

Colossians 1.24-2.5, 'Mystery' in Paul (*Wednesday Night*)

Daniel is the only place in the OT where we find the word "mystery."

- *Daniel 2.17-45* — the king's dream and its interpretation are a mystery.
 - Daniel 2.22-23,
 - "he **reveals** deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have **given me wisdom and might**, and have now **made known to me** what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter."
 - Daniel 2.28-29,
 - "There is a God in heaven who **reveals mysteries**, and he has **made known** to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and **he who reveals mysteries made known** to you what is to be."
- *We see here, as we see in Colossians, that 'mystery' does not refer to something unknowable*; but rather to something only knowable through secret knowledge. Or, we might say, by revelation that comes from God.
- *The final detail of Nebuchadnezzar's dream* is the rock that shatters the statue and grows to cover the earth. I'm not sure that Paul is directly referring to or specifically thinking about Daniel's prophecy when he speaks of 'mystery.' But I also don't think it is a coincidence that Daniel's answer to the mystery is a Messianic prophecy.

Mark 4.11, *And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret (mystery) of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables."*

So what is this mystery? (Colossians and Ephesians 3)

- *v. 25-26a* — *It is the focus of Paul's ministry, given to him by God*
 - Ephesians 3.2-3a, *assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation.*

- v. 26 — *Paul says that it has been hidden for generations, but now revealed to his saints.*
 - Ephesians 3.4-5, *When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.*
 - 1 Peter speaks of the prophets of old desiring to look into and understand these things. They were given messages and visions of what was to come, but they didn't know the timeline or the details of how it would all work out. But the answer to the mystery has now been given.
- v. 27 — *Here is the mystery: Christ in you, the hope of glory*
 - By glory, Paul is speaking of salvation, the return of Christ, and the setting up of his eternal kingdom.
 - The mystery is Jesus. More specifically, the salvation offered to all people.
 - Ephesians 3.6, *This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.*

For a Jew, they thought—and still think—that they are the heirs of all of God's promises, and there is no hope for the Gentiles.

- *This is why Paul writes in Ephesians 2.15-16, He created in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and reconciled us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.*
- *This is why Paul constantly points back to Abraham*, to whom were given the promises, and who existed before the Law was given. We are sons and daughters of Abraham.
- *And this was always the plan!* This is why Abraham, and later Israel, were called to be a light to the nations. They were to invite them in to his fellowship.
- *Gentiles are not temporary guests.* We don't get a room out in the barn. We are not second class citizens in the Kingdom of God.
- *Kitty Ferguson*, "To find that the experience of God reported by a rocket scientist or a saint may to a significant degree be consistent with the experience of God reported by an illiterate farm laborer, a punk rocker, or Miss America is jarring to our sense of the appropriateness of things."

There are certain things about God that are unknowable. If we knew everything about God, then we would be equal with God. There are some things that are just beyond our comprehension, and there are things he just chooses not to tell us.

But he does tell us this great mystery. How are we to be saved? What is our hope? It is Jesus. And who is salvation offered to? All people.

And even beyond this, God gives understanding to those whose faith is in Jesus to understand what some call the “deeper things” (2.3, 1.9).

- So we all have access to all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And it begins with faith in Jesus and seeking to understand his Word. So none of us have an excuse for being lazy or immature Christians.

Finally: there are still some things that are a mystery. In 2 Thessalonians, Paul speaks of the mystery of lawlessness. Our generations desire to look into the end of things. We have the overview, but not yet the details. So let us know all we can, trust God with the rest, and eagerly await the glorious return of our Savior.