Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – September 8, 2019

**The Mystery and Majesty**

**Of Jesus Christ**

*How God’s Glory and Promises Find Fulfillment in His Son*

Exploring Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians

 The Bible is a library of books about God. He creates the world which immediately turns against Him. But instead of casting sinners away, He seeks them out and offers them pardon, all the while warning them of judgment for those who continue in rebellion.

 But how can a just God also be merciful? How can a perfectly holy Deity interact with sinful man? And how can sins even be forgiven? It’s a mystery, a mystery none of the world religions even pretends to answer. But what has been hidden, even from the prophets, now is revealed through Jesus in the gospel.

 We will see that while there are many questions to answer, and many mysteries which have been hidden, they all are answered and resolved in the ONE mystery, which is the revelation of God in Christ: Both Jew and Gentile are now one in Him.

 This is the idea of this unique New Testament book. Paul is not correcting errant doctrine, or dealing with division in the church. *He is explaining to all churches for all times in all places how Jesus Christ not only is the central figure of human history, but also the only Person who can bridge the moral canyon between repentant sinners and a holy God and span the ethnic/cultural chasm between Jew and Gentile.*

Let’s think through how Paul explains this amazing mystery, how it has been revealed, and how it applies to us.

***In Ephesians, Paul shows how the long-hidden mystery now has been revealed, how it must be proclaimed, then, how it is practiced. . .***

***The Mystery Revealed: Becoming Christ’s Body 1:1--2:23***

*Through Jesus, God has created us a New Redeemed Humanity.*

Eph 1:1-14 Worship: We praise God for His revelation of Christ.

Eph 1:15-23 Prayer: We ask God for insight into His blessings.

Eph 2:1-10 Remembrance: We recall our rescue from spiritual death.

Eph 2:11-23 Celebration: We rejoice in becoming one in Christ.

***The Mystery Proclaimed: Being Christ’s Body 3:1--4:24***

*Through Jesus, God is equipping us to mature and maintain this unity.*

Eph 3:1-13 Proclamation: We make known the Mystery of Christ.

Eph 3:14-21 Unity: We seek power to understand our unity in Christ.

Eph 4:1-16 Diversity: We discover/participate in the unity of Christ.

***The Mystery Practiced: Living as Christ’s Body 4:17--6:23***

*Through Jesus, God is enabling us to be holy, loving, and strong.*

Eph 4:17-32 Holiness: Be holy because you are in Christ’s Body.

Eph 5:1-20 Love: Act lovingly because you are one in Christ’s Body.

Eph 5:21–6:9 Relationships: Recast relationships within Christ’s Body.

Eph 6:10-18 Battle: Be strong against the enemy of Christ’s Body!

Eph 6:19-24 Workers: Network with others in Christ’s Body.

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***Worship: We praise God for His revelation of Christ!***

***Ephesians 1:1-14***

 Jesus is not a mystery because He is hard to figure out or difficult to find. In fact, He is no longer a mystery at all, and that is the story Paul tells in this letter to the Ephesians.

 When the word “mystery” is used in Scripture, it refers to something that God had not revealed before, but now has made known. Most of these mysteries refer to God’s activity in “the last days.”

 As we know, The Last Days began with the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (Hebrews 1:1), and continue to the present. The Last Days were the subject of Nebuchadnezzar’s mystery vision as interpreted by Daniel (Dan. 2:18, 19, 27, 30, 47). They also are the setting for the mystery of Israel’s “partial hardening” in Romans 11:25 as well as the mystery of “the rapture” as pictured in 1 Corinthians 15:51.

 The Last Days also are when the mysteries of Antichrist and Babylon the Great will be revealed in all of their evil glory (2 Thess. 2:7-12; Revelation 10:7; 17:5, 7).

 But all these end time mysteries are encompassed in one Grand Mystery which God now has made known, that at the very end of time, ***God will have brought all things to a conclusion and fulfillment through God’s Son, Jesus, the Messiah***. That is a reason to worship!

Paul answers five key questions related to “the Mystery. . .”

***Why is Paul writing?*** He is sent by God to edify His people. vv. 1, 2

***What Has God done for us?***

 He has blessed us with every conceivable blessing, and He has done so via His Son. v. 3

***What, exactly, are those blessings God already has given us?***

 We are eternally chosen in Him to be holy and blameless. v. 4

 We are destined to be adopted, in His will, as His children. v. 5

 We are blessed as recipients of and witnesses to His grace. v. 6

 We are redeemed, our sins richly and freely forgiven by grace. v. 7

***Why has God, in Christ, blessed us in these ways?***

 We are lavishly blessed to show God’s great wisdom as the Mystery unfolds in the work of His Son. vv. 8, 9

 We are blessed as an outworking of His plan finally to unite all of His purposes (heavenly and earthly) in His Son. v. 10

 We are blessed (given this spiritual inheritance) as our destiny, according to His plan and timetable, because it results in Him getting the glory. vv. 11, 12

***How is it all happening in our experience?***

 This spiritual inheritance began to be realized in us when we believed the Gospel, and is guaranteed to be ours via the presence of the Holy Spirit Himself. vv. 13, 14

***Why it matters. . .***

*How does knowing you already have God’s blessings turn requests to praises?*

*Why must we know God loves us before we can love Him? 1 John 4:19*

*How does knowing you are God’s child change you? Romans 8:14, 29*

*What does it mean for all things to be summed up in God’s Son? Eph. 1:10*