

The Lost Precious Gem

J.C. O'Hair
(1876-1958)



Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power (Colossians 2:8-10).

There is a lost precious gem in Christendom; it is the divine message and program, for which the apostle Paul was an ambassador in bonds, for which Paul suffered as an evil doer (Ephesians 6:19-20; Colossians 4:3-4; II Timothy 2:8-9). He called this particular divine truth, “*the mystery of Christ*,” “*the mystery of the gospel*,” “*the mystery of God’s will*,” “*the dispensation of the grace of God*,” “*the eternal purpose of God*.”

Concerning this precious gem, God’s will for every saint is expressed in Ephesians 3:9:

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 ...

Let us quote from the book of H.A. Ironside (1876-1951), *The Mysteries of God* (page 50):

Throughout the writings of the apostle Paul he again and again refers to a wondrous secret which he designates in a special way as “*the mystery*” or a “*great mystery*.” Other mysteries he treats of, as we have seen, but there is one that is preeminently such. It occupies much of his ministry, and is clearly **the chief gem** in the diadem of the truth of Christianity; yet for centuries it was almost entirely **lost sight of**. In fact, until brought to the fore through the writings and the preaching of a distinguished ex-clergyman, J.N. Darby (1800-1882), in the early part of the last century, it is scarcely to be found in a single book or sermon throughout a period of sixteen hundred years!

If any doubt this statement, let them search, as the writer has in measure done, the remarks of the so-called Fathers, both pre- and post-Nicene; the theological treatises of the scholastic divines; Romans Catholic writers of all shades of thought; the literature of the Reformation; the sermons and expositions of the Puritans; the general theological works of the day. That a doctrine so clearly revealed in the Scriptures could have become **so utterly lost** is only to be accounted for by **the Judaizing of the Church**, and the consequent minding of earthly things that beclouded the heavenly ones.

Here we learn what every Christian should know; the chief gem in the diadem of the truth of Christianity was for centuries almost entirely lost sight of. How are we to account for the loss of that gem, “*the mystery*”? “The Judaizing of the Church.” How then are saints to uncover, recover or re-discover the lost gem? By dejudaizing the Church.

From Ironside’s same book, page 51, we quote:

Of ordinances exalted to the place of mysteries, as in heathen rites, he will find much; but as to “*the Mystery*,” which to the apostle was so unspeakably precious, rarely a reference.

The truth concerning “*the Mystery*” is indeed “lost truth.” If it were possible for you to visit all of the “churches” in this country and hear all of the preachers, including the outstanding Fundamentalists, you would not find one-tenth of one per cent of them obeying Ephesians 3:9,

*And make all men see what is **the fellowship of the mystery**, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God ...*

So far as the ninety-nine plus per cent is concerned, the gem is still lost; it is still “*hid in God*.” It is lost, because the Church has been Judaized.

Several years ago I attended one of the sessions of the Founder’s Week Bible Conference at Moody Bible Institute. I heard a splendid “grace” message from a Bible teacher, who is pastor of a Presbyterian Church right outside Philadelphia. He said that shortly after the death of Paul the truth concerning “*the dispensation of the grace of God*” was forgotten and lost. He said, “The Church went into apostasy and darkness.”

Several weeks after I heard this very stirring message some one handed me a book written by E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913). In that book I uncovered or discovered the fact that years before he, too, wrote concerning lost or forgotten truths that the Presbyterian preacher gave out at the Moody conference.

We again quote what H.A. Ironside has printed in one of his books (*Baptism*) concerning the lost truth recovered by John Darby:

It is a great truth that the Lord is teaching many over again in the present day, after it has been buried in the rubbish of ecclesiastical tradition for centuries, that God has a Church

upon earth. It is our part, then, not to be making churches but to acknowledge what He has already made ... Into this membership man cannot admit, but the Lord only.

Truly Darby was an able, excellent, spiritual Bible teacher and proclaimed some wonderful truths concerning the “*one Body*,” and some of the differences between the messages and programs of Peter and Paul. Darby saw that in this dispensation of grace the Church is not working under the so-called great commission of Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:14-18. He knew that so far as the “Acts” record is concerned, there is no proof that any of the twelve apostles left the land of Israel to preach the “grace” gospel to Gentiles. He taught, from Acts 3:14-26, that the Son of man would have come back and redeemed the nation Israel and established the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, sending the Israelitish messengers to the nations under the Matthew and Mark commissions, if Israel’s rulers had repented.

Darby acknowledged that the Body of Christ was God’s secret, not the subject of prophecy, and that the truth concerning that Body was revealed to Paul before any of the twelve apostles knew it.

Note carefully and ponder well this statement from the pen of H.A. Ironside:

The mystery was not something of difficult, mysterious character, but a sacred secret never known to mankind until in due time opened up by the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul.

I most heartily agree with both Bullinger and Ironside that historically “*the dispensation of the grace of God*” did not begin until Israel rejected Christ in resurrection. This Ironside plainly teaches in his book (Romans) in his comments on Romans 16:25-26. In this he teaches the truth.

The Old Testament Scriptures clearly predicted the calling of the Gentiles, but always in subjection to Israel ...

Let the reader not fall into a mistake very commonly made today. The Kingdom is not the Church (Body) ...

“The Mystery,” on the other hand, is spiritual and belongs to heaven. A break in God’s ways having come in, He now makes known His hidden purpose ...

“The Mystery” formed no part of the revelation of the previous dispensation. Had it been otherwise, Paul could not rightly have written that it was “*kept secret since the world began*.” He (Paul) learned it not from the former Scriptures, but by direct revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ in glory ...

A truth never before made known. The Old Testament will be searched in vain for it. It is not there, because it was “*hid in God*” ...

Preachers of Old Testament truths, which they offer in place of New Testament mysteries, would not find it so easy to go on confusing the people of God if there was real exercise of conscience among those who are content to be styled “the laity,” and who seldom read their Bibles for themselves and endeavor to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

Note his remarks, pages 17-18, *The Mysteries of God*:

Not a saint in a hundred knows the difference between the two terms ... the bulk of professing believers know little or nothing ... unquestionably the onus of blame rests upon the guides, who, professing to be Christ’s ministers, are anything but “*stewards of the mysteries of God*” ...

But this doctrine of the one Body is never referred to by any other apostle than Paul. He calls it “*the dispensation of the mystery*” with which he especially had been entrusted. Indeed it was the characteristic truth of his large and varied ministry.

Every servant of Christ, who is familiar with the denominational creeds and programs and who has endeavored to teach the general run of Christians the glorious “grace” message, knows how true are Ironside’s statements concerning the appalling ignorance of the Word of God among Christians.

In his book, *The Mysteries of God*, Ironside stated many important facts concerning an intelligent knowledge of the Scriptures by understanding God’s present “grace” program during this parenthetical age when God’s eternal purpose is being accomplished, while the “Kingdom” covenants have been interrupted, and the Kingdom of Heaven has been postponed. Hear his words, which should be heeded and obeyed by every Christian:

Christ’s ministers are to be stewards of the mysteries of God, not merely preachers of what people so often call the simple gospel.

Surely every Bible teacher who has read I Corinthians 4:1-4 should know how true this statement is.

Paul plainly stated that a dispensation was committed unto him (I Corinthians 9:15-17; Colossians 1:23-26; Ephesians 3:1-9). As Ironside suggests, if the “Reverends” and “Doctors of Divinity” go on in their utter confusion, do not be blind followers of blind leaders, but rather remember to be true Bereans (Acts 17:11).

It is so important to believe Paul’s statement in I Corinthians 3:10:

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

The risen, glorified Christ, the living Head of the Church, which God is edifying in this age

and dispensation of grace, appointed the apostle Paul His chief foreman in building up the Body of Christ. To Paul we must go for the blueprints and specifications, if we are to be workmen who need not to be ashamed. Let us take heed how we build together upon that foundation which Paul laid.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID

Now read what William T. Pettingill (1886-1950) has written concerning Pauline truth:

“Now to Him that is of power to stablish you” (Romans 16:25-27). This closing paragraph is of great doctrinal importance as touching the person of Christ.

1. God is of power to stablish His people;
2. He stablishes them according to Paul’s gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ;
3. This preaching of Jesus Christ by which God stablishes His people must be a preaching of Jesus Christ according to *“the revelation of the mystery”*!

There is much preaching of Jesus Christ which does not stablish God’s people, because it is not according to Paul’s gospel, nor according to *“the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,”* but was made manifest by revelation to the apostle Paul. (Compare Ephesians 3:1-7).”

Now from the pen of William R. Newell (1868-1956):

You can judge any man’s teaching by this rule – is he Pauline? Does his doctrine start and end according to those statements of Christian doctrine uttered by the apostle Paul? No matter how wonderful a man may seem to be in his gifts and apparent consecration, if his gospel is not Pauline, it is not the gospel, and we might as well get our minds settled at once on that point.

For instance, if you were to take Paul’s Epistles out of the Bible, you cannot find anything about the Church, the Body of Christ, for no other apostle mentions the Body of Christ.

Would that we had grace to defend just as vigorously this great message today, for it has many enemies and even real friends who do not yet see it clearly; and there are others who, like Peter (Galatians 2:11), through fear of others, are ready to compromise.

Now I will give you a little from C.I. Scofield (1843-1921):

After repeated study of the Epistles written after Paul’s arrival at Rome, I am convinced that in them is found a curative teaching for all of the present-day delusions and fanaticisms found among many of the most sincere saints in the Church ...

Also by careful restudies of the Book of the Acts and of the Epistles written before its close,

I am convinced that those who contend for a purely Kingdom dispensation covering the Book of Acts period are as much deceived by Satan as are those who contend that the sign gifts are still in the Church and would be in manifestation everywhere if God's people were in a healthy spiritual state and exercising faith to that end ...

When the apostles were doing "*signs and wonders*" in the Book of Acts period for the purposes mentioned in Romans 15:18-19 and Hebrews 2:3-4, the sovereign sign gifts of the Spirit mentioned in I Corinthians 12 were operative among some of the members of His Body, the Church ...

The fact that the Bible does not give a hint of the manifestation of the sign gifts after the close of the Book of the Acts period must carry convincing evidence to the careful student who compares Scripture with Scripture, that they have been retired ...

In the latest Epistles of Paul not only is it noticeable that the sign gifts are nowhere in manifestation but a different order is brought forth by the Holy Spirit for the correction of prevailing hobbies and fanaticism ...

There is no foundation in the Word of God for the prevailing popular doctrine of "divine healing" ...

It is not true that healing is as much the will of God for every Christian as salvation is for the unsaved. Some of the choicest of saints, by the elective will of God, have been patient sufferers for years upon sick beds ...

The sign-gifts of I Corinthians 12 were operative only during the Acts period ...

A careful study of the Epistles, especially of the latest Epistles of Paul, which give the normal course of the Church during the present dispensation, would dismount all from their hobbies, eliminate the last vestige of Judaism from their lives and teaching, and would adjust things in general, placing secondary things in their place and first things where they belong ...

Is it the Spirit of God, or Satan, who turns the eyes of sincere Christians back to Pentecost and away from the goal placed before them in Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians?

(C.I. Scofield, *Tongues, Visions, Signs Not God's Order Today*.)

Scofield's teaching is that God's spiritual program for the Body of Christ was somewhat changed after the pronouncement of Acts 28:25-28, God's judgment upon Israel. He believed that it was the same Body under a changed program; that in Paul's prison epistles is found the normal course of the Church for this present reign of grace, and also the curative for every form of Pentecostalism and all the "isms" and ills with which the Church of Christ is afflicted.

THE FALL OF ISRAEL: GENTILE SALVATION

There are some foundation truths that the Christian must first know before he is ready to see and make others see what is “*the fellowship of the mystery*,” which was “*hid in God*” from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 3:9; Romans 16:25). One of the most important truths is stated in Romans 11:30, that the Gentiles obtained mercy from God because of Israel’s unbelief. Think of this verse seriously and prayerfully. When did the Gentiles obtain mercy from God because of Israel’s unbelief? Let us see from the Scriptures how true is the statement of Ironside that “*the mystery*” was not revealed until after Israel had rejected Christ in resurrection. This is the all-important truth that students of the Word of God must understand, if they want to have the eyes of their understanding opened to know the most glorious, wonderful truth for saints in all of the Bible, and be no longer children “*tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine*” (Ephesians 4:14).

What is the meaning of Romans 11:11, that through the fall of Israel salvation was sent to Gentiles, the meaning of Romans 11:15, that the casting away of Israel brought reconciliation to the rest of the world? What is meant by “*the fullness of the Gentiles*” in Romans 11:25; that blindness in part happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in?

When Israel, the builders, rejected the Stone (Christ), it was the Lord’s doing and it is marvelous in our eyes (Matthew 21:42). Therefore Christ on the cross prayed for their forgiveness (Luke 23:34). When Israel rejected Christ in resurrection the apostle of the Gentiles cried,

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! (Romans 11:30-33; c.f. Acts 5:29 to 32).

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