

In our local fellowship, we've been studying Paul's letter to the Romans for quite some time, and about 6 weeks ago we talked about what Paul called a 'mystery'. Paul used this term 'mystery' quite a bit in his writings. In fact, he used it 17 times. So conveying this 'mystery' to his audiences was apparently quite important to him.

As we were discussing Roman's 11, we read over the word 'mystery' and did not spend any time discussing it, but today I want to go back and discuss it because I would say it's one of the most important topics in the Bible. Why? Because God – through Yeshua and Paul - has given us the keys to unlocking and understanding the mystery.

In this three-part message I want to show that it is God's desire that all mankind be saved, but how He plans to bring about that salvation has been hidden from his people – even many of the prophets – until things are in place for it to be revealed. Therefore, God's plan is a mystery to those who want to know what's happening now, and in the future. Nevertheless, God does reveal certain aspects of that plan from time to time, especially when it's time for them to play a role in bringing it about. So in part one of this three-part message, I want to:

- Show what a 'mystery' is in the Biblical context.
- See what's required of us if we want to understand the mystery,
- Help us to see what was happening in the messianic congregation in Rome that caused Paul to reveal his understanding of the mystery
- Show why theologians have missed the meaning of the mystery

In part two, we will begin to uncover the mystery by showing:

- God's purpose for raising up the Kingdom of Israel
- Why it is imperative that the kingdom be restored
- Biblical and historical proof that Israel and Judah have not been joined back together

And in part three, we will put together what we've seen in the first two parts, and combine it with what Paul had come to see, and thus somewhat begin to understand the Mystery of the Gospel – the Good News of the Kingdom of God. So let's get started!

### **What is a Biblical 'mystery'?**

In the New Testament the word mystery is from the Greek word 'musterion' (Strong's 3466) which means 'a hidden thing' or 'a secret'. It is first used in the scripture where Yeshua began to explain the Parable of The Sower. It was most often used by Paul (20 times) as well as by John in the book of Revelation. It is a derivative of the unused Greek word "muo" which means "to shut the mouth", or as we would say today – "keep your lips sealed".

The Hebrew equivalent of 'musterion' is 'rawz' (רָזַז – Strong's 7328) which is only used in the book of Daniel in regards to Nebuchadnezzar's dream. That dream is where God laid out world history in advance, and though Daniel understood the 'head of gold' to be Nebuchadnezzar, God hid from Daniel's understanding who the other kings would be.

Though never translated 'mystery' in the KJV, the Hebrew word 'mistowror' (מִסְתּוֹרָר – Strong's 4563) which means 'a place of shelter' is considered by some<sup>1</sup> to be the actual root of the English word

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<sup>1</sup> <https://hebrew.jerusalemprayerteam.org/hidden-concealed-mysterious/>



'mystery'. What does 'shelter' have to do with 'mystery'? Simply this – a 'shelter' is what hides you from the elements, but it can also hide you from evil people. 'Mistowror' is the noun form of the Hebrew word 'sathar' ( סָתַר – Strong's 5641) which means 'to hide or conceal', and that is precisely what a mystery is - something that is hidden and concealed - and in the case of the 'Mystery of the Gospel', the message of how God was going to bring about His kingdom needed to be concealed until the people were in place to fulfill the prophecy.

The Hebrew word 'sathar' is used in a number of other passages, such as this one in Deuteronomy -

<sup>ESV</sup> **Deuteronomy 29:29** "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

This passage is somewhat confusing, but it makes a little bit more sense in the Septuagint, where it reads -

<sup>LXE</sup> **Deuteronomy 29:29** The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, to do all the words of this law.

Which leads us into the next topic which is -

### How Can We Understand Biblical Mysteries?

I mentioned Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar's dream a moment back, but later in his life, Daniel had a vision that he could not understand, and when he inquired about it, God told him -

<sup>ESV</sup> **Daniel 12:9-10** . . . "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. <sup>10</sup> Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.

Since we know that Daniel was neither wicked nor unwise, we must assume that there was another reason why God simply did not want to reveal the meaning of the vision to Daniel at that time. Such was the same with most of the prophets. It's not that they were wicked or unwise; it was simply that it wasn't time for that understanding to be revealed. Nevertheless – wisdom is a criteria for prophetic understanding. If you want to understand prophecy, you need Godly wisdom, not the wisdom of this world. And how do you get Godly wisdom? By following His Torah -

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Psalms 119:97-100** Oh, how I love Your law! It *is* my meditation all the day. <sup>98</sup> You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they *are* ever with me. <sup>99</sup> I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies *are* my meditation. <sup>100</sup> I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts.

The psalmist made it clear that wisdom comes from a person's willingness to follow God's Torah<sup>2</sup>, which is the same as the words of Moses that were referenced a few moments back -

<sup>LXE</sup> **Deuteronomy 29:29** The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, to do all the words of this law.

God is saying that He reveals His understanding to us so that we will do all the words of the law. God's way is a 'walk'; it's not a 'sit'. Hebrew is an action language, and therefore we learn by doing, and the festivals and the Sabbaths are fundamental parts of this walk. God hides His understanding from those who will not 'do' His words, but reveals understanding to those who 'do' His words.

<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew word 'Torah' means instruction or law.



The word 'sathar' (mentioned above) is in the Proverbs where it says,

**NKJ Proverbs 25:2** It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.

God conceals things, but leaves it up to those of us who wish to be kings (Rev. 1:6; 5:10) to figure them out – and He gives the key to figuring them out right here in this passage. How? By His use of the word 'dabar' (דָּבָר – 1697) which is translated 'matter'. 'Dabar' is the Hebrew word for 'word'. The masculine plural form of 'word' is pronounced 'dabarim' which is the Jewish name for the book most Christians call 'Deuteronomy'. Deuteronomy is full of God's instructions, but is also full of prophecy. In it, God lays out His purpose for creating Israel as a people, His instructions that will provide Israel with the ability to fulfill her purpose, His prophecies of what will happen as they strive to fulfill their purpose, and the punishment they will receive if they refuse to fulfill their purpose.

The point is – understanding the 'Mystery of the Gospel' is not beyond our grasp. We have the tools to figure it out if we simply do what God says.

### The Mystery and the Congregation in Rome

Before we start looking into the mystery, we need to go back to Romans and see the context in which Paul introduced the mystery to his Jewish and non-Jewish audience (the northern tribes of Israel)<sup>3</sup>.

Paul was talking about how at that time Judah was going to be playing second fiddle to the Northern Tribes<sup>4</sup> in regards to conveying the message of the Messiah to the nations. He then warned those from the Northern tribes to not get the 'big head' because of it.

Breaking into the thought, Paul said –

**ESV Romans 11:25-26** Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. <sup>26</sup> And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob";

Paul told the northern tribes side of his audience to avoid thinking they had anything to do with these turn of events. Instead, they must keep in mind that this is all part of God's plan to bring about the salvation of Israel (both northern and southern tribes), and ultimately the salvation of all mankind<sup>5</sup>.

So in this verse, Paul linked the 'mystery' to salvation. The mystery reveals how all Israel will be saved. And if this is so, then the salvation of Israel must be a key point in how all mankind will be saved. So it's pretty important that we strive to understand the mystery.

Let's look a little deeper into this word 'mystery' to see what we can find.

Searching the scriptures for the word 'mystery' reveals that Paul was not the first 'New Testament' personage to speak about it. Yeshua did so in Mark 4 verse 11 in the context of the Parable of the Sower. After hearing the parable, the disciples came to Yeshua asking Him to explain it, to which He replied -

**NKJ Mark 4:11** ... "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables ..."

Now this is an interesting statement. It 'throws a wrench' into what many of us have been taught in our Christian churches in regards to the purpose of the parables. In effect, Yeshua just said that the meaning

<sup>3</sup> To receive recordings of our 'Romans' Bible study, [contact me](#).

<sup>4</sup> Learn more about the Northern Tribes of Israel - [https://amiyisrael.org/articles.php#Understanding\\_Israel](https://amiyisrael.org/articles.php#Understanding_Israel)

<sup>5</sup> 1 Tim. 2:1-4



behind the Parable of the Sower was not intended to be understood by the masses. Instead, that understanding was only to be given to His disciples. "Well" you say, "I thought Jesus came to save the world!" That's true – but not the way many of us have been led to believe. Let's continue on in the passage -

<sup>ESV</sup> **Mark 4:12** ... so that "they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven."

Did you see that? Do you believe what you just read? Yeshua clearly told His disciples that the parables were given so that the people could see, but not perceive what they were seeing, and could hear, but not understand what they were hearing. And the reason for that was so that they would not turn to Him (turn back to God) and subsequently be forgiven!

It's very clear! Yeshua did not intend for the masses to understand the 'mystery' at that time; instead, it was only to be understood by His disciples.

So what's going on here? To better understand what Yeshua said, we should go back to the passage He quoted, and we find that in Isaiah 6:9-11. To provide the background for what the prophet was writing we see that both Israel and Judah had sinned and that God would scatter them and bring great destruction upon them. Nevertheless, He would whistle for those who continue to follow Him and gather them up into a great army.

Note that Isaiah's prophecy shows that until that time, the time of the great destruction, which we can understand to be the birth pains of the Messiah<sup>6</sup>, Yahweh would cloud their understanding of the scriptures so that the people would not see nor understand them. And the reason he was going to do that was so that people would not repent and therefore would not be spiritually healed.

Hard to understand, right? Well think about it this way. God called Israel for a purpose, and that purpose was that they would be a light to the peoples and nations around them, and when the nations saw the greatness, the love, the compassion, and the blessings of the God of Israel, they would want to turn to God and enjoy those blessings as well.

But Israel did not fulfill her calling except for a brief moment when they were united under King David and King Solomon. So if Israel was not going to do her job, God would have to blind her eyes for whatever amount of time it would take for Him to scatter her throughout the world – Into all the nations. With their eyes blinded to what God was doing, Israel would soon lose her identity and eventually come to believe they are 'gentiles'. As 'gentiles' they would abandon God's Torah (laws & instructions), turn from observing His Sabbath festivals - the key to understanding who they were<sup>7</sup> – and begin to adopt the practices of the pagan nations into which they were scattered. For all practical purposes, they would be 'gentiles', yet God would know they are descendents of Jacob (Israel).

Nevertheless, just as there are plenty of places that show that Israel would be scattered, there are plenty of places where God shows that he will gather his people back. As soon as they come to their senses, they will turn back to God. He will 'open' their eyes and ears, and they will understand the meaning of the Sabbath and festivals and will again walk in the Torah. They will then begin to recognize Yeshua as their Savior and King. God will then open their understanding to the many prophecies such as what's found in the Parable of the Sower – just as He did His disciples. So let's go back to Mark 4 –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Mark 4:11** . . . "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables . . .

So Yahweh is hiding His plan from the masses and only revealing it to a select few.

<sup>6</sup> Also referred to as 'the Tribulation'

<sup>7</sup> Exodus. 8:23



Another point I want to bring out about the 'mystery' before moving on is simply this – 'the Kingdom of God was, and still is, Yeshua's gospel'. We see that in Matthew 4 –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 4:23** And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the **gospel of the kingdom** and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

Yeshua's 'gospel' was not a message about Himself. Rather, it was the 'good news' that the Kingdom of God would soon be restored. It therefore stands to reason that the 'Mystery of the Kingdom' is also the 'Mystery of the Gospel' spoken of by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians.

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Ephesians 6:17-20** And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; <sup>18</sup> praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints -- <sup>19</sup> and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Going back to Romans 11 we see why it's important to understand the mystery.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 11:25-26** Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. <sup>26</sup> And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish unGodliness from Jacob";

According to Paul, understanding the mystery gives you insight into how all Israel will be saved. That's a key point in seeing what the Mystery is all about.

### Gentile Inclusion?

Before digging into the mystery, I want to share with you what some believe this mystery to be. After looking into this topic, and first writing about it nearly 19 years ago (2005), I read a book entitled "Mystery of the Gospel" and noted that it was basically about the Jewish concept of what's commonly called "gentile inclusion". 'Gentile Inclusion' is widely taught in Messianic Jewish circles.

What is 'gentile inclusion'? It is simply the belief that Gentiles can be brought into the 'commonwealth of Israel' via the sacrifice of Messiah Yeshua. But there's a problem with that understanding, and it's simply this - God never talks about Gentile inclusion as something that was a mystery. You know why? Because Gentile inclusion has always been a part of Israel's culture. God always allowed the Gentiles to join in with Israel – as long as they met certain conditions. There's no mystery about it. Here are a couple of examples to show what I mean.

Back before Israel was ever a people, we find the story of God instructing Abraham to circumcise the males of his household. The text shows that –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Genesis 17:23** ... Abraham took Ishmael his son and all those born in his house or bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as God had said to him.

Circumcision is considered to be a sign of God's covenant people. As such, if you wanted to be a part of God's people, you would then live as God's people. It's the same as if you want to be an American and you're coming from another country – say Romania. In this case, you should forget about all Romanian laws and you should subscribe to the laws of the United States of America.



So let's say you're a Gibeonite, like those who tricked Joshua into making a covenant with them<sup>8</sup>. In either case, if they wanted to be a part of the Israelite people, they would have to denounce any other God than YHVH, the God of the Israelites, and they would have to subject themselves to His laws. Then they could be circumcised and become a part of the Israelite people.

Going back to Abraham – he had bought a number of individuals along the way from Ur of the Chaldees and apparently they were so impressed by Abraham and Abraham's God (God) that they chose to be circumcised – to become Hebrews just like Abraham<sup>9</sup>, and apparently that was fine. This is 'gentile inclusion'.

Let's look at another example. We find it in Exodus chapter 12 verse 48 – part of the Passover story.

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Exodus 12:48-49** If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. <sup>49</sup> There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you."

This again, is 'gentile inclusion'. If you want to be a Hebrew, you become like the Hebrews. You discard your former culture, your former laws, and your former Gods. There is no 'mystery' to it!

So – if in Romans 11 Paul was not talking about 'gentile inclusion', what then was he talking about? That is what we're going to find out. as we continue to part two.

Shalom Aleichem

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<sup>8</sup> Joshua 9:3

<sup>9</sup> At this time, Abraham was the only Hebrew, with the possible exception of Lot.