

## I. INTRODUCTION – THE “MYSTERY OF CHRIST”

- A. Paul the apostle says that the gospel “according to the mystery now revealed” in Christ is God’s ordained means of establishing the saints in maturity, righteousness, and obedience.

*Romans 16:25-27 NIV*

***<sup>25</sup> Now to him who is able to establish you (in faith and obedience, cf. vs. 26, Rom. 1:5) by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ (Gk. sense - “Jesus Christ’s proclamation”<sup>1</sup>), according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, <sup>26</sup> but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him— <sup>27</sup> to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.***

- B. Paul said that God had called him to make plain to everyone the administration of the gospel according to mystery of Christ.

*Ephesians 3:7-9 (NIV)*

***<sup>7</sup> I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power. <sup>8</sup> Although I am less than the least of all God’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.***

- C. As we will see, clear understanding of what the apostles called the “mystery of Christ” is designed by God to motivate the saints to pursue lives of righteousness before God in the face of great adversity. As we enter the end of the age, therefore, we need to make sure that we have clear understanding of what Paul means by the “gospel according to the mystery” of Jesus the Messiah.

## II. GUARDING AGAINST GNOSTICISM

- A. First, let us briefly mention what a mystery in the biblical sense is *NOT*. A biblical mystery is not some kind of esoteric or special knowledge accessible exclusively to those in an “enlightened” inner circle, and the attainment of which leads to salvation. This is Gnosticism. Gnosticism is deceptive on several levels. It is lie-based in its *view of reality*, its *view of knowledge*, and its *view of salvation*.
- B. The ancient Gnostics had great contempt for the human body and all things physical. This tendency had its roots in Hellenistic (Greek) culture. Salvation for the Gnostics meant the soul’s escape from the body through death. Because of their contempt for the body and things physical, the Gnostics resisted the biblical doctrines of the bodily resurrection, the incarnation, and the kingdom of God on the earth. John tells us that this is the spirit of the anti-Christ.

*1 John 4:2-3 (NIV)*

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Warner, “Paul and the Mystery,” <<http://www.pfrs.org/pd/09.html>>.

**<sup>2</sup> This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup> but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.**

- C. The Gnostics were also antagonistic toward the Bible's declaration of God as the Creator who performed Genesis 1, since they didn't see the creation as good. The early church father Irenaeus said that the Nicolaitans were a Gnostic group whose members believed that the Creator of the world was a lesser deity, and not the Father Jesus proclaimed (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III, xi). The Father was postulated as a higher deity who had sent Jesus to make a way for people to escape the cruel grip of the Old Testament Creator God of the Jews who had caged-up people's souls in materiality.
- D. The idea that salvation means the soul's escape to a "heavenly destiny" is more reflective of Platonic thought than biblical truth. Plato divided reality into two realms: the "ideal realm" and the corrupt "perceptual" or material realm. Plato saw death as a friend because it liberated the soul from the body. Though different Gnostic groups had their own nuances of teaching, on a general level most if not all of them operated out of a Platonic worldview.
- E. God hates Gnosticism, not just because it is built on a deceptive view of reality, but because it is fertile ground for a lifestyle of pride and wickedness. Wickedness, pride and rebellion is what gets people thrown into the Lake of Fire in the age to come, and that is what grieves God. Contempt for the body usually leads either to sexual immorality (the body does not matter and is not connected to spirituality, therefore what I do with my body doesn't really matter) or self-righteousness and religious pride (the harsher I am toward my body, the more acceptable I am to God).

*Revelation 2:20-25 (NIV)*

**<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching (Gnostic in orientation, cf. vs. 24) she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols (disconnect between the body and spirituality unto wickedness). <sup>21</sup> I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. <sup>22</sup> So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. <sup>23</sup> I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds (judgment of Jezebel's followers a sign of the coming judgment in Day of the Lord). <sup>24</sup> Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (Gnostic relationship to knowledge driven by Satan) (I will not impose any other burden on you): <sup>25</sup> Only hold on to what you have until I come.**

*Revelation 2:6 (NIV)*

***But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.***

*Colossians 2:20-23 (NIV)*

**<sup>20</sup> Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: <sup>21</sup> "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not**

*touch!'"? <sup>22</sup> These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. <sup>23</sup> Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence (true victory over the flesh only through the grace of the Spirit).*

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NIV)

***For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.***

- F. All of us need to guard our hearts against pride. At the end of the day, Gnosticism is simply an expression of the sinful tendency of the human heart to relate to knowledge in ways that exalt self rather than God. All of us have that little prideful Gnostic itch that our fallen hearts like to scratch now and then.
- G. Many of those in the early centuries of the church who called themselves Christian but were Gnostic in their theological orientation liked to take biblical words and give them unbiblical meanings. Many in the church today do the same thing. When we use the word "mystery," want to make sure that we do not read Gnostic-oriented meanings into the term.

<b>Biblical Terms</b>	<b>Gnostic/Platonic-Oriented Meaning</b>	<b>Biblical Meaning</b>
<i>Knowledge</i>	Special information gained upon entry into a secret society. Elitist, pride-based unto accruelement of power, title, honor, and wealth, etc. Information and knowledge kept within a closed circle and made known to new initiates only if it leads to increased personal power and control.	Intimate fellowship and relationship with God. Understanding of God's ways made available to the whole world through the gospel. Humility-based unto inheritance in age to come (e.g. 1 Cor. 8:1-3). Made known at personal expense and sacrifice.

<p><i>Wisdom and Revelation</i></p>	<p>Source – guru(s), Satan, etc. cf. Rev. 2:24</p> <p>Attainment of some kind of special knowledge unto self-promotion and preservation of power.</p> <p>Pride-based increase in “understanding.”</p> <p>Sources and rituals concealed in secret.</p> <p>Unto the exaltation of the power brokers (e.g. Jezebel and her followers).</p> <p>Unto wicked behavior.</p> <p>Obtained through our <i>own chosen means</i> and in <i>our own timing</i> (cf. Gen. 3:6) – i.e. pride.</p> <p>False/deceptive content and self-exalting motives driving quest for increased understanding.</p> <p>Lie-based understanding.</p>	<p>Source – Jesus, the Holy Spirit. cf. Eph. 1:17-23, Rom. 16:25, Eph. 3:5</p> <p>Insight by the Spirit concerning our coming inheritance as revealed in Scripture (e.g. Eph. 1:17-23), and how to faithfully walk in righteousness and self-sacrifice unto receiving that inheritance (Ph. 1:9-11)</p> <p>Humility-based increase in true understanding.</p> <p>The Bible/gospel message freely available to all.</p> <p>Unto the edification and strengthening of the entire Body.</p> <p>Unto righteous behavior (Ph. 1:9-11).</p> <p>Growth in righteous understanding in through <i>God’s</i> chosen means and timing. God gives understanding as we walk humbly in relationship with Him, as we read and hunger for the Scriptures, and as we submit our minds and hearts to Him (cf. Prov. 2, Col. 1:9-14)).</p> <p>True content, pure and God-exalting motives driving the quest for increased understanding.</p> <p>Truth-based understanding.</p>
<p><i>Natural</i></p>	<p>The inferior material “realm,” in contrast to the truly spiritual and superior “supernatural realm.”</p>	<p>Normal life processes that characterize the present age (some continuity and also discontinuity in its fallenness).</p>
<p><i>Spiritual</i></p>	<p>Immaterial and non-bodily.</p>	<p>Of the power of the Spirit. E.g. Isaac’s birth.</p>
<p><i>Salvation</i></p>	<p>Escape from the body through death. Exaltation of death.</p>	<p>New, resurrected bodies at the Second Coming. Destruction of death.</p>
<p><i>Resurrection</i></p>	<p>“Spiritual” resurrection, i.e. soul’s escape from the body.</p>	<p>Bodily resurrection by the Spirit’s power.</p>
<p><i>Kingdom</i></p>	<p>“Heavenly” spiritualized kingdom</p>	<p>Real government on the earth</p>

Mystery	Used to dismiss and spiritualize the Old Testament. E.g. Marcion – rejected OT, kept parts of Luke and Paul’s letters, twisting Paul’s use of the word “mystery.”	Understanding granted by the Spirit concerning God’s plan to restore all things in accordance with Old Testament hope. Entrusted to the apostles for the purpose of being broadly disseminated and proclaimed openly to Jew and Gentile for their strengthening in the gospel prophesied from the beginning.
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### III. THE CONCEPT OF “MYSTERY” IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A. In the New Testament, the gospel according to the mystery simply means the gospel that was prophesied and understood in the Old Testament, but the precise details and historical circumstances of which were not yet fully disclosed or understood. However, that which was hidden is now disclosed and therefore understood because God has made it known in Jesus. God gave the apostles understanding of this mystery through Jesus’ preaching, ministry, death and resurrection, and also through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 16:25-27 (NIV)

**25 Now to him who is able to establish you (in obedience, cf. vs. 26) by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ (Gk. sense - “Jesus Christ’s proclamation”), according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, 26 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him— 27 to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.**

Matthew 13:11-12, 16-17 (NIV)

**11 He replied, “The knowledge of the secrets (Gk. “musterion” – “mysteries”) of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them (Pharisees and others in Israel whose hearts were hard toward God, cf. vv. 13-15). 12 Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him...16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. 17 For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.**

Luke 24:24-32 (NIV)

**24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” 25 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. 28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. 29 But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They**

***asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"***

Acts 1:3 (NIV)

***After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.***

Ephesians 3:2-5 (NIV)

***<sup>2</sup> Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you (Gentiles, vs. 1), <sup>3</sup> that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. <sup>4</sup> In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, <sup>5</sup> which was not made known to men in other generations (the prophets) as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.***

- B. Daniel 2 – Nebuchadnezzar's Dream. Known, but not understood until God made known the meaning through Daniel's interpretation.
- C. E.g. Isaiah 53 interpreted Messianically until it was applied to the cross by the followers of Jesus. Isaiah 53 was in their hands, but they didn't fully understand that it meant execution of the Messiah on the cross (very offensive).
- D. E.g. First-fruits and Waving the Sheafs, Feast of Weeks, and many other things in the Law. God told them to do things, but didn't give much explanation as to why He wanted them to do those things. He was cultivating the olive tree to prepare Israel for Christ (cf. Rom. 11:17-21).

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NIV)

***<sup>3</sup> For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.***

E. Irenaeus

*"True knowledge, then, consists in the understanding of Christ, which Paul terms **the wisdom of God hidden in a mystery**, which 'the natural man receiveth not,' the doctrine of the cross; of which if any man 'taste,' he will not accede to the disputations and quibbles of proud and puffed-up men, who go into matters of which they have no perception. For the truth is unsophisticated; and 'the word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart,' as the same apostle declares, being easy of comprehension to those who are obedient." (Irenaeus, Frag. xxxvi)<sup>2</sup>*

- F. One of the reasons God concealed parts of His plan from the understanding of His prophets, was to safeguard the plan until the time for its historical fulfillment arrived.

1 Corinthians 2:6-8 (NKJV)

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<sup>2</sup> Irenaeus, quoted in "Paul and the Mystery, <<http://www.pfrs.org/pd/09.html>>

***<sup>6</sup> However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. <sup>7</sup> But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, <sup>8</sup> which none of the rulers of this age knew (ESV, NIV – “understood”); for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.***

G. Paul calls the gospel according to the mystery of Christ the “word of God in its fullness.” “The word of God” here refers to the hope of the Old Testament, and “fullness” refers to that which is now more fully understood about that hope in light of the Messiah’s first coming.

*Colossians 1:25-26 (NIV)*

***<sup>25</sup> I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— <sup>26</sup> the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.***

H. Paul didn’t take his assignment from the Lord lightly. He and the other apostles had been entrusted with the task of making some very important news and information freely available to the world. They were servants of the gospel. They served and cared for it with great attentiveness. They were at its beck and call. They were called to embody the message they preached at the core of their being. We need to imitate their example.

*1 Corinthians 4:1 (NIV)*

***This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. <sup>2</sup> Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.***

*1 Corinthians 11:1 (NIV)*

***Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.***

*Philippians 4:9 (NIV)*

***Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.***

I. There was something about the gospel as now more fully understood in Christ that brought great persecution to Paul. He requested prayer that he might proclaim the mystery of the gospel boldly. Something God was doing was causing great offense in the hearts of many people in his day.

*Ephesians 6:19-20 (NIV)*

***<sup>19</sup> Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.***

*Colossians 4:3-4 (NIV)*

***<sup>3</sup> And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. <sup>4</sup> Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.***

- J. The mystery of Christ concerns the manner in which God has chosen to administrate, execute, implement, and carry out His plan of redemption and fulfill His promises made in the covenants recorded (or prophesied about – NC) in the Hebrew Scriptures (Creation, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New).

*Ephesians 3:8-9 (NIV)*

***<sup>8</sup> Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.***

- K. As we explore this topic, we will see that what Paul calls the mystery of Christ has several core dimensions. Again, the point is simply that some aspects of God's plan of redemption were not fully understood until Christ came. The unexpected aspects only made sense against the backdrop of what the people of Israel already did expect based on their reading of the Hebrew Scriptures.
- L. The gospel according to the mystery of Christ relates to God's plan and story of world redemption. God's plan is like an exciting book full of drama. You know the good guys are going to win in the end, but there are lots of twists and turns in the middle. There is an introduction at the beginning, a conclusion at the end, and all of the excitement in between. In order to understand the turns and twists of the middle chapters of God's story, we need to first take a step back and see the big picture of where the story is going. *Perfection* and *Restoration* are the bookends of God's plan of redemption.

#### IV. PERFECTION

- A. In the beginning, there was perfection in the Garden. There was perfection of life (no death), perfection of rule (the kingdom of God), and perfection of fellowship (no shame and guilt).

- B. Perfection of Life

*Genesis 1:31 (NIV)*

***God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.***

*Genesis 1:26-27 (NIV)*

***<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." <sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.***

*Genesis 2:15-17 (NIV)*

***<sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."***

Genesis 3:22-24 (NIV)

***22 And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." 23 So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. 24 After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.***

C. Perfection of Rule – The Kingdom of God

Genesis 2:2-3 (NIV)

***2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. 3 And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.***

Isaiah 66:1-2 (NIV)

***1 This is what the LORD says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? 2 Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD.***

Ezekiel 28:13a-14

***13 You were in Eden, the garden of God... 14 You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones.***

Genesis 1:26-27 (NIV)

***26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.***

Genesis 2:15 (NIV)

***The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.***

Psalms 8 (NIV)

***1 O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. 2 From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. 3 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, 4 what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? 5 You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings (Heb – "elohiyim"; LXX – "angelos") and crowned him with glory and honor. 6 You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: 7 all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, 8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. 9 O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!***

Genesis 2:19 (NIV)

**Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name (co-ruling in fellowship).**

Psalms 115:16 (NIV)

**The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has given to man.**

D. Perfection of Fellowship

Genesis 3:8a (NIV)

**Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God (singing? cf. Zeph. 3:17) as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day...**

Genesis 4:13-16 (NIV)

**<sup>13</sup> Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear. <sup>14</sup> Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." <sup>15</sup> But the LORD said to him, "Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. <sup>16</sup> So Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.**

E. God's Covenant with Creation

Jeremiah 33:19-21 (NIV)

**<sup>19</sup> The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: <sup>20</sup> "This is what the LORD says: 'If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night no longer come at their appointed time, <sup>21</sup> then my covenant with David my servant—and my covenant with the Levites who are priests ministering before me—can be broken and David will no longer have a descendant to reign on his throne.**

F. The Fall and Its Effects

Genesis 3:6-10, 12 (NIV)

**<sup>6</sup> When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it (sin). She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it (sin). <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. <sup>8</sup> Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God (fellowship corrupted by sin) among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" <sup>10</sup> He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid (fellowship with God corrupted) because I was naked; so I hid."... <sup>12</sup> The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree (fellowship with neighbor corrupted), and I ate it."**

Genesis 5:5 (NIV)

***Altogether, Adam lived 930 years, and then he died (death).***

Genesis 4:8 (NIV)

***Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.***

Genesis 6:5-6 (NIV)

***<sup>5</sup> The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. <sup>6</sup> The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.***

## V. RESTORATION

A. The hope of the Bible is the restoration of all that was lost in the Fall. Our hope as followers of Jesus is the restoration of life (resurrection and removal of death), the restoration of righteous rule (kingdom of God), and the restoration of fellowship (seeing God face-to-face again).

Acts 3:21 (NIV)

***He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything (NKJV “until the times of restoration of all things”), as he promised long ago through his holy prophets (the gospel an ancient message proclaimed from of old).***

Revelation 21:5 (NIV)

***He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”***

B. Restoration of Life

Romans 8:18-25 (NIV)

***<sup>18</sup> I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. <sup>19</sup> The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. <sup>23</sup> Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.***

Isaiah 25:6-8 (NIV)

***<sup>6</sup> On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine— the best of meats and the finest of wines. <sup>7</sup> On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; <sup>8</sup> he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all***

**faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.**

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NIV)

**<sup>13</sup> Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. <sup>15</sup> According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup> Therefore encourage each other with these words.**

1 Corinthians 15:20-26 (NIV)

**<sup>20</sup> But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. <sup>24</sup> Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death.**

Revelation 21:3-4 (NIV)

**<sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.**"

C. Restoration of Righteous Government – The Kingdom of God

Daniel 2:44-45 (NIV)

**<sup>44</sup> "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. <sup>45</sup> This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.**

Isaiah 9:2-7 (NIV)

**<sup>2</sup> The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. <sup>3</sup> You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder. <sup>4</sup> For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. <sup>5</sup> Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. <sup>6</sup> For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> Of the increase of his government and peace**

**there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.**

Isaiah 2:2-5 (NIV)

**<sup>2</sup> In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. <sup>3</sup> Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. <sup>5</sup> Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.**

Matthew 19:28 (NIV)

**Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**

Revelation 2:26-27 (NIV)

**<sup>26</sup> To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations. <sup>27</sup> 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery' — just as I have received authority from my Father.**

D. Restoration of Fellowship

1 Thessalonians 4:17-18 (NIV)

**<sup>17</sup> After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup> Therefore encourage each other with these words.**

2 Thessalonians 1:8-10 (NIV)

**<sup>8</sup> He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power <sup>10</sup> on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.**

1 Corinthians 13:8-12 (NIV)

**<sup>8</sup> Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup> but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. <sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. <sup>12</sup> Now we see but a poor**

**reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.**

Job 19:25-27 (NIV)

**<sup>25</sup> I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. <sup>26</sup> And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; <sup>27</sup> I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!**

Psalms 11:7 (NIV)

**For the LORD is righteous, he loves justice; upright men will see his face.**

Revelation 21:2-4 (NIV)

**<sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”**

Hebrews 2:11-12 (NIV)

**<sup>11</sup> Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. <sup>12</sup> He says, “I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises.”**

Zephaniah 3:16-17 (NIV)

**<sup>16</sup> On that day they will say to Jerusalem, “Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands hang limp. <sup>17</sup> The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.”**

## VI. CONCLUSION

- A. The “gospel” on a general level can be summarized as *resurrection, kingdom of God, and restored fellowship*. This is the *restoration of all things*.
- B. Shortly after the Fall, God told Adam and Eve that at the center stage of His plan of redemption unto the restoration of all things would be seed/a seed born of the woman.

Genesis 3:14-15 (NIV)

**<sup>14</sup> So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. <sup>15</sup> And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring (Heb. “zera”=“seed”) and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”**

- C. So, we have an understanding of the big picture – God is going to restore all things. However, when the promise of the Seed was announced, there were still many unanswered questions. How God was going to get the earth from A to Z? How long would it take? Whom would God allow to take part in the restoration, and on what terms? What did God actually

mean by “seed”? Did He mean a singular seed, seed corporately, or both? If both, what would that actually mean and look like? When would the Seed come? What would it mean for the Seed to be bruised by Satan? What would it mean for the Seed to crush Satan’s head? We need to put ourselves in the shoes of Adam and Eve and the earliest saints to step into the drama, passion, and emotion of God’s promise to restore the Garden.

Genesis 4:1 (ESV)

**Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord”** (Walter Kaiser and Luther – “I have gotten a man – even the LORD.”)

Jude 14,15 (NIV)

**<sup>14</sup> Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones <sup>15</sup> to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”**

Genesis 5:28-29 (NIV)

**<sup>28</sup> When Lamech had lived 182 years, he had a son. <sup>29</sup> He named him Noah (“Noah” – means “rest” sounds like Hebrew word comfort, cf. NIV note) and said, “He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the LORD has cursed.”**

D. The prophets longed for increased understanding of God’s plan of redemption.

Matthew 13:16-17 (NIV)

**<sup>16</sup> But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. <sup>17</sup> For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.**

1 Peter 1:10-12 (NIV)

**<sup>10</sup> Concerning this salvation (resurrection/kingdom/fellowship→restoration=the known), the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, <sup>11</sup> trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow (the unknown, mystery revealed in Jesus). <sup>12</sup> It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you (the mystery revealed) by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven (cf. Eph. 3:5). Even angels long to look into these things.**

E. On a general level, then, the gospel is *the restoration of all things*. “According to the mystery of Christ,” in turn, simply refers to the dimensions of God’s plan for accomplishing the restoration that He kept hidden until the coming of Jesus. The Father wanted to save some “mind-blowers” for the arrival of the Son. The “gospel” refers to the “what” of God’s plan – *what* God wants to do and has promised to do on a general level – and the “mystery” reflects more of the “how” of God’s plan – *how* God has and is doing what He promised to do. God is concerned about both. The hows are important because it is in context to “the

how” that God reveals and teaches us His ways, nature, and character (though not making a sharp distinction here – God’s heart revealed also in the “what”). The gospel according to the mystery now made known in Christ is our window into the depths of God’s heart and His ways. In it He exposes His heart for all the world to see and behold.

