

Building on the Foundation

Chapter 2

In Colossians, Paul says, Christ in you, the hope of glory. I would like to take a look in Colossians the first chapter and I'd like to pick up reading in the end of the 23rd verse. I, Paul, am made a minister who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; even the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations but now is made manifest to his saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Look over at Romans 16:25. Paul, writing at the end of his letter to the Romans talking about the same mystery, says, Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus 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. So, this is what Paul was referring to when he said that this was not revealed by man but by God. He said he did not go up to man about it, but after years he went up to spend time with Peter and also James the brother of Jesus.

I would like for us to think about this mystery that is Christ and what did Paul mean when he said it had been hidden from the foundation of the world. Let's look over at Revelation the 13th chapter and I want to read the 8th and 9th verse. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear. This is revealing to us that there was a lamb slain and it was the foundation upon which the world was made. Here it talks about the life of the lamb that was slain being the foundation of the world. What this is letting us know is that there was a sacrifice that God made before the world was made. We know that there is no way that this was a physical lamb because 4-legged woolly beasts named lambs weren't made in until the 5th day. So, there was a lamb here that is a picture of an offering that God made. The reason the picture here in Revelation is of a lamb is because God knew that under the law of Moses he was going to make a lamb an atoning sacrifice for a nation. Even further, John the Baptist would stand in the River Jordan one day and he would see Jesus standing on the riverbank, and he would realize that Jesus was the lamb and it no longer had 4 legs and wool, but that the progressive unveiling of God's sacrifice before the world began was not a beast but a man.

We know that Jesus died on a cross as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Up until that time for Israel as a nation, because of the law through Moses, there were some sins that were able to be forgiven when a physical lamb died, but although that was the sacrifice of provision for Israel, the effectiveness of that sacrifice was limited. There were two specific sins that a lamb could not die and you would be forgiven for. The lamb could not die for murder, and if you committed adultery, you could not offer a lamb to die for your sin. So, it was only an adequate provision for sin. But even more importantly, the limitation of a physical lamb for sin was that when the sinner laid their hands on the lamb and imputed their sin to the lamb and the priest killed the lamb for that sin, the particular sin was imputed to the lamb and the lamb died for that sin. That worked, but the reason it was limited was because there was no righteousness established in the sinner. So, the sinner went back to his tent forgiven but nothing changed in the sinner because of the sacrifice.

When we bring Jesus as a sacrifice for sin, when we accept God's provision of that lamb for sin, our sins are laid upon him and his death forgives all sin. There is no sin that is left out of that provision. We can see in that provision that it was the more complete provision than a physical lamb. But even more importantly than that it forgave all sins instead of some sins, when we identify with Jesus as the lamb of God, not only are our sins forgiven but through that identification a life is quickened in us so that we're not only forgiven but we are changed. Under the law the sinner who offered a physical lamb would go back to his tent forgiven but not changed. Over the years how many times did they offer a sacrifice of a lamb for the same sin? There was no hope of being anything more than what they were when they sinned the first time because the physical lamb had no effectiveness to change them. The quality of the life and the blood that was shed when a physical lamb died was not of a quality that could change the sinner. The best they could do was a limited effectiveness.

In Hebrews, Paul testifies that what the blood of bulls and goats could not do the blood of Christ, being a better sacrifice, could accomplish. The main significance is that there was not just a forgiveness of sin but there was a cleansing of the conscience so that there was brought into that sacrifice a hope. A hope that one day I wouldn't have to continue bringing the sacrifice because I was still the same man, but the function of the capacity of this sacrifice exceeded the limitation of a physical lamb. So, it says, God provided himself a sacrifice.

We see this when Abraham went up the mountain to offer his son, and God provided a sacrifice in the place of the son. He accepted the death of that sacrifice in the place of the death of Isaac. That is the same picture as God providing a lamb before the world was made. The real picture that's represented by that lamb before

the world was made was not a physical lamb at all, but what the picture represented by that lamb slain that John saw was the heart of God. The intent of God's heart – that he was going to provide a redemption for the world that he would make, that he was not making the world by a creative act just to leave it as a created world, but that he was going to make a provision for that need.

One of the things that we are going to discover and see running throughout this look at the life that is Christ is that God is in Christ, that God did not operate or do what he does apart from Christ so that the salvation of God for man was expressed through the lamb. We will look at the reason for this as we get further into the study. The point I wanted to get to is that when Paul said this was a mystery that had been hidden since before the world was means that the revelation of this provision has been progressive through time. So, it wasn't revealed all at once.

One of the first pictures that we get of this is an offering that two boys brought in Genesis in the first story that didn't involve Adam and Eve. Cain and Abel brought an offering to God, and it says that Abel brought a lamb and Cain brought something else. So, in the very beginning of the book, we see God speaking to the fact that his acceptable sacrifice is a lamb. We see that when God brought through Moses the law to Israel that, although there were many sacrifices that could be offered, the primary offering of atonement was a lamb. Then, we see that after many years of the law being in place, it says in due time Christ came, and through many signs and wonders, there was a testimony made that Jesus was the fulfillment of the lamb of God in the Old Testament. The most obvious statement about that was when John the Baptist said, Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. In that moment, it was revealed that the true lamb of God was not 4 legs and wool, but that it was a man. If you weren't seeing by the spirit, if it wasn't revealed to you by God, you would not be able to know that man from any other man. It was something that would have to be revealed to you, and that man was much more an acceptable sacrifice than any 4-legged wooly beast had ever been.

We have established that this is a mystery, that it's been revealed to some degree but not necessarily fully revealed. When Paul revealed the mystery to the expression that had been given unto him, he said, Christ in you, the hope of glory. There are many things in that phrase that still need to be defined. There are many things about what that describes that have yet not been established in the earth because having the hope of something is not having the something you hoped for. Having the hope of something is progressive, but having the thing that you hoped for is the fulfillment of the hope. So, the full demonstration of the mystery we are going to see is another man. The revelation of God in Christ is not going to go backwards from a man to a 4-legged wooly beast again. The expression of Christ as

Jesus took it out of four legs with wool and established it firmly forever as being in a man. It is important for us to realize that the lamb is now a man because we, as men and women being born again, have had the life that is Christ quickened in us, and we also are called to be testimony to the lamb of God.