

10th May 2015

The mystery of Christ and the church, and our vile body being changed at the rapture (The mysteries of God Pt 2).

Introduction:

This is our second study on the topic of the mysteries of God.

Previous 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.

Two points are established from the Scriptures for this study.

1. Our second mystery: believers shall not all sleep, but shall be changed incorruptible at the rapture.
2. Our third mystery: Gentiles are fellowheirs, and of the same body by the gospel.

Our two points in more detail.

1. Our second mystery: believers shall not all sleep, but shall be changed incorruptible at the rapture.

Supporting Verse.

1Cor.15: 51 & 52 "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

Context and meaning of our verse.

* The natural body at the resurrection is raised a spiritual body. "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (1Cor.15: 44). Verse 49 says: "We shall bear the image of the heavenly." We cannot be raised as flesh and blood, because "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (verse 50). Then we have our verse where Paul says "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." This corruptible must put on incorruptible (verse 53), and this mortal must put on immortality (verse 53). When the corruptible body has been raised incorruptible then "Death is swallowed up in victory" (verse 54). Hence, believers shall not all sleep, but shall be changed incorruptible at the rapture.

Other scriptural support.

* 1Thes.4: 13 – 17. Verse 13 Paul does not want us to be ignorant concerning they that are asleep (dead in Christ), verse 14 "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again even so them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him". Verse 15 "that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep." Verse 16 "and the dead in Christ shall rise first" Verse 17 "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord." For their dead bodies to be "caught up together" they must be changed from dust/ashes to a new body, hence a reference to the mystery of 1Cor.1: 51 & 52.

Application of our verse today.

* Our verse is found within a letter that the apostle Paul wrote to the Gentile church at Corinth, and is therefore applicable to those in the body of Christ, the church, today: we (believers, both those who are asleep and those alive) shall all be changed at the rapture of the church saints.

Illustration.

* Have you been to a non-believer's funeral? Are they not sad, devoid of hope, except a false worldly hope that their loved ones have "hopefully" gone to a better place, especially if they have suffered?

In contrast have you been to a believer's funeral and seen the joy that underlies the sadness of losing their loved ones? Such joy is based on the knowledge, the hope that their loved ones have gone to heaven because they believed the Scriptures, and have trusted in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for their salvation.

* Have you ever asked yourself: what is the sequence of events that takes place for a believer once they die? It is all a bit of a mystery, isn't it?

Learning from our Illustration.

* What light do the Scriptures shed on this mystery that we shall all be changed? Let us from the scriptures say what can be said:-

* When a believer dies their spirit goes to be with the Lord (Ecc.12: 7). At the trump when the church is raptured (1Thes.4: 16) they are raised incorruptible (must be their bodies). Their natural body is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption (1Cor.15: 42), is sown in dishonour and raised in glory (1Cor.15: 43), and it is sown in weakness and raised in power (1Cor.15: 43).

* Now remember the mystery applies to both the living and the dead. And the mystery that was revealed to Paul was that they shall all be changed. Question: "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" (verse 35). Answer "God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body" (verse 38). So whether a person is dead or living they are both changed, and the Lord Jesus Christ changes our vile body (corruptible) and fashions it like His glorious body (Phil.3: 20). But do you really understand what takes place? No, because although it was a mystery revealed to Paul the detail remains a mystery.

Challenge & or encouragement.

* What sets a believer apart from the cults, beside the fact that they believe the Holy Scriptures? Each of the cults miss this mystery: that at the trumpet both the dead and living believers **will** be changed. The Jehovah Witness' believe in soul sleep, the Mormon believes their spirit goes to the "world of spirits", and the Roman Catholic believes in a separate place of purging for their sin after death. If the church ministers, preachers, and teachers were obedient to our first point in our first study in this series ("the ministers of Christ are to be stewards of the mysteries of God"), these cults and others may have been reprov'd for their error more than they are today. Because the Bible says that to Paul was revealed a mystery: that we shall all be changed incorruptible when the trumpet sounds. Let us live our lives believing this mystery, and looking forward to the day when we will hear the trumpet and all be changed incorruptible!

2. Our third mystery: Gentiles are fellowheirs and of the same body by the gospel.

Supporting verses.

Eph 3:3-6 "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men...That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel".

Context and meaning of our verses.

* Eph.1: 9 & 10 Paul revealed the mystery of God's will: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; in him". Verse 22 & 23 Paul identifies that Christ "gave himself to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Eph.2: 15 Paul points out that God has abolished in His flesh (Christ's) the law of commandments, "for to make in himself of twain one new man". Verse 16 Paul continues on the theme of the body, by pointing out that God reconciled both (Jew and Gentile) to himself "in one body on the cross". Then in verse 19, Paul establishes that the Gentile believers are no longer strangers or foreigners, "but fellowcitizens with the saints". Then Paul begins chapter 3 confirming that he is the apostle to the Gentiles, and states clearly that Christ made known to him the mystery by revelation (he did not receive it from Peter who is the first pope of the church of Rome), which when you read the mystery they would understand his knowledge of the mystery of Christ (verse 4). Then in verse 5 Paul points out that this mystery was not made known unto the sons of man, "as it is now revealed" unto the apostles. Verse 6 begins with "That", which sets the scene for what follows to be the mystery:"That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel". So this mystery revealed to Paul, that was hidden from past

ages, has three components: i) the Gentiles shall be fellowheirs (obviously with the believing Jews known as saints in Eph.2: 19. Hence, whatever they will inherit, so will the believing Gentiles, and ii) they will be of the same body, which in Eph.1: 22 & 23, he had pointed out that Christ was the head of the body, and iii) partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel. Hence, the gospel that Paul preached (Eph.2: 8 & 13) is the vehicle God uses to make available to the Gentiles this mystery of Christ and the church being one body. And this mystery is spoken of in Eph.5: 32 as “a great mystery...concerning Christ and the church”, that the Gentiles are fellowheirs of the same body by the gospel.

Other scriptural support.

* See also: Eph 3:9, 5: 30 & 32.

Application of our verse today.

* Paul is writing to the Gentile church at Ephesus and as such his instruction, his doctrine is for the church today. The mystery that was before hidden, from Abraham, David, Solomon and Peter, was made known to Paul: that the Jew and Gentile are fellowheirs of the same body. Hence, there is no difference between the saved Jew and Gentile, we are known today as the “church of God”.

Illustration.

* The Holocaust of the Jews during WWII was later known in Hebrew as “Shoah” or catastrophe, where 6 million European Jews were slaughtered because of an ideology of hate, based on the Roman Catholic (RC) theology that the Jews had been **replaced** by the RC church today. And today the church of Rome continue to propagate their **replacement** theology.

Is it any wonder that the Jew who believes that Jesus is their prophesied Messiah, that He died for their sin on the cross, often feels betwixt and between? They feel unwelcome at the Synagogue and in churches, especially those that adopt Rome’s false doctrine of replacement theology, and hence why some go along to separate Messianic groups to find fellowship.

Learning from our Illustration.

* Had the teachers, ministers, and preachers of God’s word been stewards of the mysteries of God, and specifically this “great mystery” that Paul spoke of in his letter to the Ephesians then such catastrophes might never have happened. The church of the living God may have been awake to the significance of the nation of Israel and those Jews who had come to believe in the Lord Jesus as their Messiah. The church may have seen the saved Jews as fellowheirs and the unsaved Jews as beloved of the Father yet put aside, but certainly not superseded as God’s children, and in any way inferior. This mystery that was revealed to Paul remains a mystery to the church of Rome today as they remain steadfast in their distorted foundation of Peter. Whereas, for the Christian Paul says the purpose of us reading this mystery is: “ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ” (verse 4).

Challenge & or encouragement.

* Do you understand the knowledge that Paul had of this mystery of Christ, the mystery of Christ and the church as one body, where there is neither Jew nor Gentile (1Cor.12: 13), but both are one in Christ Jesus, who is head of the body?

* You may not understand how the head of our body is with the Father in heaven whilst we in the same body are on earth. But within the book of Ephesians Paul provides some light on this where he writes: “And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph.2: 6). Right at this very moment, every believer, Jew or Gentile in the body of Christ is physically on the earth, whilst spiritually in heaven. Do you understand the that? A scientist could never demonstrate the truth of this mystery. Because it is a mystery, you cannot understand it and you cannot prove it, and beforehand it was never made known unto the sons of men, but it **was** made known unto Paul. And today let us not be ignorant of this mystery, that we in turn can make it known to those in the body who lack knowledge of this truth, that: Gentiles are fellowheirs and of the same body by the gospel.

Summary of our two points.

1. Our second mystery: believers shall not all sleep, but shall be changed incorruptible at the rapture.
2. Our third mystery: Gentiles are fellowheirs, and of the same body by the gospel.