

## The Mystery

*"Making known unto us the MYSTERY of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in Christ ..." (1:9) . The word "mystery" is found at least six times in this letter (1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:31; 6:19). While Paul is not an exclusive user of this word "mystery," he is still its most frequent user. Aside from Ephesians, the word appears in his other epistles in Romans, 1 Corinthians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians and 1 Timothy. We understand a mystery to be something which we do not understand; but its most frequent appearances in Paul's writings could be thus defined: "Something once concealed but now revealed." In its six appearances in Ephesians, it carries that thought at least five times, and likely in all six. Certainly that is its meanings in the present text: "making KNOWN unto us the MYSTERY of his will." The text indicates that it is to all believers to whom God's mystery has been revealed. Yet, elsewhere in the letter it is apparent that that revelation came from him who wrote the letter and who was inspired of God in its writings. In chapter 3:1-4 he wrote, "For this cause, I Paul, a the prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of you Gentiles, --- if so be that ye have heard of the dispensation of that grace of God which was given me in you-ward; how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, whereby when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ ..." This claim of being chosen to reveal God's mystery continues in verses 8-9: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all the saints was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the dispensation of that mystery which for ages hath been hidden in God who created all things ..."*

There is no misunderstanding Paul's claim as to his inspiration in Galatians 1:11f: *"For I make known to you brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it; but it came to me by revelation of Jesus Christ."*

The genuineness of Paul's apostleship rested in large measure upon his having received God's message through direct agency of the Holy Spirit. Such was the promise Jesus made to His original twelve apostles (Jn. 14:25; 15:22; 16:13). For Paul to be on equal footing with them (albeit the thrust of his apostleship was different from theirs: he to the gentiles; they to the Jews), it was absolutely necessary that Paul be fully and equally inspired as they. Such was Paul's claim: *"For I reckon that I am not a white behind the very chiefest apostles. But though I be rude in speech, yet am I not in knowledge; nay in every way have we made this manifest unto you in all things"* (2 Cor. 11:5f). Admittedly in this Corinthians text *"the very chiefest apostles"* of whom Paul refers could have been false ones; still, the apostles

claimed that he was not deficient in knowledge in any area. And, while his comparison between him and "*apostles*" in Second Corinthians might have been between himself and men who really were not apostles; the contrast in Galatians two allows no room for dispute: Paul compares himself to the original twelve and asserts that 1) he was independently inspired of God in the message he taught, just as they; and 2) the original apostles could add nothing to the knowledge the Holy Spirit had endowed him with (Gal. 2:1-10). It was God's revelation of His mystery to Paul, which Paul had faithfully passed on to the Ephesians. The full realizations of the benefits of this mystery is found (as has been earlier shown) in Christ.

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