”

Why did Jesus call Peter this (v. 23)?

Who was Peter aligning himself with? (Keep in mind that Peter was a *redeemed* man.)

Look again at v. 24. If anyone wishes to come after Jesus (Lit. “go where Jesus will be going”) they must deny themselves and take up their cross. The cross is an instrument of suffering and death. What, then, does it mean to *take up your cross*?

Take note that Jesus’ suffering in the flesh is an example for us—

I Peter 2:11, 19-24

¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul... ¹⁹ For this find favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a

man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. ²¹ For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, ²² who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; ²³ and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴ and He Himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

What are we to abstain from (v. 11)?

According to vv. 19-20, what finds favor with God?

We then read in v. 21 that we have been “*called* for this purpose.” What purpose (v. 21)?

Rewrite v. 24.

Jesus suffered and died *in* the flesh, as an example to us. We are to suffer and die *to* the flesh. We are to die to sin and live to righteousness. This is exactly what we studied in last week’s lesson.

We can see that there is certainly more to following Jesus than simply believing He died for your sins. Jesus says clearly that there will be suffering and death. This means that Jesus’ followers must suffer, and they must die (put to death their life in this age), in order to go be where Jesus will be. And where will He be? In the kingdom, ruling and reigning, in that Seventh Day! Paul says this very succinctly in his letter to Timothy—

II Timothy 2:11-12 (KJV)

¹¹ It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: ¹² If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us...

What would it look like in *your* life to pick up your cross and follow Jesus? What would have to change? Is your heart prepared for this? Why or why not?

Let's stop for today. Stay in prayer over the things that you are learning, and ask your Father to give you the wisdom you need to put the pieces into place. He will, so stay faithful to Him!

See you tomorrow.

Day Five – The Mystery, Part III

Pray first!

Yesterday we looked at the suffering of Christ, and how this is an important piece of the mystery that is now being made known to us. But that is only part of the picture, for Jesus Himself said, **“Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?”**

Here's the good news—suffering and glory go hand in hand. Suffering *always* precedes glory!

This is how Paul said it—

Romans 8:16-17

¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

We are a “fellow heir with Christ” if we do what?

What is implied by the use of the word *if*?

That means we have a choice about suffering, doesn't it? (Remember that to suffer with Christ means that we die to the flesh!)

If we suffer, what will happen?

An heir, as we've learned, is in line to receive the inheritance. Since this statement in Romans 8:17 is true, then the converse is true also-- if we do *not* suffer with Him, we will *not* be glorified with Him.

Romans 8:18-19

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

The “sufferings of this present time” are connected to “the glory that shall be revealed in us.” Do we receive glory now?

Do we suffer now?

More from Paul—

Colossians 3:3

When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

When do we receive glory?

Those that suffer now with and for Christ will be glorified with Him in that Seventh Day.

Colossians 1:24-29

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions. ²⁵ Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, ²⁶ that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from the generations; but has now been manifested to His saints, ²⁷ to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. ²⁹ And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

Paul rejoiced in his sufferings. (Of course he would, because glory will follow!) What did he say that his sufferings do (v. 24)?

Does that mean that Christ is somehow incomplete without our suffering? Let's look at Hebrews 2:10—

Hebrews 2:10

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect (or bring to completion) the author of their salvation through sufferings.

How is this similar to what Paul says in Colossians 1:24?

(Note: Of course Christ is perfect—He is God. However, in view of the purposes that God intends to carry out through Christ, He is “incomplete” at the present time. Christ is incomplete with respect to having a wife to complete Him. God stated in the beginning that it was “not good for man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18). Man needed a helper, a wife, in order to rule. That was true for the first man, the first Adam. And it is also true of the Second Man, the Last Adam (*cf.* Gen. 1:28; Rom. 5:14; I Cor. 15:45; I Cor. 15:47; Eph. 5:25-32).)

Understanding Spiritual Warfare— Standing Firm in the Battle

Lesson Four Finally...

Paul also says he was made a minister for the benefit of the Church to fully carry out the preaching of the Word of God. What does Paul mean by “the word of God”? What is the message that Paul preached (Acts 20:24-25)?

The “word of God” means the *whole* counsel of God—the grace AND the glory.

How does Paul describe the Word of God in Colossians 1:25-26?

This mystery has now been manifested to His saints. According to v. 27, what is it that God “willed to make known”?

The mystery is “Christ in you, the hope of glory!” The *hope* of glory—does that mean we have it now?

Does hope mean that we are *all guaranteed* to get it?

Why does Paul proclaim Christ, and teach and admonish every man with all wisdom (v. 28)?

If a man is complete in Christ in that coming day, he will have achieved the salvation of his soul and will receive a reward. How does one become complete? Remember the passage from James—

James 1:2-4, 12

² Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete [same word used in Col. 1:28], lacking in nothing...¹² ...for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Through trials, through testing, through *suffering*! If one endures through it all, he/she will be found perfect and complete.

II Corinthians 4:6-17

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal [age-lasting (166)] weight of glory far beyond all comparison.

What is our momentary, light affliction producing?

Understanding Spiritual Warfare— Standing Firm in the Battle

Lesson Four Finally...

Which age is it for?

Is there anything that can compare to this glory?

We must suffer through trials and tests, and we must suffer *in* Christ and *with* Christ if it is to be acceptable to God. This is the purpose for which we have been called (*cf.* I Pet. 2:21).

Paul writes it another way—

II Thessalonians 1:5, 11-12

⁵ This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. ¹¹ To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the word of faith with power; ¹² in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

According to v. 5, for what do we suffer?

Why?

We suffer for the kingdom of God so that we *may be considered worthy* of the kingdom of God.

What does v. 11 say that this is?

Do you see that our calling is the same as our purpose in I Peter 2:21?

It all comes back to glory, doesn't it?

I hope you get the picture that God has built for us, suffering *now* means glory *later*. No suffering *now*, means no glory *later*.

Any thoughts?

Throughout this week's lesson, we have looked at many different verses that touch on many different aspects of the mystery. However, it is all one mystery. It is that "word of the kingdom" and all that it encompasses—the complete gospel. This mystery has to do with *how* we've been saved and *why* we've been saved. It's the complete picture of Jesus the Christ and His finished work. It's about the *whole counsel of God*.

So let's get on with it and mature.

See you next week.