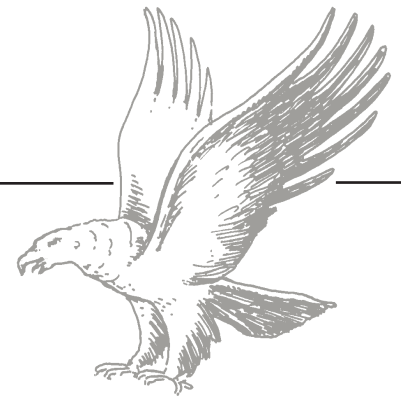


Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



July 12, 2015

The Mystery of Christ

Paul frequently speaks of the mystery to which his life was committed. It was not a closely guarded secret that he kept to himself, but a magnificent plan that God executed—and revealed—in Christ.

“By revelation He made known to me the mystery . . . that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel” (Eph. 3:3-6).

“. . . the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:26-27).



Everybody loves a good mystery, and the Bible provides the mother of all mysteries. Unfortunately, modern readers are so familiar with how the story turns out that we fail to appreciate just how perplexing the plot line was to the original participants.

Prior to the coming of Jesus, every religion was provincial in nature; that is, each tribe or nation had its own god (or gods) and unique religious traditions. High barriers prevented cross-cultural migration of these belief systems. Even when empires brought large numbers of peoples under the control of a central

government, the rulers at the top quickly learned that it was in their best interest to allow the locals to keep their own religion intact, so long as they didn't stir up trouble. It was a system that worked.

Even Judaism—the religion of the Old Testament—shared this narrow view of faith. The true God belonged to Israel, and everybody else (the Gentiles) was shut out. Great care was taken not to allow the influences of paganism to pollute the true faith. By the time of Christ, the Pharisees had elevated that spirit of exclusivity to an art form.

But no one saw coming what God had in mind. There were a few hints here and there in the Old Testament of a day when all mankind would have equal access to God. But no one understood those hints, so when Jesus came to do His Father's will, He was rejected and killed. His death did not derail God's plan, but fulfilled it. His sacrifice provided a graphic demonstration of God's love for all mankind, and His resurrection offered a powerful validation of His claims of future glory. More significantly, the benefits of this Messianic mission

were not confined to any one nationality or ethnic group. They were offered freely to all.

This gospel (“good news”) swept away all the barriers that had divided humanity in the past. It united East and West, slave and free, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, in the world's first truly universal religion. No longer would people be separated from each other by the impenetrable—and wholly artificial—walls created by their forebearers. The gospel of Christ swept all that away, offering everyone a single path to God, regardless of background or status.

In Jesus, the mystery that had been hidden in ages past was finally revealed, that “the Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body.” The path by which that unification would take place was “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Now, everywhere that people embrace Jesus and allow Him to live in their hearts and lives, God's purpose is bearing fruit.

“The mystery of Christ” (Eph. 3:4) is no longer a mystery. It is a beautifully executed plan to offer salvation to all mankind. Will we take it?

– David King