

26th of April

Be not ignorant of the mysteries of God (Mysteries of God Pt 1)

Introduction.

This is our first study on the topic of the “mysteries of God”.

Two points are established from the Scriptures for this study.

1. The ministers of Christ are to be stewards of the mysteries of God.
2. Our first mystery: Be not ignorant of the mystery: “that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”

Meanings and or occurrences of key words.

* Mystery and mysteries

Only occur in the New Testament and there is only one Greek word – “mysterioun”. There are 22 occurrences of the word “mystery” and 5 occurrences of the word “mysteries”.

The Oxford dictionary provides a meaning of: “Hidden...treat as a secret”.

* Stewards

There is one occurrence in the Old Testament and 3 occurrences in the New Testament.

The Hebrew word is also translated: captain, chief, general, governor, keeper, lord, master, prince and ruler.

The Greek word is also translated: chamberlain, and governor.

The Oxford dictionary provides a meaning of: “Person responsible for another’s property”.

Our two points in more detail.

1. The ministers of Christ are to be stewards of the mysteries of God.

Supporting Verse.

1Cor.4: 1 “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

Context and meaning of our verse.

* Paul is writing to the Gentile church at Corinth. The ministers that he mentions in chapter three are himself and Apollos (1Cor.3: 5), and then in verse 23 he adds Cephas. He begins chapter four with our verse: “Let a man so account of us [himself, Apollos and Cephas] as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of Christ”, hence they are responsible for the preaching of the mysteries of God.

* The references to the ministers of Christ, them being stewards, and them being responsible for the mysteries of God, are lost in the NIV as it changes the text to read: “So Apollos and I should be looked upon as Christ’s servants who distribute God’s blessings by explaining God’s secrets.” So please do not complete this study on the mysteries of God in a corrupt version of the Holy Scriptures, because we will not be in agreement.

Scriptural examples.

* In Paul’s letter to Titus he points out that “a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God” (Tit.1: 7), and also “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught” (verse 9).

Application of our verse today.

* Paul is writing to the Gentile church in Corinth, and hence this point has application to us today.

Illustration.

* I often hear believers that use the 1611 Authorised Bible because “it is a good translation” being happy to sit under a minister, teacher, or pastor who uses a corrupt version of the Holy Scriptures. Well, here is another example where words have been changed in the corrupt versions so that the minister or pastor who uses them (and often multiple versions) is unable to obey God’s word. They are unable to receive the instruction for themselves, nor feed their flock with the knowledge that they are to be stewards of the mysteries of God.

* How can the current-day ministers and pastors who use corrupt versions i) know of these mysteries, and ii) teach others of these mysteries and hence be obedient to the instruction, if the versions **they** choose to use remove all trace of the mysteries of God?

Learning from our illustration.

* DO NOT sit under ministers or pastors that **do not** have the Holy Scriptures, and do not believe them and are therefore unable to bring a teaching from the **Book** on being stewards of the mysteries of God. But rather sit under a teacher, pastor, or overseer that does have the **Book**, believes the **Book** and teaches from the **Book**, and then when someone shows them from the **Book** that as ministers of God they are also stewards, and are responsible for teaching the mysteries of God to their flock that they oversee, then they will check it out for themselves and obey the **Book**.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* Paul pointed out that Bishops or pastors are to be stewards of God (managers of what God has given us), and how are they encouraged to do that? And what has God preserved for us to feed from? The Scriptures! and we obey that commandment when we hold "fast the faithful word as he has been taught". In our point we are made accountable to God not for simply being stewards of God's word, but more specifically stewards of the mysteries of God that are revealed in the Scriptures.

* Do not look for those mysteries in the corrupt versions (like the NIV) because they are corrupted. So if you know a minister or pastor that uses a corrupt copy of the Holy Scriptures, then ask him how can he obey the commandment placed on ministers of God to be a steward of something that his Bible version changes? (e.g mysteries to secret).

* Let us remember, that according to the Holy Scriptures ministers of Christ are to be stewards, they are responsible for teaching their flock the mysteries of God. Let us now study the Scriptures to know what are these mysteries of God.

2. Be not ignorant of the mystery: "that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."

Supporting Verse

Rom.11: 25 "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."

Context and meaning of our verse.

* Rom.10: 16 Paul points out regarding Israel that "they have not all obeyed the gospel" (c.p verse 21). Then in verse 19 "Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people". He begins chapter (11): "Hath God cast away his people? God forbid" (Rom.11: 1). And what did the Lord say to Elijah after he had fled for his life from Jezebel? "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal" (verse 4). Then in verse 5 Paul draws the link to the church age: "Even so...there is also a remnant according to the election of grace".

* Then you have a link with the word "blinded" in verse 7 to the word "blindness" in our verse (Rom.11: 25), where Paul speaks about "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for: but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Then you have an explanation for their blindness: "God hath given them the spirit of slumber, **eyes** that they should not see" (verse 8). Then keeping on in the theme of blindness, Paul reminds us that even David said, "Let their table be a snare...Let their **eyes** be darkened, that they may not see" (verse 10). And what happens to blind people? they stumble and fall over, and that is what Israel did, and the purpose in them doing so, was that "salvation is come unto the Gentiles for to "provoke them {Israel} to jealousy" (verse 11). Then in verse 14 Paul points out by any means he may provoke them {Israel} to emulation". Staying with the theme of the Jews being disobedient and blind, Paul mentions the result was the "casting away of them" (verse 15).

* Paul points out that the Jew can be "grafted in" (verse 17, reiterated in verse 24), and we know today that that can only occur when they believe the gospel of Christ crucified. Then we have our verse: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."

* Therefore, what Paul was writing about was a mystery which he sums up: "that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." And when is the fullness of the

Gentiles come in? When the Lord returns in the clouds and the dead in Christ will be raised and those who are alive “shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air” (1Thes.4: 16 & 17).

Scriptural examples.

* In the days of Elijah he was chased by Jezebel and felt like he was alone standing for God and obeying His voice. But the Lord reminded him that “I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal” (Rom.11: 4 & 1Kg.19: 18). Hence, there like a blindness had come in part to Israel.

Application of our verse today.

* Paul is writing to the Gentile church at Rome and so this verse is applicable to us today. So today from our verse in Romans we have the first mystery of God revealed to Paul. And we see evidence today of the partial blindness of Israel because there are Jews at the Synagogue who reject the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah, whilst others are part of the remnant – the body of Christ. And this is one of the mysteries that was revealed to Paul by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Illustration.

* Roman Catholicism believes they have replaced the nation of Israel, and all of God’s blessings and promises apply to her as the church of the living God. And such thinking is not surprising when their first pope, Peter, was not shown this mystery, and **all** those that followed him as their first Bishop of Rome are **blind** to this particular biblical mystery. Incidentally this mystery is the only one, that we are **not** to “be ignorant of”

Learning from our Illustration.

* If the church, if teachers, preachers, and ministers in the body of Christ today were not ignorant of this mystery, but took responsibility for it, and taught it to their flocks, then Rome would not be able to assert that she has replaced Israel, and the wider church would not be blind to her false doctrine. And they as pastors and teachers would be obedient to God’s word, and they might have more compassion on the nation of Israel today, who are generally, in part, blind to the gospel.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* If we forget that blindness has in part happened to Israel, then we will cease to pray for them, as we are required to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Ps.122: 6), we will cease to witness to the Jew when given an opportunity, and we will end up where the Roman Catholic religion is, that is: believing that God has cast away his people, “God forbid” (Rom.11: 1). So let us pray for Israel, and specifically the city of Jerusalem, and have compassion on them, remembering that to Paul, not Peter, was revealed what no one before him knew, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

Summary of our two points.

1. The ministers of Christ are to be stewards of the mysteries of God.
2. Be not ignorant of the mystery: “that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”