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SEVEN MYSTERIES OF THE BIBLE
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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my good friend, A. Peisker, who has so faithfully labored with me in
missionary activities.

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PREFACE

Mystery! What a word! How it captivates our imagination and stimulates curiosity! We are not only queer creatures, but we are curious creatures. When we are told not to do a thing, that seems to be the thing we are bound to do. When a door is locked, we want to know what is on the other side. When there is mystery attached to anything, at once we have an urge to pry into it. This desire is not evil in if self. In fact, without such, men do not develop very much in any line. However, it can be very dangerous, and can be the cause of man's undoing, if he is not careful. We find mystery connected with so many things in the Word of God that we are made to wonder just how far God will be pleased with our investigations and searching into them. Has He marked "mystery" over the door of some things to warn us to keep out, or has He shrouded some things in mystery to incite us to search for hidden gold? The writer believes it is the latter. The purpose of this book is not to deal exhaustively with the subject presented, but to create a desire on the part of the reader for further studies of the mysteries of God. I pray that this desire shall be realized in the hearts of all who may peruse these pages.

* * * * *

01 -- THE MYSTERY OF GOD

There seems to be but three ways in which we can penetrate somewhat into God's existence and character; namely, by His names, His actions, and His attributes.

Names today are generally senseless and meaningless things. In regard to names given among civilized peoples in our day this is almost universally true. We are influenced in C his by whims, fancy, and respect. With God, however, names have always meant something, and through His names He has revealed His character to men. It was a part of the work of Christ to reveal His name. He said, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." It will be one of the greatest pleasures of all eternity to bask in the glories of the unfolding of His names. He has included in His names all He is and all we will ever know of Him.

His covenant names are six in number: Jehovah-jireh, meaning, "The Lord will provide." (Gen. 22:8); Jehovah-rapheka, meaning, "the Lord who healeth us" (Ex. 15:26); Jehovah-nissi, meaning, "The Lord our banner" (Ex. 17:15); Jehovah-shalom, meaning, "The Lord our peace." (Judges 6:24); Jehovah-tsidkenu, meaning, "The Lord our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6); Jehovah-shammah, meaning, "The Lord is there" (Ezek. 48:35). There are other names, also, by which He revealed Himself, such as El, "The strong and mighty one"; Rochum, "The great and mighty one" and many others. But here we are concerned only with the covenant names. We will notice them as we have listed them above.

Jehovah-jireh, "The Lord will provide." Gen. 22:8. We dwell for a moment on the name Jehovah. This was the name the Jews called, "The incommunicable name." They were so awed by it that they would not allow themselves to pronounce it. It embodies the thought Of the independent, eternal, all-sufficient and ever-present One. If we had been left alone with this revelation of God, man would never have known anything about a God of love, but only a God of wrath. When, however, the word Jireh is coupled to it, it engenders hope. "The Lord will provide." This immediately brings to us the question, "What will He provide?" The scripture, in

connection with this revelation of God found in Genesis the twenty-second chapter, would certainly teach us two things. First, that God will provide strength enough through faith for us to obey Him without murmuring. And, second, that God will provide a plan of redemption for lost humanity by the sacrifice of Himself.

Abraham had been promised that in Isaac all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Now he is commanded by the same God who gave him that promise to take this same son and offer him up on an altar as a sacrifice. He is not told why nor does he ask why. He does not seem even to question how God will keep His promise through Isaac after he is dead. Without even conferring with his wife, he started off on a three-day journey with Isaac and the wood for the fire. That was faith unmixed with questioning. God had provided strength through an unwavering faith. As they journeyed, Isaac said, "My father." And he said, "Here am I, my son." And he said, "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." This God-inspired, prophetic utterance by Abraham seems to have satisfied Isaac; for it says, "So they went both of them together." When they arrived at Mr. Moriah, Abraham built the altar, placed the wood, and put Isaac on it. His knife was drawn to strike the deathblow, when God stepped in. Abraham was directed to God's provision -- a ram caught in the thicket. God had provided a lamb.

There is no more beautiful picture in the Bible of the relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son than is found here; neither is there any clearer picture of Calvary. Here is Isaac, a full-grown man, submitting to the will of his father in everything, even to death, without a murmur or question. He undoubtedly carried the wood upon which he was supposed to burn, while his father carried the fire representing judgment. How like Jesus, carrying His cross while the fierce wrath of His Father was going over Him. What a picture of Jesus in His submission; for Jesus said, "I came not to do mine own will but the will of him that sent me." When He was sweating drops of blood in Gethsemane He feared He might die before He could reach the cross, and cried out, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

What a picture of Jesus in His surrender of life. Here is a strong young man, with the strength of youth, surrendering to a man much over a hundred years of age. Did he have to do it? No! He did it willingly in obedience to his father. Just so did Jesus surrender His life. He did not have to do it. He said He could call legions of angels to come to His rescue; but He did not. His Father had planned, before the foundation of the world, that He should die on a cross; and in obedience to the Father's will He gave His life. As God did provide a lamb substitute for Isaac, so He provided "the lamb slain from the foundation of the world" as our substitute.

If He has provided this, what else will He provide? "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" He did give His Son. Therefore the inference is that He will not withhold any other good gift from us. This is a staff upon which we can lean every hour of every day. It is a safe anodyne when you need rest, a stimulus when your heart is faint, and a reviving cordial in time of battle. It will neutralize the bitterness of life's sorrows. It will ease the weight of life's burdens. It will give light on life's darkest pathway.

In His provisions we see infinite wisdom and the beauty of perfection. We see in it the power to crush a world and yet the tenderness to stoop and bind up the foulest sore. He is the highest ideal of tenderness. The nearest thing on earth like it is the tenderness of a devoted mother. He declares, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." Should we give all the scriptures that speak of His tenderness they would fill a book.

There is one picture that is the cap sheaf. He is dying. His mother Mary and His beloved disciple John stand at the foot of His cross. He fastens a loving gaze on them and exclaims, "Woman, behold thy son!" and "Behold thy mother." What an expression of tender thoughtfulness. Where can its equal be found?

Faithfully will He provide what we need. It will not always be agreeable, or the most pleasant, but always what is best. "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Good things are those which will best promote our highest interest. It was not pleasant for Joseph to be sold into Egypt or put in a prison; but it was for the best interest of God's plan and purposes for His people. It was not pleasant for Job to lose his farms, his family or his health; but how much God's people would have lost had he never been placed in that furnace of affliction. Whenever it is necessary for God to involve us in trial or inconveniences in the interest of our highest good, His faithfulness demands that He maneuver us into such and keep us there as long as necessary.

Jehovah-rapheka, "The Lord that healeth thee." Ex. 15:26. Here God lets Himself down to the level of our weakness and necessity. Israel had left Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, and were encamped at Marah, (meaning Bitter Water). They were thirsty after their long, weary march. There was no sweet water with which to quench their thirst. They complained, and God told Moses to cut a certain tree and cast it into the waters. When he did, God, by direct miracle, made the water sweet. He then informed them that if they would trust and obey Him He would keep them from the diseases that had plagued the Egyptians. He here demonstrated to them His infinite and exhaustless power to heal.

This revelation was first applied to healing in its lowest form, that of the body. We are aware that among the manifest misfortunes that can befall humanity, the loss of health is the most severe.

All the joys life can bestow can never repay for the loss of health. The hard ground to a well person is more comfortable than a soft couch to the sick. Give a sick man food, drink, wealth, and he will cry, "Take them all, but give me health." God alone, in the final analysis, has the power to bestow this health. Such power is great, but it is still the lowest form of healing power. There is a healing power that is far above this, and God alone possesses it. That is the power to heal the sin-diseased soul. In this realm He is efficient. His healing is complete. He is practical in His method. He mixes His healing touch with our practical obedience. If one would have spiritual health, he must carefully consider his repentance, his consecration, his faith, and his practices. He gives life to a dead spirit by regeneration, and health to a sick spirit by entire sanctification; but He can keep us healthy spiritually only as we weave into the very warp and

woof of our lives those everyday exercises of spiritual activities that will feed and develop our spiritual nature.

His healing power is universal. We have known of cases that no physician would take. He knew that it was hopeless. Jehovah-rapheka knows no such cases. In His hospital there are no wards for incurables. Man has no spiritual ailment that heaven cannot heal. Man would say a man like Manasseh, the king of Israel, was a hopeless case; or that a Saul of Tarsus, or a John Bunyan, or a Jerry McAuley was to be sent to the hopeless ward. But not Jehovah-rapheka. He met them and cried, "I am the Lord that healeth thee." Thank God, He is our efficient, sufficient, practical, universal, and gloriously eternal healer.

Jehovah-nissi -- "The Lord our banner." Ex. 17:15. Israel was journeying through the wilderness. The Amalekites, in an unfriendly spirit, came out to oppose the onward march. Moses chose a thousand men from each tribe, making an army of 12,000, and sent this army out to set the battle in array against the hordes of the Amalekites. They can not win without God, so Moses betakes himself to Mt. Horeb for prayer. Prayer and the valor of the people subdue Amalek. In honor of the victory, Moses erected an altar and inscribed on it, Jehovah-nissi -- "The Lord, our banner." Every army has a banner under which it goes forth to fight. In the Psalms we read, "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee... that thy beloved may be delivered" (Psa. 60:4, 5). And in the Song of Solomon we read, "He brought me into his banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." Banners are sometimes revered because of their antiquity. Nations are proud of their flags, which are their banners. That being true, then we as Christians have a right to rejoice under our banner; for it is as old as God Himself. The Lord is our banner. Banners are revered also, because of what is on them. I have traveled in many foreign lands. I have seen their beautiful flags unfurled in the breezes. I appreciated them for their beauty. But none of them brought the thrill to my heart that the star-spangled banner brings. It is my banner. It represents, in its red, white, and blue, the red blood of sacrifice, the purity of purpose, and the loyalty to principles. I salute it anywhere I find it. I love it for what is on it.

As a child of God, we should revere our banner for what is on it, and we have a perfect right to claim the protection of its inscriptions; for on it are inscribed all of the promises of God. Read them! "The Lord is my rock, my fortress." "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him." No wonder we can sing:

"Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war;
With the cross of Jesus
Going on before."

Our banner is made of such enduring substance it will endure forever. Just today I was reading that the Communist Chinese had planted their banner on top of Bunker Hill in Korea; and no sooner was it raised than it was torn to shreds by a shell from an American gun. Not so with our Christian banner. It has stood the shot and shell from our enemies down through the ages, and still it waves. It is everlasting; for He is our banner and its inscriptions are His eternal Word.

"A thousand arrows keen,
With fiery force and strain,
Aimed at it in fierce rage and hate;
But all has been in vain.

"Against this sea-swept rock,
Ten thousand storms their will
Of foam and rage have wildly spent;
But it lifts its calm face still.

"It standeth and will stand,
Without a change or age;
The word of majesty and light,
The church's heritage."

Jehovah-shalom, "The Lord our Peace." Judges 6:24. Israel was being sorely oppressed by the Midianites. God vouchsafed to give them deliverance through a man by the name of Gideon. A being like unto a man appeared to Gideon and delivered to him God's message. He seemed to be without divine credentials, so Gideon demanded to know how he was to be sure the message was from God. He built an altar and put on it a sacrifice. The angel who had appeared unto him as a man caused the fire to leap out of the rock from which the altar was made, and as the fire consumed the sacrifice the angel ascended back to God in the flame. There was a feeling prevalent among the Jews that to see an angel meant death. Gideon was fearful that he would die; but God spoke to him and said, "Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die." Then Gideon built an altar unto the Lord and called it Jehovah-shalom; that is, "The Lord our peace." Through this name we have a revelation of that peace which comes through the gospel. Notice the nature of this peace. It is called "The peace of God." It is a part of God's nature projected into the God-determined, God-planned and God-provided plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. Zechariah 6:13 says, "The counsel of peace shall be between them both."

This is not the peace that comes from ownership, or the peace of successful accomplishment. It is not the peace of victorious arms or the peace of death. It is the peace of reposing in God. It is the peace of simple faith. It surpasses understanding. It blots out of our life that disturbed condition of soul brought on by sin. It is the soul's umpire. Philosophy cannot bestow it. Psychology cannot create it. Good works cannot secure it. There is only one source where it may be found. "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace" (John 16:33). "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." The same peace which dwelt in the bosom of Jesus Christ can dwell in our hearts and bring, with the divine will, that yielding to the divine dealings, the same rest in the divine protection, the same consciousness of the love of God, and the same assurance of eternal victory as He possessed.

Consider, if you think it is not for you, the foundation on which it rests. "He made peace through the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20). I have traveled in air-planes a few hundred feet above a desert where the wind was blowing a gale and our plane was riding bumpy air currents as a ship rides the disturbed sea. At other times I have traveled at eight or ten thousand feet,

where clouds surrounded the plane and many times storms tossed the ship about like a toy bobbing on the waves of a sea, while lightning flashed and seemed to run all over the plane. At still other times I have traveled at three hundred miles per hour, twenty-two thousand feet above the ocean, in dazzling sunlight, no clouds in sight, no wind blowing, little vibration from the plane's motors, just sitting in a calm that is indescribable. They say there is a place high enough above the earth where there is perfect calm, and a place deep enough in the oceans where there is the same perfect calm. I cannot prove it; but I do know there is a place high enough and deep enough in God that when one reaches it there is perfect soul rest.

"Peace from the Father and the Son,
Peace from the Spirit, all are one,
Peace that need never more be lost,
Peace that was purchased on His cross."

Jehovah-tsidkenu, "The Lord our righteousness." Jer. 23:6. It is highly important that we understand this name of God. Who is this Jehovah-tsidkenu? We read, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise up unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth." The branch is another reference to Jesus. "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isa. 11:1). And, "Behold the man whose name is The Branch." "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." These scriptures would seem to imply that the Jehovah-tsidkenu is none other than Jesus Christ.

The fact that He can be called by such a name is founded in the active and passive obedience of Christ to the entire law of God, written and unwritten, in every thought, feeling, motive, word, and action.

Of what value is this righteousness to us? It is one of the foundation stones of our salvation. It brings to us provisionally and practically the benefit of all He did and suffered. It is placed to our account. Just as our sins were transferred to Christ, and in God's sight He must be treated as a sinner, so His righteousness, in God's sight, is placed to our account. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Here we have substitution working both ways. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). "Christ... made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). He tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9). Here is provision complete. Just as our sins were reckoned unto Him, so His righteousness can be reckoned unto us. It is made possible to us by grace. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." It is not only imputed to us, but it can be imparted to us. It will do no one any good just to have it provided for us. We must accept that provision and appropriate it by faith to make it of any value to us. By provision it takes in all men, but by imputation and impartation it takes in only those who accept the provision by faith. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:4). It is called the righteousness of God which is by faith in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:9). To say that one can sin knowingly and die in that sin unforgiven and still stand in the presence of God uncondemned is unscriptural. Our practice must correspond with our faith and conform to the Word of God or His provisional righteousness will never be imputed unto us. That His

righteousness is imparted unto us to be lived out in our practices is certainly taught in God's Word. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6). Filled with what? Certainly, that for which they hunger -- righteousness. "That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74, 75). Service is active, so we are to be active in righteousness. "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34, 35). Here He says, "He that worketh righteousness is accepted with him." "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness" (Rom. 6:13, 16). "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness" (Phil. 1:11). "Every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (1 John 2:29). "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous" (1 John 3:7). "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God" (1 John 3:10). If these scriptures mean anything, they certainly mean that only as we live out in practice that righteousness that God has imparted to us can we claim to be clothed with His imputed righteousness.

His righteousness can be well founded, it can be gracious, it can be perfect, it can be everlasting, it can be provided; but unless it is imputed and imparted by faith it is of no avail to us.

Jehovah-shammah, "The Lord is there." Ezek. 48:35. There is a day coming when Israel, God's earthly people, shall come into their own; and the last few chapters of Ezekiel foretell that glorious time. We are told that Jerusalem shall have a glorious future. "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God" (Psalms 87:3). The descriptions depicted here have never yet been fulfilled. Therefore, we must conclude there is a time in the future when Israel shall dwell safely in their own land and their sacred city shall be glorious. In connection with this glorious condition we find our scripture, "And the name of the city from that day shall be -- the Lord is there."

This seems fantastic. It is almost beyond belief that the Jerusalem which we know today, and which the world has known for centuries, is to be honored with the personal abiding presence of God Himself. This is a glorious truth and happy prospect for all of God's children, both Jew and Gentile. If we can exact the meaning of these names, we can comprehend God. But that is impossible short of a progressive revelation which will last through all eternity.

We also learn something about God through His attributes. His attributes are many. Watson defines them as, first, unity; second, spirituality; third, eternity; fourth, omnipotence; fifth, omnipresence; sixth, omniscience; seventh, immutability; eighth, wisdom; ninth, goodness; tenth, holiness. Other theologians give more, and some less; but as we delve into these attributes we learn more of the mystery of God. His multiplicity of acts, in creation and redemption, also, are a revelation, to humanity, of His character.

Certainly, only "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." No one else ever would be guilty of such an assertion.

The innate consciousness of a supreme being is the birthright of every man. God has so implanted in the soul of man the fact of His existence that He does not need to prove it in revelations. The unqualified statement, "In the beginning God," is sufficient. It is God's first and greatest bid for man's faith in His character. While Scripture does not prove, or even attempt to prove, the existence of God, it does appeal to that native consciousness of God in every man (Acts 17:27, 28; John 1:8, 9).

A right concept of God, however, can come only through revelation. We declare that God is a Spirit, that He is real, that He is infinite, that He is perfect in character, that He is three distinct personalities of one substance and inseparable, of absolute knowledge, power, and goodness; but to find His beginning or to trace His origin, to understand His ways or comprehend His thoughts, is beyond man. Mystified, we accept by faith the statement of the psalmist that "God is," and conclude that, "A God comprehended is no God at all."

* * * * *

02 -- THE MYSTERY OF FAITH

There are many definitions of faith. Someone has said, "Faith is a combined effort of the intellect and the will. The intellect accepts the truth and the will acts upon it." Another has said, "Faith is taking God at His word and acting like it is so." It is called by God a mystery, and there may be several reasons.

Faith is sometimes demanded without reason. In the garden of Eden God spoke to man and told him he could eat of every tree in the garden; but of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden he could not partake, and on the day he did he would surely die. Here we have a positive command from God without apparent moral reason. Man is supposed to accept it and act accordingly, without asking any questions. Here is a demand for faith at its best. It is acting on no other grounds than "Thus saith the Lord." It is confidence in the character of God, not human reason.

Reason, of even a pure heart and a clean mind, may become dangerous. It was so in the case of Eve. The devil appealed first to her reason. He asked her if God had forbidden her to eat of any fruit of the garden. She answered more than he asked, and in so doing gave him an entrance into her mind. He asked only if there was any tree of which they could not eat. She replied that there was one in the midst of the garden of which they could not eat, or even touch, lest they die. At once the devil pounced upon her misrepresentation and misquoting of God.

How necessary it is to quote Scripture correctly. Otherwise, we give the devil an open door for his activities. At once he said to Eve, "'Ye shall not surely die." for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Here her reason began to work. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food." That is, Here is a tree just as good for food as any other tree in the garden, and why should

God keep it back from us? "And that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise." Surely, God wants us to be wise and be like Him, and here is fruit that will make us like God. Why should He command us not to eat of this fruit? I can see no reason in the demand; and I can see no more in this fruit to make one die than in any other fruit. I desire it, and I do not believe it will hurt me. And she made the fatal plunge and reaped the horrible loss.

Was it not on the same grounds that the devil appealed to Jesus? "If thou be the Son of God." Certainly, your Father loves you and does not want you to be hungry; and why do you not use your power and work a miracle and turn these stones into bread to satisfy your hunger? On the surface, the argument looked reasonable and right. But there is the Word of God, "Man shall not live by bread alone." Why did Jesus quote that Scripture? What has that to do with this temptation? A great deal. God sent Jesus into the world to fight the devil on the same plane on which man must fight him. For Him to disobey His Father to gratify His appetite at the expense of obedience would be to lose everything; for the thing the devil tempted Him to do looked reasonable. Jesus told the devil there was something more for man to live for than the gratification of his appetite, and that was obedience to God.

It takes strong faith to obey when reason says that to disobey is beneficial and only gratification of natural desires. But faith, in many instances, sets reason aside and cries, "This is the way; walk ye in it." When God commands, it is ours to obey and leave the "whys" and "wherefores" with Him.

Faith is a mystery because it works by sure laws. In Romans 3:27 we read of "the law of faith." When these laws are not complied with, all the will power man can exercise will not enable him to exercise faith. The first law controlling it is the law of centralization. Faith not properly centered will never bring results. Some people have their faith centered in what their parents believed and taught them. It makes little difference to these people what God's Word may say about certain things, for they are more affected by the early teaching of their parents. Faith thus centered will never get much from God unless, of course, such teaching has been in accord with the Word of God.

Some center their faith in what some Sunday school teacher taught them. How responsible is the place of the Sunday school teacher or Bible school teacher! The seed sown in the mind during the formative period of one's life will be a determining factor in his future for time and eternity. If the teaching is wrong, the faith will be wrong. If the faith is wrong, it brings nothing from God.

Some center their faith in what their preachers say. No wonder Paul said, "Preach the Word." To teach anything else will misdirect the faith of the people. Preachers sometimes are wrong. Unfortunately, personal background and prejudices have affected their interpretation of God's Word more than has their investigation. "No scripture is of private interpretation." Unless by diligent search, aided by the Holy Spirit, and comparing scripture with scripture, one finds the thought of God in the scripture, his interpretation may be misleading.

There is but one primary interpretation of any scripture passage. There may be several partial fulfillments and many different applications, but a preacher should differentiate between

interpretation of scripture and its application. He should also make clear to his listeners the difference between a partial and a complete fulfillment. No doctrine of scripture should be founded on an isolated single historical fact or parable. Such fact must be indicted by the general tenor of all Scripture. To do otherwise is dangerous and may lead to delusion. Many of the false doctrines of today spring from this practice. In preaching or teaching, one should carefully strive to give as nearly as possible the apparent interpretation originally intended. Otherwise his listeners may misplace their faith.

Faith that is misplaced will damn as well as will no faith at all, because the only faith that will save is the faith that is centered in God. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Faith is a mystery because it will not mix. This situation is suggested in that Jesus likened it to mustard seed. Almost all seeds will cross with others of the same species if the plants are crowded together. But we are told that the mustard seed will not mix with any other kind of seed. Just so, faith does not lose its identity amid surrounding circumstances. In the midst of difficult situations and temptations faith remains conspicuous and effective. Jesus and Paul both said that if one has faith he can remove mountains. Men have crossed mountains, flown over them, and tunneled through them; but few ever have removed mountains. The inventions of the centuries have never enabled men to do that. Nevertheless, here is power to do it without a pound of steam, a watt of electricity, or a move of a man's hand. All that is necessary is mustard-seed faith, a faith that is unmixed. Doubt makes mountains, but faith removes them.

Faith is a mystery because it works by love. Love trusts. When love wanes, trust and confidence cease to function. When love controls, it knows no sacrifice for the one loved, and there is no fear of faith going unrewarded. It is this kind of faith that one has when he consecrates his all to God. It works differently from the faith mentioned in Romans 5:1: "Therefore being justified by faith." This is the faith of a penitent seeking forgiveness for his sins. Faith working by love is a faith that seeks to give its all because of confidence in the one loved.

There is a vast difference between surrender and consecration. When one surrenders, he gives up to God on the basis of demand. When he consecrates, he gives to God on the basis of love. There is a vast difference between giving God one's talents because He commands it, and giving Him one's talents because of love for Him.

Faith is a mystery because it will trust all to one whom its possessor has never seen. All one knows about Him is what he has read in the Book. True, he has seen His footprints, His handiwork, and His providences; but no man has seen God in person.

Faith is a mystery because of what it can do. Exercised by God, it framed the world. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed." It caused Enoch to walk with God three hundred years without a break. It enabled Noah to build an ark for the saving of his house. It prompted Moses to renounce a throne, to suffer with the children of God. It gave the Hebrew children power over fire, and Daniel power over lions. Once it is in operation, nothing on earth

can withstand it; for Jesus said, "According to your faith be it unto you," and "All things are possible to him that believeth."

"O for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by every foe;
That will not falter on the brink
Of any earthly woe."

Faith is passive as well as active. In its passiveness it can bear all things. In its activeness it can accomplish all things.

Faith is always in the present. We can hope for the future; but faith is in the "now." It has two phases -- the rest of faith and the realization of faith. When the centurion, whose servant was sick, came to Jesus asking for help, he said, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." Jesus said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." He walked away from Jesus with the rest of faith. He did not hurry home; he took his time. When he arrived at home, he found his servant healed. He had the realization of faith. The work was done, however, when he walked away from Jesus. He did so with the rest of faith.

That rest of faith is a mystery. It is a secret between the heart of the believer and God. It will always end in the realization of faith if you do your part. If you know how to keep secrets between your soul and God, you will never fail, because He will never fail.

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03 -- THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32). There was a church in the wilderness (Acts 7:38), of which Moses was the earthly leader. It was a part of that church mentioned by Jesus in Matt. 16:18, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church;" and in Matthew 18:17, "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church." These are the only places where Jesus mentioned the church. He had already given the great Sermon on the Mount; but not one word had He said about His church. He had offered Himself to the Jews, and had been rejected. "In that same day went Jesus out of the house and sat by the seaside;" but He made no mention of the church. Up until this time His ministry had been about a kingdom. He preached a gospel of a kingdom (Matthew 4:23 and 9:35). He sent His disciples to preach that that kingdom was at hand. "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 10:7). Even in the twelfth chapter, where the Jews finally rejected Him, He is talking about a kingdom. "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."

He came unto His own, but His own received Him not. Through His foreknowledge He knew they would not. Nevertheless, He offered Himself to them as their king. They finally turned Him down. He accused them of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (Matt. 12:22-32) and went out of the Jewish house. He sat in the open and immediately began to unfold the future of

Christendom and the church by giving the parables. The parables are a picture of the kingdom of heaven and its development as Christ works to get a people for Himself out from the Gentiles.

In some of these parables we can catch a glimpse of the church, but the facts about it are still deeply veiled.

In Matthew, chapters 14 and 15, Jesus proceeds to establish His divine authority by His miracles, although the Jews had rejected Him. In the 16th chapter He inquires of His disciples who they think He really is (Matt. 16:13-19).

This seems to be the first revelation the disciples really had of Him. With this revelation He was now able to unfold to them the plan of redemption. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." His church was to be built on a foundation against which the gates of hell could not prevail; and afterwards He was to come to set up His kingdom and give rewards to the faithful. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." To make this plain to them He said, "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." All along they had looked for Him to set up an earthly kingdom and deliver them from the Roman yoke. To find that He was not building an earthly kingdom, but a spiritual church; to find that He was not to reign, but to die; to find that they were not to have positions of trust in His government, but would have to bear a cross if they continued with Him was almost too much.

"Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:22-26).

To bolster their hopes after the Jews rejected Him, He gave them a revelation of Himself. To bolster their hopes of the kingdom He had to give the leaders, Peter, James and John, a revelation of the kingdom in the future. "And after Six days Jesus taketh Peter, James and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." Then, in II Peter 1:16-18, we read, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount."

The disciples began to grasp the meaning of His coming and of His death; but as yet they could not grasp the meaning of His resurrection, ascension and mediation and the coming of the Holy Ghost to empower the church.

Although Christ had mentioned the church, and had tried to get them to see that the kingdom could not be set up until He could finish building His church, they could not grasp this idea. And even up until the last they could not give up the thought of the kingdom. Even after His resurrection, when He was giving them His farewell message, they talked about the kingdom.

"And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:4-6).

This mysterious church was purchased by Christ. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." It was revealed more fully to the world on the day of Pentecost. It consisted of the "called-out ones," both Jews and Gentiles. It was loved by Christ. "As Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it." He forgives the sinner. He cleanses the church. Christ is its head. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." He is getting it ready to present it to Himself. "That he might present it to himself." It must have a character like His own when He does present it to Himself. "Not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

In Matthew 16:13-19 and 18:15-20, and the Sermon on the Mount, there is depicted the peculiarities, the privileges, the practices, the power, and the preservation of the church.

The peculiarities of the church. In Matthew 5:13 Jesus likens His church unto salt. "Ye are the salt of the earth." Why Jesus would liken His church to such a common thing as salt, it is difficult, on the surface, to understand. When He calls it a garden, or a bride, or a building, or a body, or likens it to the moon, we readily grasp it; but when He says it is like salt, what is fully involved is beyond our comprehension. However, there are a few qualities in salt that He has a right to expect to find in His church. First, salt is unlike anything else on earth; and so is His church. Second, salt is pure white; and so is His church. Third, salt is transparent in texture; and so is the church. Fourth, salt brings out the flavor of anything it touches; and so does His church. Fifth, salt prevents decay; and so does His church. In fact, the church is the only thing today that is preventing total moral decay to the entire human society. Sixth, salt is a universal need; and so is the church. In travels in heathen lands I have seen many people who did not desire houses, furniture, clothing, or any comfort of life, as we know comforts; but they had a craving for salt. I have offered them money for their trinkets; but they preferred salt. It should always be remembered, however, that when salt has lost its saltiness it is worse than useless. And when any denomination has lost its spiritual qualities it is a curse rather than a blessing.

The privileges of the church. The first privilege is life. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there

be that find it" (Matt. 7:13). There is no life without agonizing suffering; so He said to "agonize" in order to enter into life. It is a privilege worth the effort.

The second privilege is purity. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). What is His will? "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (I Thess. 4:3). It seems, from many scriptures, that for one to remain a part of Christ's church he must either be sanctified or be pressing and progressing toward it. Not to want holiness is not to want God. "Therefore he that rejecteth, rejecteth not man, but God" (I Thess. 4:8). It would seem impossible for one to stay in Christ's church and not want what He died to provide. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it" (Eph. 5:25-26). "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12). Certainly, one could not stay in His church and trample on His blood. Certainly, one could not stay in His church and not desire to go to heaven. And it is also certain that one's desire to go to heaven is no stronger than his desire for holiness.

The practices of the church. These are many and varied. The people in this church rejoice when lied about. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:11-12).

Those in this church keep the law (Matthew 5:17-20).

Those in this church have been reconciled to all men (Matt. 5:23-24).

Those in this church have purity of desire (Matt. 5:27-28).

Those in this church ignore scandal (Matt. 5:39).

Those in this church go beyond their duty (Matt. 5:40-41).

Those in this church love their enemies (Matt. 5:44).

Those in this church are a praying people (Matthew 6:1-13).

Those in this church trust God for supplies (Matt. 6:19-21).

Those in this church fast (Matt. 6:16-18).

Those in this church never stoop to hurtful criticism (Matt. 7:1-5).

Those in this church have built on the rock (Matt. 7:24-27).

The power of the church. "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound

in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:18, 19). "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18:19). It would seem that Jesus is teaching that the great key to the kingdom of heaven and the great power of the church is agreement in intercessory prayer.

We talk about the power of kings and prime ministers and presidents. But they can tie things up only while they live, and at times a few years longer. Here is the promise of a power that will tie things or loose things for eternity. That power is the power of intercessory prayer.

There are three great realms of prayer -- the realm of communion, the realm of petition, and the realm of intercession. Few people ever get very far into the first realm. It is a realm of conscious contact with God. It is that realm where the soul is stayed on God. Many people get on the edges of this, but few stay in it long enough to realize its depth. Fewer still enter into the second realm, where they can trust God for their needs. The truth of the scripture, "My God shall supply all your need," never becomes alive to them.

There is a small class, indeed, who ever get out into the third realm -- the realm of intercession. This is the place where one forgets his own needs and where he cares not just to be blessed. It is that realm of burden for the needs and welfare of others. It is that realm where one can be trusted with a burden for something which, if received, will in no way benefit him. It is a realm wherein there is no limit to power.

The Preservation of the Church. Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Denominations may come and go; but the church of Jesus Christ will stand forever. Christ is building it of people from every clime and every nation, and from all classes of men.

It is indeed a mysterious church, with its Head in heaven, its body on earth, and its feet on hell. It is a mystery to worldly men and a conundrum to the devil, but a joy to Jesus Christ.

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04 -- THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY

In 2 Thess. 2:7 we read, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way." This verse has reference to the working of antichrist in the world. Just as God's names reveal His character, His relation to His children, and His activities among men; and the different names of the fallen archangel, Lucifer, reveal his character, his relation to his children, and his activities among men; so the name of the antichrist reveals his character and his activities in the world. Jesus said, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."

We notice but one name given to the antichrist; that is, the Man of Sin. In II Thess. 2:3 we read, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed." Here he is called not only a sinful man but

the man of sin. He is to be all that sin represents. Judas was given this same title by Christ; and many believe that because of this he will be resurrected and will be the coming antichrist. But that is only conjecture and has little in fact to support it.

We notice that his Office and functions are to be similar to those of Christ, yet in contrast to them. Contrast, many times, suggests points of likeness.

Relative to Christ, we read of the mystery of godliness. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (I Tim. 3:16).

Relative to the antichrist, we read of the mystery of iniquity. "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (II Thess. 2:7).

We read of a holy trinity. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19).

There is also the unholy trinity. "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet" (Rev. 16:13).

Let us, then, make some comparisons between the holy and unholy trinities.

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THE FATHER -- AND -- THE DRAGON

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FATHER -- Called The Father

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17).

DRAGON -- Called The Dragon

"And the great dragon was cast out that old serpent, called the Devil" (Rev. 12:9).

* * *

FATHER -- Called The God Of Heaven

"And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds" (Rev. 16:11).

DRAGON -- Called The God Of This World

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not" (II Cor. 4:4).

* * *

FATHER -- Called The Lord Of Hosts

"Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts" (I Sam. 17:45).

DRAGON -- Called Leader Of A Fighting Host

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels" (Rev. 12:7).

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FATHER -- He Has His Own Chosen Ruler -- Christ

"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom" (Heb. 1:8).

DRAGON -- He Has His Own Chosen Ruler

"And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast" (Rev. 13:4).

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FATHER -- He Will Give His Throne To Christ

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21).

DRAGON -- He Will Give His Throne To The Beast

"And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast" (Rev. 13:4).

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THE SON -- AND -- THE BEAST

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THE SON

"Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22).

THE BEAST

"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea" (Rev. 13:1).

* * *

THE LAMB

"And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (Rev. 5:6).

THE BEAST

"And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast?" (Rev. 13:4).

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THE CHRIST

"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16).

THE ANTICHRIST

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (I John 2:18).

* * *

THE SON IS EQUAL WITH GOD

"I and my Father are one" (John 10:30).

THE BEAST EXALTETH HIMSELF AS GOD

"Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (II Thess. 2:4).

* * *

THE SON IS THE KING OF KINGS

"And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:16). Read Dan. 7:13,14.

THE BEAST EXALTS HIMSELF ABOVE ALL GODS

"And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods" (Dan. 11:36).

* * *

THE SON HAS HIS COMING

"But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (I Cor. 15:23).

THE BEAST HAS HIS COMING

"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (II Thess. 2:9). Read II Thess. 2:8.

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THE SON HAS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (I Thess. 4:14).

THE BEAST HAS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

"The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit" (Rev. 17:8). Read Rev. 13:3-14.

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THE SON HE HAS KINGDOM, POWER AND THRONE

"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15).

THE BEAST HAS KINGDOM, POWER, AND THRONE

"And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" (Rev. 13:7). Read ch. 13.

* * *

THE SON COMES APPROVED OF GOD BY MIRACLES, SIGNS, AND, WONDERS WROUGHT BY GOD THROUGH HIM

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know" (Acts 2:22).

THE BEAST COMES WITH POWER, SIGNS, AND LYING WONDERS

"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (II Thess. 2:9).

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THE SON ATTESTED THE TRUTH WITH MIRACLES IN ORDER TO SAVE

"And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" (John 7:31).

THE BEAST WROUGHT MIRACLES TO DECEIVE IN ORDER TO DESTROY

"For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles" (Rev. 16:14). Read II Thess. 2:9,10.

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THE FATHER WILL HAVE ALL TO WORSHIP THE SON

"That all men should hon. our the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him" (John 5:23).

DRAGON WILL HAVE ALL WORSHIP HIM

"And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8).

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THE SON HAS A CONSORT-BRIDE

"And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Rev. 21:9).

THE BEAST HAS A CONSORT -- HARLOT

"And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth" (Rev. 18:24). Read Rev. 17:1-5.

* * *

THE CONSORT OF THE SON WAS THE HOLY CITY

"And he carried me away in the .spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God" (Rev. 21:10).

THE CONSORT OF THE BEAST WAS A GREAT, CITY

"And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth" (Rev. 17:18).

* * *

THE CITY OF THE SON IS THE NEW JERUSALEM

"I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2).

THE CITY OF THE BEAST IS BABYLON

"Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" (Rev. 17:5).

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THE HOLY SPIRIT -- AND -- THE FALSE PROPHET

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THE HOLY SPIRIT CALLED THE HOLY SPIRIT

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the. communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all" (II Cor. 13:14).

THE FALSE PROPHET CALLED THE FALSE PROPHET

"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him" (Rev. 19:20).

* * *

THE HOLY SPIRIT CALLED SPIRIT OF CHRIST

"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9).

THE FALSE PROPHET CALLED SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST

"And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" (I John 4:3).

* * *

THE HOLY SPIRIT CALLED THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).

THE FALSE PROPHET CALLED THE SPIRIT OF ERROR

"We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" (I John 4:6).

* * *

THE HOLY SPIRIT CALLED THE SPIRIT THAT WORKETH IN THE CHILDREN OF GOD

"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. 3:16).

THE FALSE PROPHET CALLED THE SPIRIT THAT WORKETH IN THE CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE

"Wherein in time passed ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2).

* * *

THE HOLY SPIRIT TAKES CHRIST'S PLACE

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7).

THE FALSE PROPHET TAKES THE PLACE OF THE BEAST

"And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast whose deadly wound was healed" (Rev. 13:12). Read Rev. 13:14-15.

* * *

THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKETH MIRACLES

"He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith." (Gal. 3:5).

THE FALSE PROPHET WORKETH MIRACLES

"And deceiveth them that dwell in the earth, by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast" (Rev. 13:14). Read ch. 19:20.

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THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVETH LIFE

"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rein. 8:11).

THE FALSE PROPHET GIVETH LIFE

"And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed" (Rev. 13:15).

* * *

THE HOLY SPIRIT SEALS FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB

"In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13).

THE FALSE PROPHET SEALS FOLLOWERS OF THE BEAST

"And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads" (Rev. 13:16),

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The revelation of the antichrist will come in the last part of the last days. But Paul said his spirit was already, in his day, working in the world. "The mystery of iniquity doth already work." In I John 2:18 we read, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists."

What is this spirit of antichrist, and who are his forerunners? The answer is found in I John 2:22: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son." According to this, the denying of the divinity of Jesus Christ is a manifestation of antichrist. As long as the world believes in the divinity of Jesus Christ they will not accept the antichrist. Such a belief must largely be broken down before the revelation of the antichrist. All who teach that Christ was a good man but was not divine are a part of the antichrist system, and are channels for the working of the mystery of iniquity.

The flood of antichrist teaching has been prophesied for these last days. Its swirling waters are all around us, ready to engulf all who play along its shores. We may put up a levee here, or an embankment there, to keep it out of certain sections; and we may have a measure of success. But to stop it now is like trying to dam up the Mississippi River at its mouth, or stop the roaring Niagara at the brink of the falls. Because the task is hopeless we cannot, stop throwing up embankments. We must work with all of our might while it is called today, before the night engulf the world in the full flood of iniquity, and in its wake the wrath of God sweep the world.

Why call it the "mystery of iniquity"? Sin has: always been in the world since the fall of man, and men have understood its source and its haunts. They have expected to find it in the brothels and saloons, the gambling dens and race tracks, the slums of our cities and high unchurched society. Men do not expect to find it in churches and religious circles. How mystifying it is when they do.

The mystery of iniquity which we find in these last days is not found in haunts and dives of sin only, but in our religious organizations, churches, and institutions of learning. They sail under the Christian flag, and are supported by the Christians' money while denying the foundations of the faith of all true Christians. In fact, they have made the name Christian a stench both to God and man. So much that goes under the name of Christian in these last days is so unchristian that it looks like God's people would be better off to drop their nickname and use the name by which they were first known, which is that of "saints." It may sound out of place, but it is far more scriptural and far more meaningful than the word "Christian," as used today. How anyone can call himself a Christian and deny the divinity of Christ is a mystery of mysteries.

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05 -- THE MYSTERY OF THE MINISTRY

The ministry is a mystery in its inception. Why God should circumscribe Himself to humanity in His effort to inform men of his redemptive scheme is a mystery in itself. It would seem that He could have chosen a better, faster, and more sure way to give men the gospel than by the slow process of human endeavor. We do not mean by this to question His wisdom. "He doeth all things well." But we become heartsick at the slowness of man's decisions and his

human efforts. He spends so much time building scaffolds that there is little time left for the building of the kingdom. But God has chosen to save the world by the foolishness of preaching, and to preach is the primary task of His ministers.

The call to the ministry is a mystery. Why God should choose some men to preach His gospel who seem naturally to lack the necessary qualifications for such a calling, and pass by others who are more talented, is strange. At a very early age some have felt that their life's work would be the ministry; and many men have known long before they were saved that they must preach if they ever were saved. How God can make such an impression on a dead spirit is a mystery.

The way one knows he is called is mysterious. It may come through a dream or a vision. It may be just seeing the need of a lost world. It may come through a divine impression that develops into a conviction that one must either preach the gospel or be lost. However it comes, it should always be accompanied with some ability to do it or a foundation on which acquired ability can be built. One should never preach, so long as he can follow some other kind of work or some other calling and still keep a clear conscience.

The peculiar power in preaching is a mystery. Paul writes of the foolishness of preaching. How foolish preaching does seem sometimes. To lift a few words out of a book and spend an hour in expounding them seems foolish. Were the same words taken from any book but the Bible, they would have little meaning and could be expounded and exhausted in a very few minutes. But when they are taken from the inspired Word of God they are inexhaustible. Who has ever exhausted the words, "God is love," or "I am the way, the truth, and the life"? Men have talked about them through the centuries, but they still hold unrevealed mysteries.

That peculiar anointing of God which comes on a minister or his message is a mystery. This anointing can rest upon either, singly, without resting upon both at the same time. The writer has known times when a preacher has rambled in the fog with what seemed to be a mediocre message; but it was accompanied with the lightning-like power of God, for the preacher was charged with that power. Also, we have seen men who were frauds and immoral preach with telling effect. God could not anoint them, but He did anoint the message founded on His Word, which He hath declared will not return unto Him void.

There is also the mystery of the relationship existing between the called preacher and God. In Revelation we read of the seven golden candlesticks in the seven churches. We are informed that they are in God's hand and that they represent the ministry. It is a mystery that men can get so close to God and be used so mightily by Him.

The responsibility of the minister is a mystery. Ezekiel, writing about him, implies that he will be held responsible for the souls of men. "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand" (Ezek. 3:17, 18). Other men become responsible for perishable goods, but the minister is responsible for never-ending, indestructible

souls of men. How or why God should call men and make them responsible for the souls of other men is a mystery. Why did God not choose angels to carry His gospel? Why does He not wing it on the winds or print it on the sky where all can read? He has chosen men. To us it seems the very worst method; but it is His secret, to be revealed in His time.

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06 -- THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness." God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (I Timothy 3:16). Paul is no doubt using the term "mystery of godliness" in reference to God incarnate; for he says, in reference to it, "God was manifest in the flesh." This was written relative to Jesus Christ. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). This certainly proves, first, that Jesus Christ was God; second, that He was eternal; and, third, that he dwelt as God in the flesh.

There was only one way that God could become incarnate to any profit to humanity, and he took that way. He could have created a body that in no way was attached to man, inhabited it, died in it, and even been resurrected in it, without in any way affecting man. To lift man He must take upon himself the nature of man. He must do more than that; He must unite Himself with human nature. How else could He have done that than the way He did? He did it perfectly. The result was a being not half man and half God, but one who was wholly man and wholly God -- the God-man. What a mystery! It is on this truth that Christianity rises or falls; that redemption succeeds or fails. If the fact of Jesus Christ being God in the flesh could be disproved, then the whole scheme of redemption fails. Infidels, agnostics, and modernists acknowledge the death of Christ in the interest of His teachings and principles. Some of them will even give consent to the fact of His resurrection. But none will acknowledge that His divinity was above the divinity of other men or that His birth was different from the natural order.

To prove that He was God incarnate, to prove that He was virgin born, to prove that He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, we will have to prove His divinity and His place in the trinity. First, we notice His divinity. If He is divine He must have had an existence prior to His birth in Bethlehem. Let us, then, consider some facts relative to this.

The pre-existence of Christ. First, He was before John the Baptist. "He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me" (John 1:15). This does not mean that Christ was before John in dignity only, but in time.

Second, He was before Abraham. He declared, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). The obvious meaning of this statement is that "Before Abraham was born, I was in existence." The Jews did not mistake His meaning. They said, "Thou are not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" They knew He was talking about time, and not dignity.

Third, he claimed a glorious existence antecedent to the world. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17" 5). If we are to believe Him, does not this prove that He had an existence, not only prior to His birth at Bethlehem, but also prior to the creation of the world?

Nature of existence before birth in Bethlehem. In reading the Old Testament one discovers that on several occasions a divine person appeared to the Jews. It is also very evident that that person was not God the Father.

There were evidently occasions when God the Father manifested Himself to man other than in the person of His Son. "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up" (Isaiah 6:1). Jacob said, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." However, on numerous occasions this revelation of a divine person was not of God the Father. Sometimes He appeared under the title, "the angel of the Lord." He was so named because He was sent as the messenger of the Lord. It is evident that a person sent must be distinct from the one who sends him.

At other times He was revealed as Jehovah. "I am Jehovah, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another" (Isaiah 42:8, A.S.V.). "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth" (Psa. 83:18).

At still other times He is called the Lord. "Then said I, woe is me for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips... for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5). "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord" (Isaiah 40:3). "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered" (Joel 2:32). This was quoted by Paul in Romans 10:13.

At other times He is called God. "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:23). "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). See, also, Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8.

We already have pointed out that the angel of the Lord appeared as a divine personage; and that He was sent by God the Father, and therefore could not be the same as the one sending Him. We now note that this "angel of the Lord" is at times called God. In connection with Hagar's flight from Sarah, we read, "And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness" (Genesis 16:7). Then we read, "And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me" (Genesis 16:13). See, also, Genesis 18:33 and Genesis 28:16. This is another person other than God the Father, and He is divine. To try to cast a shadow on the divinity of this personage when He appears under the name of Jehovah in the Old Testament, some have said that the name Jehovah was sometimes used in connection with things and therefore could not prove the divinity of the person bearing it, for things are never divine. This can hardly be substantiated by scripture. There seems to be no clear scripture in which a created being or thing is ever called Jehovah or was so known among the Jews. We have already seen that it was the prominent name by which this other person than God the Father was known in the Old Testament.

The very fact that the Old Testament scriptures calling this person God are quoted by John and Paul would certainly imply that they considered him as God. And the fact that they so clearly state that this other Old Testament personage is the Christ of the New Testament proves conclusively to all Bible believers that this second divine being of the Old Testament is the Christ of the New Testament.

If this angel of the Lord, Jehovah, and God of the Old Testament, and Christ of the New Testament, is not divine, then why do saints as well as angels worship Him? Why, then, is He written about as the object of worship throughout eternity?

He was worshipped by His disciples prior to His ascension into heaven. "When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean" (Matthew 8:1,2). Also, see John 9:35-38 and Matthew 14:33.

This was not the kind of homage paid to secular rulers, out of respect; for He made no pretense of rulership. It was not the worship paid to religious rulers, who exacted great external respect from their followers; for this Jesus rebuked. They worshipped Him as God.

He was worshipped by His followers after the resurrection. "He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him" (Luke 24:51, 52).

He is worshipped by angels. "When he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him (Hebrews 1:6).

He is the object of worship in eternity. "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:13).

The Jews had long since ceased to have anything to do with idol worship. The disciples refused to let anyone worship them, because they were men. This was so with Paul and Barnabas at Lystra. It was so with Peter at the house of Cornelius. Read, also, Rev. 19:10. If they refused worship because they were only men, do you suppose they would have worshipped a mere man?

If Christ is not divine, then it seems strange that the same attributes are ascribed to Him as are ascribed to God the Father.

Eternal. "The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord. I am the first and the last" (Rev. 1:8, 17). Was not this same attribute ascribed to God? See Isaiah 43:10; Isaiah 44:6.

Omnipresence. "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). See, also, Matthew 18:20 and Matthew 28:20.

Omniscience. "He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man" (John 2:24, 25). Does not this attribute belong to divinity alone? (I John 3:20).

Omnipotence. He laid claim to all power in heaven and earth. He called Himself "the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8). He claimed to be able to do anything the Father could do (John 5:19). Does it not follow, then, that if He possessed in Himself all the attributes of God that He must be divine?

All of this does not in any way prove that He was virgin born. He could have had a pre-existence, He could have been divine, He could have been equal with God in eternal existence and have had all divine attributes and been worshipped by men and angels, and still not have been virgin born. Neither does it in any way prove that He was the Son of God either before or after the incarnation.

Son of God before the incarnation. This title was not assumed by Jesus Christ, nor was it given to Him by His disciples because of His miraculous conception. It seems to be certain that the Jews recognized a being in every way equal with God and titled the Son of God. "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (Psalms 2:7). Paul, in referring to this scripture, implies that this person was above angels. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:1, 2). This is proof enough for any candid mind that He was called by God His Son before the incarnation and was so recognized by the Jews. He was the eternal Son of God and not just the Son of God eternal. Devout Jews believed Him to be the same as their Messiah. Apostate Jews in the time of Christ did not, but associated their Messiah with temporal rulership rather than one with a divine nature. They did not molest Jesus when He claimed to be the Messiah. They no doubt secretly hoped He was. But when He claimed to be the Son of God, they immediately took up stones to stone Him.

The Son of God after His incarnation. He is introduced to the world as such by God the Father. "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). He was revealed as such to John the Baptist (John 1:32-34). He was revealed as the Son of God to Nathaniel. Philip had brought Nathaniel to Jesus and introduced Him as "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John 1:45). Nathaniel looked on Him and exclaimed, "Thou art the Son of God" (John 1:49) He was revealed to Peter as the Son of God (Matthew 16:16-17). Space prohibits our giving all the scriptures relative to this, but this is sufficient to prove the point.

All of this does not yet prove that He was virgin born; but, thank God, there is proof of it. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 1:18). "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a

son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:23). "Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus" (Matthew 1:24,25). Read, also, Luke 1:26-38.

If scripture is to be believed at all, we believe we have given proof of Christ's divinity, His sonship, and His virgin birth. If He was born of a virgin, then He was man as well as God, human as well as divine. Are there proofs of His humanity as well as the proofs given of His divinity? He is called a man, but mostly the Son of man. He is designated "Son of man" over 71 times in the Bible. In most of these instances He employed it Himself. The appellation discloses His true character. Enough characteristics of man are ascribed to Him to place Him in the human category. He hungered, He thirsted, He slept, He wept, He was sustained by food, He toiled with His hands, He was tempted, He was obedient to His Father, He was meek and lowly, He lived, He suffered, and He died. Would not this indicate that He was human, as well as the scriptures given above indicate that He was divine? It demanded a whole Christ, God and man, the God-man, to redeem fallen humanity. This is the mystery of godliness.

Justified in the Spirit. This is another part of the mystery of godliness. His birth was justified in the Spirit (Matthew 1:18 and Luke 1:35).

His baptism by water was justified in the Spirit. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:13-17).

His miracles were justified in the Spirit. "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you" (Matthew 12:28). His teaching in the temple was justified by the Spirit. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18,19).

His resurrection is justified by the Spirit. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11).

This is another sign of the mystery of godliness in Him. Here, we have God the Son, the embodiment of the Godhead, "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9), being helped by the third person of that Godhead in all that He did.

Seen of angels. The angels were Christ's constant companions. The angels announced His birth to His mother (Luke 1:26-35). The angels announced His birth to the shepherds (Luke 2:8-11). The angels guarded His young life by warning Joseph not to put His mother away as a

harlot (Matthew 1:20). The angels also warned him to flee into Egypt with his young son (Matthew 2:13). The angel opened His tomb at His resurrection (Matthew 28:2). The angel announced His resurrection (Matthew 28:5,6). The angels no doubt attended His ascension and announced His second coming (Acts 1:10, 11). The angels will attend Him when He returns (I Thessalonians 4:16). What a glorious mystery this is.

Preached unto the Gentiles. This is a part of this mystery which it is hard for a Hebrew to understand. God had to give Peter a special revelation before he could grasp it. (Acts 10:28). Peter was called in question by the church officials because he preached to the Gentiles (Acts 11:1-18).

Paul was the first to be commissioned to preach to them (Acts 26:15-18). Yet even he must be forced to go to the Gentiles by the rejection of the Jews. The mystery of godliness in part is the mystery of one God only for all mankind and without whom there is no salvation.

Believed on in the world. NO being has ever pressed his feet on the soil of this earth who has so affected the lives of men through mere faith in his name as has Jesus Christ. This part of the mystery is so tremendous that it would take volumes to give even a short explanation of all the scriptures touching on it. That He, who had such a humble beginning, who never went to school, who never wrote a book, who never had a roof over His head to call His own, who wore a robe of charity, who did not have money enough to pay His taxes, who borrowed a beast to ride on and a room in which to hold a supper with His disciples, who died as a malefactor and was buried in a borrowed tomb, could so revolutionize the thinking and actions of mankind seems incredible. This is a high peak in the mystery of godliness.

Received up into glory. This is the cap sheaf to all of redemption's story. When He left heaven, he left it in poverty. The gates were closed behind Him. He could not return without redemption's price, which was His own precious blood. He could not enter heaven again unless He fulfilled the righteousness of the law of God. This He did by both His life and His death. On the resurrection morning, between the time that He met Mary and said, "Touch me not," and the time that He met the disciples in the upper room and said, "Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have," I am convinced that He took His own blood and went back to heaven and home. The gates were closed, but as He knocked at the closed gates, with redemption's price, we can almost hear them singing on the inside, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Those doors were opened for Him and He marched in, placing the blood on the mercy seat in the presence of God the Father, who, when He saw it, cried, "I'm satisfied." The law looked on, and cried, "Satisfied." Justice looked on and cried, "Satisfied." And, today, through that precious blood, which made atonement and satisfied the demands of the broken law, you and I can have satisfaction.

As He ascended, leaving His disciples looking up after Him, He stretched out His hands over them. It seems that one can almost see, descending upon humanity, thousands of blessings -- both temporal and spiritual from those pierced hands. And the fact that He is now seated at the right hand of His Father in heaven making intercession for us, while beyond our comprehension

and shrouded in mystery, nevertheless assures us of an open heaven and a way back to God from the death of sin and degradation.

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07 -- THE MYSTERY OF THE RAPTURE

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DISCLAIMER: -- I DO NOT ACCEPT THE AUTHOR'S TWO-STAGE RAPTURE-REVELATION THEORY PRESENTED IN THIS CHAPTER

By Duane V. Maxey

I regret that I cannot agree with R. G. Flexon's presentation of the Rapture-Revelation in this chapter as a two-stage event, the former preceding the latter by 7 years. This teaching, I consider to be erroneous and quite unScriptural. I shall not omit publishing the whole of the author's teaching on the subject below, but first I desire to inform the reader of two things:

(1) So far as I am aware, the theory of a two-stage Second Coming of Christ (The Rapture and Revelation being separated by anything more than "the twinkling of an eye") was never taught nor even heard of in the Church until the year 1830. In his 1973 book, "The Unbelievable Pre-Trib Origin," author Dave MacPherson ably traces the Pre-Trib Rapture theory to Scottish Tongues Lassie, Margaret McDonald, summing up his extensive research and discovery with these words: "'Margaret's Pre-Trib revelation occurred sometime in the early part of 1830."

Subsequent to the purported revelation of Margaret McDonald in 1830, Darby, Irving, and others began propagating this teaching. Later, it was adopted and made a part of Scofield's Bible, and at some point L. L. Pickett, G. D. Watson, M. W. Knapp and others in the Holiness Movement began to teach the theory. Nevertheless, I assert that neither John Wesley nor any of the earliest Methodists ever heard of the theory, and never taught it -- and, while Pickett and others may have gotten it first-hand or second hand from the Scofield Bible or elsewhere, other staunch Holiness men like A. M. Hills never accepted it and/or repudiated it.

I DOUBT THAT MANY, IF ANY, OF THOSE IN THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT WHO BOUGHT INTO THE THEORY EARLY ON (along with thousands of their ilk since) EVER DELVED DEEPLY, IF AT ALL INTO THE ORIGIN OF THIS TEACHING. I further assert that it was NOT taught by Christ, by the apostles, nor by ANY in the Church before the purported revelation of Margaret McDonald in about the month of March, 1830! The late arrival alone of this theory on the scene should be enough to cause serious students of Bible prophecy to question its authenticity. Let me urge all who can and will to obtain and read Dave MacPherson's book, "The Unbelievable Pre-Trib Origin."

(2) I assert that the Two-Stage Rapture-Revelation has no real foundation in the Scriptures, and that a thorough study of all passages relative to the subject and a genuine interpretation of the meaning of the Greek words Parousia, Apokalupsis, and Epiphany point to

the fact that the Rapture and Revelation are but two aspects of the One, Crisis Event of Christ's Second Coming -- and are not separated by 7 years, 3 and one-half years, nor anything more than "the twinkling of an eye." I too once accepted and taught the Pre-Trib teachings, but after serious and intent study I abandoned it as unScriptural and have refuted this theory exhaustively in my book, "His Appearing and His Kingdom." It is found in the HDM Digital Library as hdm0124, and I urge the readers of this chapter to R. G. Flexon's booklet to read this file along with Dave MacPherson's book.

Having thus prefixed my own sentiments and recommendations on this subject, I now present the whole of R. G. Flexon's Chapter 7 below. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind," but let not that persuasion come from prejudice, but from an honest examination of the facts relative to the subject. -- DVM

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"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" (I Cor. 15:51, 52).

Strange, this may seem, after God declared, "It is appointed unto men once to die" (Hebrews 9:27), "In Adam all die," and "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Yet Paul tells us in Corinthians that we shall not all sleep, or die. This means that some will get out of this world without death. The scriptures are very clear in their teaching that this mysterious change will take place at the coming of Jesus Christ.

One of the most prominent tenets of faith in the early church was the return of Jesus Christ. No matter what else the disciples preached, they tied in all truth with this great doctrine. In I John 3:1-3 we find it associated with the doctrine of the new birth. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." In I Thess. 5:23, it is associated with the truth of holiness. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." It was closely connected with the resurrection. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (I Thess. 4:13-18). It is connected with the judgment of rewards. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27). "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which

the Lord the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7, 8). It has a connection with practical living. "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Tim. 6:13, 14). Read Matt. 25:13; 2 Peter 3:14; Luke 21:36; Titus 2:11-14. Jesus Christ proclaimed it Himself when He said, "I will come again" (John 14:3) and "Occupy till I come."

The two stages of coming -- a mystery. His coming will be in two stages. One will be in the aerial regions to catch away His saints. The other will be to the earth to set up His kingdom. Let us notice the Scriptures on these two stages of His coming, in comparison.

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THE RAPTURE

Heb. 9:28
I Thess. 4:16-17
Matt. 16:27
Matt. 25:13
I Thess. 1:9-10
I John 3:2
Col. 3:4
John 14:3
I Cor. 1:7
2 Tim. 4:8
Titus 2:13
Luke 21:34-36
I Thess. 5:1-7
I Thess. 5:23
Phil. 3:20-21

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THE REVELATION

Matt. 25:31
2 Thess. 1:7-10
Matt. 24:30
Deut. 33:2
Psa. 102:16
Dan. 7:13
Zech. 14:4-5
Acts 15:5-17
Zech. 4:14
2 Thess. 1:7-8
Job 19:25
Rev. 1:7

2 Thess. 2:8
Rev. 5:13
Matt. 25:32

* * *

Many more scriptures might be compiled, but these are enough to show the difference between the two stages of His coming.

We notice, next, what takes place at the two stages of His coming.

THE RAPTURE

Christ shall come in person (Acts 1:11).

He shall come with a shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God (I Thess. 4:16).

There shall be a resurrection of all the saints (I Thess. 4:16).

There will be a translation of the living saints (I Thess. 4:17).

THE REVELATION

He shall be revealed in person (2 Thess. 1:7).

He shall come with His saints (Jude 14).

He will come with angels (2 Thess. 1:7).

He shall come with clouds of glory (Matt. 24:30).

He shall come with judgment (2 Thess. 1:8, 9; Matt. 25:31).

He shall come to Mt. Olivet (Zech. 14:4),

The Jews as a nation will turn to Him (Jer. 23:5-8).

He will set up His earthly kingdom (Isa. 9:6, 7).

He will subdue the nations with a rod of iron (Psa. 2:9; Rev. 2:25-27).

* * *

The mystery of His second coming was not revealed fully until after Christ was rejected by the Jews -- until after He had been crucified and resurrected, and had ascended. It is such a

mystery, with its many ground-laying preliminaries, its two stages, the great tribulation judgments separating its two stages, and the great and final sequences accompanying the second stage, that one is left awed at its contemplation.

A mystery as to time. "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." This is strange language for Christ to use, who was one with the Father. The very fact that the Son did not know the time shrouds it in mystery. This should forever keep us from listening to or being influenced by date setters.

If Christ did not know the time, while in His sinless, unglorified body, how can any man in a body under the curse of sin, with a mind warped by sin, be able to compute the time? From chronology, and from signs of the times, one may guess at it; but it is never wise to go into the realm of speculation in teaching truth.

First, we notice the chronological information gathered from the aeons. This word aeon is variously translated.

In Heb. 1:2 it is translated "worlds."

In Eph. 2:2 it is translated "course."

In Eph. 3:11 it is called "eternal."

In Eph. 3:21 it is called the "end."

In Eph. 2:7 it is called "ages."

In Heb. 7:28 it is called "evermore."

In all, it is used 124 times in the New Testament.

The fall of man terminated the aeon of innocence.

The flood terminated the aeon of conscience.

The fall of the tower of Babel terminated the aeon of human government.

The judgments of Egypt terminated the aeon of unconditional promise.

The crucifixion of Christ and the fall of Jerusalem terminated the aeon of law.

The rapture of the saints terminates the aeon of grace.

The white throne judgment terminates the aeon of the millennium.

These sevens make a week of aeons. Then we will have a new heaven and a new earth, and a new order with a new series of aeons; for then we enter upon the aeons of the aeons.

By these we see the order of the ages; but the time of their termination we can not determine. Chronologically, we can fit the seventieth week of Daniel into the time between the rapture of the saints and the revelation of Christ. But even this gives no set time for the rapture. See Daniel 9:23-27.

It is true that coming events cast their shadows before them. Many things are happening today which seem to indicate that the rapture is near at hand. But dogmatism about such signs never pays. To found truth on shadow is never safe. Some of the shadows of His coming seemingly have existed since the days of Paul. But the shadows of the night of sin which seem to be engulfing the world are deepening and are darker than ever before. So dark are they that all world leaders in government, education, and religion are alarmed, and the heart of man in all walks of life is failing because of fear of those things which are coming upon the earth.

Speculation is dangerous. Detailing in this realm brings fear without foundation. But facts corresponding with scripture may prove to be their fulfillment and be the shadows to warn us that the rapture is near. "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Daniel 12:4), seemingly is being fulfilled before our eyes. Only a foolish person would contend that 2 Tim. 3:1 is not in the process of fulfillment now. Do not some of the most prominent false "isms" of the day answer to 1 Tim. 4:1? It would certainly seem that we are living in the days spoken of in 2 Thess. 2:3 and Luke 18:8. Is not the present relationship between capital and labor depicted in James 5:1-8? Comparing Israel today with Amos 9:15, Acts 15:13-18, and Ezek. 37:1-14, do we not get their real picture? Israel, God's timepiece, is surely ticking away the last moments of this dispensation. The time of His rapture is a mystery, but we are exhorted to watch. Read Matt. 24:42; 25:13; Mark 13:33-37; Rev. 16:15.

A mystery as to its occurrences. The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven. That is yet future and is not to be confused with the coming of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. He will herald His coming with a shout. That in itself is a change of order for Christ, and is mysterious. His coming will be announced by angels, and with the voice of the archangel. A trumpet, called the "trump of God," will be blown before Him. These sounds will be loud, for they will be heard by earth dwellers, although He will not come clear to the earth. The dead in Christ shall rise first, and the living saints shall be changed. When "this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality," death and its hideousness shall be swallowed up in victory; and as we wing our way heavenward we will be able to shout, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

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THE END