

# The Harvester



*Preparing Souls  
To Serve The Lord!*



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## The “Mystery” of the Faith

Brian R. Kenyon

“Holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience” is one of the qualifications a deacon must have (1 Tim. 3:9). The religious world, including some members of the church, has often assigned meanings to the term “mystery” that are unbiblical. For example, Dave Miller, in his book, *Piloting the Strait*, shows how those trying to change the standard of authority for the Lord’s church (known also as “change agents”), consider the term “mystery” to imply that humans are unable to know God and His will (54-59). In other words, since people are incapable of fully knowing God and His will (because it is described as “mystery”), there can be no objective standards! While it is true, people cannot exhaustively know everything about God (cf. Job 11:7; 26:14; Isa. 40:28; Rom. 11:33-34), it is false to teach that people cannot know God’s objective standard (cf. Jn. 8:31-32; 1 Jn. 2:3). In fact, the New Testament use of “mystery” proves that people can arrive at the objective truth of God and His will.

Perhaps the one passage that contains the most information about God’s “mystery” is Ephesians 3:1-12, which states, in part:

... <sup>3</sup>[B]y revelation he made known unto me the mystery; I wrote afore in few words, <sup>4</sup>Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) <sup>5</sup>Which in other ages was not made known ... as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit ... <sup>8</sup>that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; <sup>9</sup>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 ... <sup>10</sup>To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God

### The “Mystery” Is Revealed

Most of the occurrences of the Greek word translated “mystery” have explicitly in their contexts indications that it has been revealed to God’s “holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Eph. 3:5), and found in “the scriptures of the prophets” (Rom. 16:26). Such terms as “it is given unto you to know the mysteries” (Mt. 13:11; Mk. 4:11), “the mystery ... now is made manifest” (Rom. 16:25-26), “I shew you a mystery” (1 Cor. 15:51), “Having made known unto us the mystery” (Eph. 1:9), “by revelation he made known unto me the mystery” (Eph. 3:3), “the mystery ... now is made manifest” (Col. 1:26), and others, make clear that though the “mystery” was once hidden, it has been revealed in God’s word! Thus, the “mystery” is not some secret, only-known-to-God, future event waiting to be revealed! Anyone who teaches a “mystery” not revealed in the Bible should not be heard (Gal. 1:6-9)!

### The “Mystery” Is Understandable

Paul declared, “Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ” (Eph. 3:4). Again, he wrote, “That their hearts

might be comforted ... unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God" (Col. 2:2). Unlike those mentioned above, who think humans are incapable of knowing the certainty of God's word, God says people can understand the "mystery." Throughout the ages, religious groups have thought of themselves as the infallible interpreters of the Bible (e.g., the Roman Catholic Church and Jehovah's Witnesses), thinking the average man cannot understand the "mystery." However, the Scripture is knowable and can be used to reason correctly in ascertaining the truth (cf. Acts 17:2-3, 16-17; 18:4; 19:8-9; 24:24-25; 1 Thes. 5:21; 1 Jn. 4:1). In many contexts, the "mystery" has to do with how Jew and Gentile would be part of the same body, in fellowship with one another through the Gospel (cf. Rom. 11:25; Eph. 3:3-7; Col. 1:26-27).

## The "Mystery" Is Unifying

Paul said the "mystery" revealed how that "the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. 3:6). Three terms in this verse have the prefix *-syn*, which means "with," and shows the unifying nature of the "mystery." The New American Standard (1995) perhaps best captures the meaning by translating: "the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." This unifying of once stringently segregated people (cf. Jn. 4:9) is made possible, as the understandable "mystery" reveals, through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross (Eph. 2:11-22). This uni-

fying factor is also universal. It is intended for Jew and Gentile, even "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord" (Acts 2:21 cf. Acts 22:16). It is extended only to those who obey the Gospel (Rom. 1:5; 16:25-26; Gal. 3:26-29).

## The "Mystery" Is Known To the Spirit World

Paul said that God made known His "manifold wisdom" concerning the "fellowship of the mystery" through the church (Eph. 3:9-10). The word "fellowship [dispensation, ASV; administration, NAS; plan, ESV]" is translated from a word (*oikonomia*, *οικονομία*) that refers to the management of a household; task, work, responsibility; divine plan (Eph. 1:10). The "principalities and powers [rulers and authorities, NAS]" include the entire realm of spirit beings (good and evil), but this focus seems to be upon the evil spiritual forces. Thus, not only is the "mystery" revealed to humanity so they can understand God's will, it has also been revealed to the unseen, spiritual world!

## Conclusion

Far from being an unknowable secret, the "mystery" of God is the comforting good news that God has revealed in an understandable way that brings unity to everyone who answers the Gospel call and that also serves notice to the spirit world that the church, God's kingdom, is where He accomplished His purpose. Let us be true to the "mystery of the faith"!

### The Harvester

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\*Our final deposit for the month is usually made on the last Wednesday of the month. All contributions received after that time are reported on the next month's financial statement.

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## *Florida School of Preaching 45th Annual Lectureship*

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# The Promise of Redemption

### Monday

- 9:00 The Concept of Redemption Will Hanstein
- 9:40 The Curse of Sin Terrance Brownlow-Dindy
- 10:20 BREAK
- 10:50 Redemptive Events: The Flood Sam Willcut

#### Forum: Rooted in Redemption

- 1:30 Implications of Being "Bought with Price" Thomas Wise
- 2:00 "Redeeming the Time" Forest Stone Antemasaris
- 2:30 Protecting Self from Believing in Vain Hiram Kemp
- 3:30 **Ladies Class:** Eve and Redemption Shenja Brownlow-Dindy
- 3:30 Questions and Answers On Forum Topic
- 4:30 DINNER

- 6:30 Congregational Singing
- 7:00 Great Redemption Texts: Psalm 22 David Myers
- 7:45 Christ: Manifestation of Redemption Jeff A. Jenkins

### Tuesday

- 9:00 Why Is Blood Required? Stephen Atnip
- 9:40 OT Sacrifices and Redemption Brooks Boyd
- 10:20 BREAK
- 10:50 Redemptive Events: The Exodus Jeff A. Jenkins

#### Forum: Deity's Role in Redemption

- 1:30 The Father's Role John Allan
- 2:00 The Son's Role Scott Pfettscher
- 2:30 The Holy Spirit's Role David Stearsman
- 3:00 BREAK
- 3:30 Questions and Answers on Forum Topic
- 4:30 DINNER
- 6:30 Congregational Singing
- 7:00 Great Redemption Texts: Isaiah 53 Rico Brown
- 7:45 The "Redemption of the Body" Jimmy Clark

### Wednesday

- 9:00 Types of Redemption in Genesis Timothy Kidwell
- 9:40 Substitutionary Atonement Chad Tagtow
- 10:20 BREAK
- 10:50 Redemptive Events: Israel's Captivity & Return J. Clark

#### Forum: Metaphors of Redemption

- 1:30 Justification: Acquittal from Sin Daniel Stearsman
- 2:00 Forgiveness: Removal of Sin's Debt James Barnes
- 2:30 Adoption: Acceptance as Family Chris Kidwell
- 3:30 **Ladies Class:** Rahab and Redemption Hannah Giselsbach
- 3:30 Questions and Answers on Forum Topic
- 4:30 DINNER

- 6:30 Congregational Singing
- 7:00 Great Redemption Texts: 2 Cor. 5:17-21 Ben L. Radford, Sr.
- 7:45 Rejecting Redemption Ty Rhymes

### Thursday

- 9:00 Connecting Redemption & Evangelism Wade Webster
- 9:40 Connecting Redemption & Edification Allen Webster
- 10:20 BREAK
- 10:50 Redemptive Events: Christ's Crucifixion Melvin L. Otey

#### Forum: TULIP's Twist of Redemption

- 1:30 "Total Hereditary Depravity" Ben Giselsbach
- 2:00 "Limited Atonement" C. J. Grimes
- 2:30 "Perseverance of the Saints" George F. Beals
- 3:30 **Ladies Class:** Mary, Martha, and Redemption H. Giselsbach
- 3:30 Questions and Answers on Forum Topic
- 4:30 DINNER
- 6:30 Congregational Singing
- 7:00 Great Redemption Texts: Hebrews 9:13-15 Hiram Kemp
- 7:45 Victorious Redemption Melvin L. Otey

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# January 20-23, 2020

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**The Harvester**

**October 2019**

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## New Student Housing Now Available

We thank the Lord and His providence for providing our students housing on the same property as the church/school building! From a house that was set to be demolished to a beautifully restored and brought-up-to-code structure, the old house that was often used as a preacher's house for the South Florida Avenue church of Christ, is now the residence of three full-time, single students, with another one beginning in January, Lord willing. As the church was complying with historical society procedure, the church's dilemma, came to the attention of Mr. Gregory Fancelli, a philanthropist interested in preserving Lakeland history. At his own expense, he agreed to have all the work done as a gift to the church and in the interest of preserving Lakeland history. The downstairs will be inhabited by permanent church residents (so the students upstairs do not get out of hand). We are thankful for the South Florida Avenue eldership and their allowing the school to use the upstairs for student housing. May the Lord bless us as we work together for His glory!



First residents of the renovated preacher's house.  
Quentin, Gavin, and Edward, with Brian upper right.

