

BUILDING OUR PERSPECTIVE

A Mystery for the Ages

The Servant-Ministers of the Mystery ...

The Chosen Pieces of the Mystery ...

The Mystery Revealed to the Saints ...

A GOD-HONORING VISION OF SERVICE

INTRODUCTION & FOCUS

CHARLES SPURGEON ...

The gospel is the grand secret, the mystery of mysteries. It was hidden from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest to the saints. To the mass of mankind it was utterly unknown, and the chosen people, who saw something of it, only perceived it dimly through the smoke of sacrifices and the veil of types. It remained a mystery which wit could not guess nor invention unravel, and it would have forever continued a secret had not God in His infinite mercy, been pleased to reveal it by the Holy Spirit.

In a still deeper sense it is even yet a hidden thing unless the Spirit of God has revealed it to us individually, for the revelation of the gospel in the Word of God does not of itself instruct men unto eternal life. The light is clear enough, but it avails nothing till the eyes are opened. Each separate individual must have Christ revealed to him and in him by the work of the Holy Spirit, or else he will remain in darkness even in the midst of the gospel day. Blessed and happy are they to whom the Lord has laid open the divine secret which prophets and kings could not discover, which even angels desired to look into. [*Christ in You / No. 1720 / A sermon delivered on Lord's Day morning, May 13, 1883, by C.H. Spurgeon, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Colossians 1:27.*]

SAM STORMS ...

Don't be misled by Paul's language. When he speaks of Christ as God's mystery in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden, he does not mean to suggest that who Jesus is and what he has accomplished are concealed from us.

A "mystery" in Paul's language was simply a truth that remained inaccessible until such time as God took the initiative to reveal it and make it clear. Paul is not saying that Christ is mysterious in the sense that we can't figure him out. He is a mystery in the sense that it wasn't until the revelation of God in the historical person of Christ that we gained total access to the truth of God's redemptive purposes through him.

And knowledge and wisdom are hidden in him, not in the sense of being impenetrable or beyond understanding but rather in the sense of being deposited or stored up in him. In other words, he is the only person and place where authentic, accurate knowledge of God and his ways with mankind can be found.

When Paul says that "all" the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ, he isn't saying that a person can't know anything at all if he isn't a Christian. The world is filled with brilliant atheists. Our universities and think tanks are populated with highly intellectual and well-educated scholars who know nothing of Jesus beyond their concession that a man by that name lived two millennia ago.

Rather, his point is that true knowledge of the ultimate meaning of human existence is found only in light of the identity and redemptive accomplishment of Jesus Christ. Insight into the character of God and his relationship with his creation is found only by looking to the person and work of Jesus. The nature and eternal destiny of the human soul, the grounds on which we differentiate between good and evil, the wisdom of God's ways in the world, as well as the pathway to reconciliation with him, are all tethered to Christ. If we know him, we know them. [*Storms, Sam. The Hope of Glory (pp. 153-154). Crossway. Kindle Edition.*]

A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF SCRIPTURE CONCERNING THE PROPHECIES AND THE MYSTERY OF THE COMING MESSIAH

1. **The first "mystery" verse ...** On one fateful day in the garden of Eden—four thousand years before the birth of the baby boy to a young Jewish virgin—the prophecy of God's Messiah was first announced.
 - (Genesis 3:15 ESV) I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.
2. Two thousand and five hundred years passed from the time of that cryptic message until Moses compiled and wrote the Pentateuch—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
3. The thirty nine Old Testament books were

written from approximately 1500-400 BC. Job appears to be the earliest but the dating is unclear.

4. The words of the prophets which were spread out over these 1,100 years included hints of the coming Messiah but the mystery remained a mystery.
5. And even though the prophets had spoken the very words of God concerning the mystery, they were not serving themselves but those who would come later to whom the mystery would be revealed.
 - (1 Peter 1:10–12 ESV) Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.
6. After the words of the prophets were completed there were 400 years of silence as far as the words of God being given and written down—no Scripture.
7. However, Christ does tell us in Matthew (11:13) that “all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John” the Baptist. Even though four centuries passed with no writings, the prophecies lingered.

THEN CAME THE FULLNESS OF TIME

1. Before the fullness of time God spoke to us by his prophets but now he speaks to us by his Son.
 - (Hebrews 1:1–2 ESV) Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.
2. God sent his Son to be born of a woman. A young Jewish woman named Mary. A virgin who conceived a child by the Holy Spirit

of God and gave birth to the Son of God. So now the time had come. The day of the conception of the Christ child and the day of his birth happened at exactly the time that God had determined according to his eternal plan of salvation.

- (Galatians 4:4–5 ESV) But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.
3. The mystery of God’s will was set forth in God’s Son in the fullness of time—the time in which the mystery of the ages would be revealed. A time planned before the foundation of the world.
 - (Ephesians 1:4–5 ESV) Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.
 - (Ephesians 1:9–10 ESV) Making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.
 4. The OT writings were done, but God had continued to speak through his written word. The Prophets and the Law spoke to those who would listen until God called John the Baptist to begin his ministry.
 - (Matthew 11:13–15 ESV) For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, 14 and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. 15 He who has ears to hear, let him hear.
 5. Blessed are the eyes that see and the ears that hear what many prophets and righteous people longed to see but did not have the opportunity.
 - (Matthew 13:13–17 ESV) Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” 11 And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For to the one who has, more will

be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: “ ‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.’ 15 For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’ 16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. 17 For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

- Isaiah ... (Isaiah 6:9–10 ESV) And he said, “Go, and say to this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ 10 Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

THE PROPHETS AND THE PROPHECIES

- **Isaiah ...** (Matthew 1:18–25 ESV) Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” 22 **All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:** 23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and

bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). 24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

- (Isaiah 7:14 ESV) Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
- **Micah ...** (Matthew 2:1–12 ESV) Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 **They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:** 6 “ ‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’ ” 7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” 9 After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 11 And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. 12 And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.
- (Micah 5:2 ESV) But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to

be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

- **Hosea ...** (Matthew 2:13–15 ESV) Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” 14 And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt 15 and remained there until the death of Herod. **This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet,** “Out of Egypt I called my son.”
 - (Hosea 11:1 ESV) When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.
- **Jeremiah ...** (Matthew 2:16–18 ESV) Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. 17 **Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:** 18 “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”
 - (Jeremiah 31:15 ESV) Thus says the LORD: “A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.”
- **Isaiah ...** (Matthew 4:13–16 ESV) And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 **so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:** 15 “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— 16 the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.”
 - (Isaiah 9:1–2 ESV) But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt

the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. 2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

- **Isaiah ... Gentiles ... hope ...** (Matthew 12:15–21 ESV) Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all 16 and ordered them not to make him known. 17 **This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:** 18 “Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. 19 He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; 20 a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; 21 and in his name the Gentiles will hope.”
 - (Isaiah 42:1–3 ESV) Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. 2 He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; 3 a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.
- **The “Prophet” ... hidden since the foundation of the world ...** (Matthew 13:34–35 ESV) All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. 35 **This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.”**
 - (Psalm 78:2–3 ESV) I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, 3 things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us.
 - (1 Corinthians 2:7 ESV) But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.

- (1 Peter 1:20–21 ESV) He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you 21 who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.
- (Matthew 13:16–17 ESV) But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. 17 For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.
- **Zechariah ... Isaiah ...** (Matthew 21:4–5 ESV) **This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet,** saying, 5 “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”
 - (Zechariah 9:9 ESV) Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
 - (Isaiah 62:11 ESV) Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, “Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.”

CHRIST’S PERSPECTIVE

1. Jesus “made himself out to be” God.
 - (John 8:53-58 ESV) Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! **Who do you make yourself out to be?”** 54 Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’ 55 But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw

it and was glad.” 57 So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” 58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”

2. Jesus asked the disciples two questions concerning his identity. His response to Peter’s answer to the second question is very “revealing.”
 - A. Who do people say I am?
 - Who do people say ... (Matthew 16:13–14 ESV) Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “**Who do people say that the Son of Man is?**” 14 And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”
 - B. Who do you say I am?
 - (Matthew 16:15–17 ESV) He said to them, “**But who do you say that I am?**” 16 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For **flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.**”

AN OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS 1:24-29

A Mystery for the Ages

- (Colossians 1:24–29 ESV) Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, 26 the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. 27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. 29 For

this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

1. **THE STEWARDSHIP OF REVEALING THE MYSTERY, 1:24-25.**

- (Colossians 1:24–25 ESV) Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, 25 of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known.

A. The servant-ministers of the mystery are to rejoice in suffering in the name of Christ for the sake of his body—the church.

- (Luke 6:22–23 ESV) Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! 23 Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

B. The servant-ministers of the mystery are given to the church as a stewardship from God to make the word of God fully known.

2. **THE TIME AND THE PEOPLE FOR THE REVEALING OF THE MYSTERY, 1:26-27.**

- (Colossians 1:26–27 ESV) The mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. 27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

A. **RECIPIENTS:** The mystery has been revealed to us—the saints.

B. **CALLING:** It is our assignment—the saints of God chosen by God—to make known how great are the riches of the glory of the mystery.

C. **TREASURE:** The riches of the glory of the mystery are discovered in the inclusion of non-Jewish people in Christ and Christ in us.

3. **THE PURPOSE IN REVEALING THE MYSTERY, 1:28-29.**

- (Colossians 1:28–29 ESV) Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. 29 For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

A. **METHOD:** We are to proclaim Christ to warn everyone and to teach everyone.

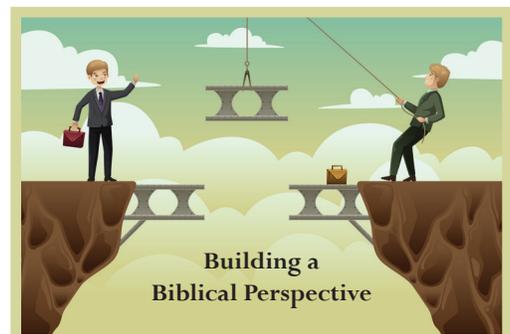
B. **MOTIVE:** We proclaim Christ—warning everyone and teaching everyone—with the purpose of presenting everyone mature in Christ.

C. **MEANS:** We accomplish our purpose by working and struggling hard depending on Christ’s mighty power that he powerfully works within us.

- (Colossians 1:29 NLT) That’s why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ’s mighty power that works within me.

- (2 Corinthians 12:9–10 ESV) But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- (1 Corinthians 15:10 ESV) But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.



CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY!

A Mystery for the Ages!

Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.

(Colossians 1:25-26 ESV)

To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

(Colossians 1:27 ESV)

