

A Tract For The Jews
And Professing Christians

THE MYSTERY COMES ALIVE

Elijah Thomas Chacko

**The Discovery Of The Mystery Of Christ
Yeshua From The Old Testament Is To Be
Found Not Only In The Gospel And The
Epistles But Also In The Experimental
Reality Of Every True Believer**

The twenty-one epistles in the New Testament are the explanation, elaboration and the practical application of the Gospel. It is the *"so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him"* (Hebrews 2:3b). The epistles therefore are the confirmation of the narratives and teachings we find in the Gospel. They serve to affirm and expound the Person, life and redemptive work of Christ Yeshua.

While a considerable segment of the epistles, especially those which come later, serves to evoke in us militancy and belligerence against the ravaging floods of apostasy, the purpose of some is to exhort us to practise a consistent and congruous living with our profession. However almost all these epistles principally speak of discovering the mystery of Christ Yeshua. Even as Paul the apostle ended his most famous treatise, namely, the epistle to the Romans *"according to my Gospel, and the preaching of Yeshua Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith"* (Romans 16:25b,26). Christology is the essential subject matter of the epistles. But, according to Paul in his concluding doxology in Romans, it is also a subject shrouded in mystery in the Old Testament. It is through the unearthing of this mystery from the Old Testament that Christ Yeshua is presented to the people of all nations.

Why are the Christological passages of the

Old Testament regarded as a mystery? As Paul himself tells us, Christology both in the Gospel and epistles was somewhat kept secret in the Old Testament economy. The unsearchable riches of Christ were all veiled and concealed, so that without illumined eyes or unction of the Holy Ghost, Christology cannot be apprehended from the Scriptures of the prophets. The fact is that New Testament Christology is embedded in the Old Testament. However, by the wisdom of God, it was concealed; just like the holiest of all was hidden from the holy place by the veil of the temple. It was at the death of Christ that the veil of the temple was torn asunder from the top to the bottom signifying a gracious provision of access and boldness into the very presence of God! So it is at the very point of the death of Christ, following the remark of Christ, "*It is finished!*" (*John 19:30*), the veil that rendered the doctrines of Christ a mystery was dissolved. It is through faith in Christ Yeshua that the unsearchable riches are discovered from the Old Testament. The "*veil is done away in Christ*" (*II Corinthians 3:14b*).

It is through the faith of the apostles, and particularly that of Paul, that this discovery is afforded to us in the epistles. Paul is the author of two thirds of the epistles. The other contributors of the remaining one third of the epistles are John (3 epistles), Peter (2 epistles), James and Jude. What I like to emphasise to you is that these very intricate doctrines were all discovered from the Old Testament. Without the foundation of the Old Testament, New Testament Christology cannot be maintained and buttressed. Wherefore whenever the apostles affirm certain attributes and works of Christ,

they always cite and substantiate from the writings of the Old Testament prophets.

How grateful must we be for the discoveries made by the apostles concerning Christ Yeshua both from His own life in the days of His flesh and from the Old Testament. Paul spent about seventeen years in reclusion to study the whole range of the Old Testament to discover Christ Yeshua therein. Yea, he was found of Yeshua on the road to Damascus. Yet he was determined to search the Scriptures in a deeper way. *"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me"* (John 5:39). Paul practised that when he retreated to Arabia for three years of meditation and even more time in his hometown of Tarsus in Cilicia and elsewhere. While Paul had special revelations concerning these mysteries of Christ (*Galatians 1:16*), there is no doubt that he was thorough, meticulous and diligent in his study of the Scriptures. We are now privileged to enjoy the fruits of his labour through his epistles. Paul's perspiration, rigours and waiting upon the Word of God will become our benefit and blessing and even our salvation, if we apply ourselves diligently by faith to apprehend the content of his epistles.

Paul exhorts Timothy that the antidote to the raging floods of apostasy is the constant study of the Scriptures. *"The Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Yeshua"* (*II Timothy 3:15b*). It must be underlined that Paul is principally referring to the Old Testament as the New Testament canon was yet to be established then. Peter avers this also, although he confesses that he and others were honoured to

be eye witnesses of the blessed life and auspicious events pertaining to Christ Yeshua. *"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day Star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"* (II Peter 1:19-21). When Peter speaks of a more sure word of prophecy, it must be stressed that Peter is especially referring to the Old Testament. More importantly, Peter is avouching the best proof of Christology comes from the Old Testament. Like Paul, Peter pored over and surveyed the Old Testament again and again to behold therein the doctrines pertaining to Christ Yeshua. The epistles are pre-eminently the harvest of their reflections and meditations on the writings of Moses, David and the rest of the Old Testament authors.

Christ Yeshua and Him crucified is indeed the most fundamental subject of the Old Testament. Christ Yeshua saturates it from Genesis to Malachi. Romans to Jude underscores that. But in the Old Testament, Christ Yeshua is shrouded in mystery. Everything about Christ Yeshua is cloaked in the mantle of typology, similitude, sacrifices, ceremonies and figurative and symbolical language. Moses leads us to Yeshua (Joshua). Moses cannot save us but like the law, he facilitates our coming to Christ. Christ is the second Man and the last Adam. In the first Adam, we all fell. In the last Adam, the elect are all redeemed. Christ is in Melchizedek, the high priestly King of Salem,

who blessed Abraham, when the latter offered tithes to him. Christ is the greater than Isaac that was to be sacrificed in Mount Moriah (Calvary). As David was the anointed King of Israel, so is Christ the great King in heavenly Zion. Christ Yeshua was typified in Zerubbabel, Cyrus the great and Artaxerxes II. Christ Yeshua is the greater than Solomon if we do not forget that both Christ and Solomon are the sons of David. Every prophetic mystery pointed to Yeshua the ultimate Prophet. The tabernacle too represented Christ; the temple as well. He is "*the glory of this latter house*" (*Haggai 2:9a*). All the furnishings of the temple and the tabernacle bespeak of Christ. The Psalms are inundated with Christ Yeshua. He is Wisdom crying out from the Book of Proverbs. He is also the Preacher in Ecclesiastes. He is the Beloved in the Song. Even as we consider all these, it is rather surprising to maintain that Christ is hidden in the Old Testament, when Christ is replete therein. Yea, as the epistles of the apostles assert, all the prophecies and promises of God find their ultimate fulfilment in Christ. They declare His incarnation, birth, death, resurrection and ascension. They also testify of the eventual glory whereby the Father will honour Him with. In both the economies of creation and redemption, Christ is pre-eminent. It is by Him the counsel of the eternal will of God was decreed in eternity past. Its fulfilment is through Him and for His glory.

But why is there such an en masse rejection of the Messiah by the Jews? Even as the Old Testament affirms "*who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?*" (*Isaiah 53:1; Romans 10:16*). "*I am*

sought of them that asked not for Me; I am found of them that sought Me not: I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people..." (Isaiah 65:1a,2a; Romans 10:20,21). There are two cardinal reasons why the Jews find it difficult to accept Yeshua as the Messiah. Firstly, they are ashamed to identify with their Messiah in the lowly estate He chose as His backdrop. Born in a manger through the womb of Mary, a virgin village lass, Christ was regarded merely as a carpenter's son from Nazareth. Secondly, and more significantly, the Jews recoil at the very thought of beholding the Godhead in the Messiah. How can Godhead and manhood be inseparably joined together? How can two whole, perfect and distinct natures exist in one Person without conversion, composition and confusion? (As the honourable Westminster divines did elegantly and eloquently define incarnation in so ingenious a manner; The Westminster Confession of Faith, Original Version, 1646). Yet these mysteries concerning Christ Yeshua have all been foretold in their own Scriptures. The Jews must be so blind as to grope in the noon day brightness; even the "brightness of His glory" (Hebrews 1:3a) that radiates from the Old Testament. "But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart" (II Corinthians 3:14,15).

But praise God, these mysteries pertaining to Christ are done away through faith in the Gospel. "Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is,

there is liberty" (II Corinthians 3:16,17). Thank God also for the epistles in the New Testament. They speak so wonderfully and beautifully of Christ Yeshua. They unravel with consummate skill and adroitness the mysteries of Christ hidden from the beginning of creation. They particularly manifest the divine attributes of Christ, His very manhood via His incarnation, the atoning efficacy of His death, His resurrection and the glory that follows thereafter. Christ is the firstfruits of the resurrected (I Corinthians 15:20,23; Colossians 1:18). He is the Head of the church. He is the Bridegroom of the bride, the true church in the wilderness. Yes, even the union with His bride (the church) is a mystery. "*This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church*" (Ephesians 5:32). By this Paul means the experimental reality of the union between Christ and the congregation of true believers is an enigma even to believers. Yet it is veritable and living. "*The Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God*" (Colossians 2:19).

The spiritual union and communion between Christ and the believer is no less a mystery. Hence Paul spoke of the effects of the transformation that Christ wrought in his life; "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*" (Galatians 2:20a). "*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (Philippians 1:21). "*That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead*" (Philippians 3:10, 11). How is this mystery manifested? Is it just by

understanding it intellectually or notionally? Nay, it is also experimental! It is lively and dynamic! It is spiritually energizing. "*It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing*" (John 6:63a). The mystery is manifested as a living reality in one's life as Paul conveyed to the Colossians, "*Christ, Who is our life*" (Colossians 3:4a).

Who can testify of such experiences? Only those who have tasted Christ. "*If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious*" (I Peter 2:3). The mystery that is in the Old Testament and recorded for us in the epistles should now become an everyday experience. This constitutes our subjective assurance in our pilgrimage of faith to the golden shores of the celestial city. Are we bound for there too? Then these mysteries of Christ, as testified and avouched by the apostles and substantiated by the Old Testament, ought to be experienced through the indwelling Spirit of Christ in our own lives. "*But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed unto the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*" (II Corinthians 3:18). If we cannot certify this as our constant and consistent testimony, then like Paul I must say, "*for I stand in doubt of you*" (Galatians 4:20b). Some may say that they had had it in the past, and for a period, and then such bouts of experiences faded away; so then like Paul I am compelled to ask, "*Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?*" (Galatians 4:15a)

Brethren, what is the point of knowing the mysteries pertaining to Christ, if they are not experimental to us? We then are no different from the majority of the Jews who rejected the Person of Christ despite the overwhelm-

ing body of evidence. Living in the Gospel dispensation, we have the privileges and the blessings of the Gospel, the epistles and the Holy Spirit to bring home Christ to the canvas of our own soul; yet in practice we hardly manifest the fruits of our union with Christ Yeshua. We ought to have a felt sense of Christ; we should be testifying "I know that He lives because He abides in my heart." Otherwise we may well be deluding ourselves into the gaping jaws of hell! If we are to have a felt sense of the sweet presence of Christ, it must be conferred by God Himself according to His sovereign pleasure. To make it personally experimental to us frequently, we ought to conscientiously and studiously draw Christ to us. *"I rose up to open to my Beloved"* (Song 5:5a). The lovely and alluring promises of Christ encourage us to draw nigh to God, so that He may draw nigh to us (James 4:8a). As the prophet Isaiah directs us, *"Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"* (Isaiah 55:6,7). Even in an evil day like ours, when apostasy is rampant and rife, the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Yeshua and the reality of our union with Him can become alive. Amen. ❧

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