

"THIS IS A GREAT MYSTERY"

Eph. 5:31-33

The letter of Ephesians is a book that was circulated and was actually addressed to all of the churches. The copy of the manuscript that we have, when the New Testament was collected, happened to have Ephesus written on the address. In this letter that discusses the body of Christ and the church, Paul discusses two important mysteries. One of them in the third chapter of the book. If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you ward, how that by revelation he made known unto you the mystery. V. 2-3.

What does mystery mean to you? It is symbolic of a saying. In which a situation develops that baffles us. We say we do not understand.

*A Lady was asked why she didn't sing in the choir any more.*

*She explained, "One Sunday I was absent & someone inquired if the organ had been fixed!"*

The word in the New Testament has a meaning like this. It is a secret in the heart of God that does not reveal until God chose to disclose it.

What Paul really says here is that the dispensation of the grace of God given to him by revelation that was made known - the mystery of the church - namely that the Gentiles were fellow heirs and of the same body of partakers of the promise of Christ by the Gospel.

The mystery was a secret kept in the heart of God - but that there should be created a new thing, a new body. And it should be composed of Jew and Gentile. Bond and free. Male and female. Old and young.

It would be a living organism.

Now the prophets, Jeremiah and Isaiah, they did not see this all together.

Because in the Old Testament, there was no church.

Now Paul vows that the church is a mystery. It is a secret kept in the heart of God until it was revealed to his Apostles. The church is a New Testament creation.

It is something not revealed during the Old Covenant of the Old Testament. But it is a secret that was revealed to the Apostles - that is the mystery that Paul speaks of in the letter of the Ephesians.

The other mystery that Paul speaks about here - concerns its nature. This is a great mystery. But he says, I speak concerning Christ and his church. What is that great mystery. Now if Paul goes back to the book of Genesis 2 - and the creation of Eve. Having sighted it and quoted from it, he says that is a mystery. That is a revealed mystery in the creation of a new institution. He takes this contrast and says in application - the creation of a new institution - the church of Christ.

Gen. 2:21 - Says and the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam. And he slept. And he took one of his ribs. Now, translators tell us that that is a strange translation. Because they say, usually the Hebrew word translated here - is ordinarily the word for side. It is not usually rib.

Somebody jokingly said that when God created woman - he took a cheap cut.

*Heard of a woman who had such a strong will that she wrote her diary in advance.*

But here it is used commonly in the Old Testament - the side, that word. Like the side of the Ark. The side of the tabernacle. The side of the temple. The side of the house. And yet here, the translation is - he took one of the ribs. It is not translated rib anywhere else in the Bible. Now why they chose to translate rib here - no one really understands. The reading should be, and he took out of the side of Adam and closed up the flesh, instead thereof in the side - which the Lord God had taken from man and made thee a woman. And brought her unto the man. And Adam said, this is now bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, she shall be called woman. Because she was taken out of man. Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother - and cleave unto his wife. And they shall be one flesh. And then in this passage of Scripture - Paul adds, these words -- this is a great mystery that I speak concerning Christ and the church.

## I. THE MYSTERY OF ORIGIN

I think the first thing that we fix in our minds - is the origin of the church. The Lord took out of the side of Adam and made the woman. And she was born from the wound or the scar of Adam.

Now the church was taken out of suffering and sorrow. And the cross, and the scars of the Lord Jesus. We were born in his redemptive grace. The mystery of our origin is out of suffering. And the death of our Lord, and the scar of his side.

As you think of that - it is not an astonishing development - that out of the

indescribable sufferings of Christ, should be born the holy institution of the church.

Marriage is the fundamental institution of all of civilization. And Paul is using this in the origin of the church. God made woman and brought her unto man. Gen. 2:22. That is marriage. In Gen. 2:24 - therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife. And they shall be one flesh. That is marriage. Gen. 1:28 - God said, be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. Adam and Eve was his wife and she conceived and bear Cain. And said, I have gotten a man. Gen. 4:1. Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bear him, Enoch. Gen. 4:17. And Adam knew his wife again, and she conceived again and bear a son, and called his name Seth. Gen. 4:25. To Seth was born a son, Enos. Gen. 4:26. There was marriage, children, grandchildren. And civilization was underway. This is a great mystery.

Let me digress for just a moment to talk about Poss-1-q. Marriage in the United States comes in a variety of packages. Sometimes it isn't a marriage at all. Just an arrangement.

The 1980 Census Takers created these symbols - Poss-1-q. Which spells out - persons of opposite sex sharing living quarters. And it is pronounced Poss-1-q.

Now Jack Smith of the Los Angeles Times columnists called that to our attention. Some of his readers played around with words and verse - and they came up with a little song. According to Mr. Smith, one lady asked her Rabbi for suggestions - how she might introduce her daughter's live-in friend. The Rabbi suggested sin-in-law.

Now others have suggested this Poss-1-q - whether it is a long or a short duration. The Bible terms it is fornication. Yet, for all the live-in and open marriage arrangements, marriage had its origin when God took a woman and gave him unto man. You remember, for 2,000 years the Jewish culture a man gave thanks in his prayers every morning that he was not a Gentile, a slave, or a woman. She was looked on as a thing. And if she did not act to suit him - she oversalted the dinner, or appeared in public with her head uncovered - or if she was troublesome to him or quarrellsome. He could give her the dowery back and write out a piece of paper - that he was done with her.

We know that in Rome, things were even worse. And Paul in this passage of Scripture - talks about wives submitting, to their own husbands. As to their own bodies. So herein lies a great mystery. The origin of man and his wife, the origin of the church, of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the mystery came about because of the death of Christ. Now if we look at all of the other movements, and religions of the world, etc.

We look at Buddha. He was called the enlightened one. He died in 483 B. C. At the age of 80. He was traveling Northeast of the sacred city of the Hindus. Having eaten a large meal of pork, he fell violently ill and died. Now the leaders burned his body in noble honor.

In 478 B. C. Confucius died at the age of 72. He became ill, went to bed, layed there for about seven days - and died. Neither one believed in God. Neither one believed in prayer. And he was buried in Shantung with honor and reverence.

In 632 A. D. Mohammed became sick with headaches and fever - he died in his bed.

He was buried in Medina. A sacred spot to the Islamic worshipper outside of Mecca. And if you look at these deaths - the death of Buddha and Confucius and the Islam leader - there is no instance of redemption, grace, or mystery there.

But the crucifixion and the agony of our Saviour was different. It was set apart. Out of this was born a new people. Who had suffered from the scar of his side and there was born the church. Now this is the great mystery that I speak - concerning Christ and His church.

## II. THE MYSTERY OF NATURE

Now when you think about the mystery of the church - it is a mystery in nature. The Lord God looked over all of his creation, and there was not found anything or anyone who was really suitable for Adam. And the Lord God said, it is not good for man to be alone. I will make him a help-meet. Gen. 2:18. Somebody suitable or fitted for him.

And the Lord God brought before Adam all of his creation in the living world. Fish, fowl, beasts, and Adam named them all.

And then God add 2:20 - but for Adam, there was not found a help-meet for him. So the Lord God made for Adam a help-meet. A companion - a suitable one, and brought her to him.

There is something about marriage, the family, that is a mystery in its nature. In the Westerville, Ohio, there is a little old shack of a house where Benjamin Russell Hanby wrote - Darling, Nellie Grey. Now the old house has been restored, and they have brought back some old furniture and antiques. When Hanby was a theological student in 1856, he read in the newspaper the account of Nellie Grey. It was a Kentucky slave - torn away from the arms of her beloved. Because she was worth \$750 to a plantation owner in Georgia.

Now the story of that left a lasting impression on this young man. And his thoughts overflowed as he walked home one night. The tune Nellie Grey was formed. The words and music were copyrighted June 17, 1856. Now very soon, the song became a great favorite in the country. And it helped to stir up things about slavery. The song writer profited nothing to the man who wrote it - the author. But to the publishers - it served a powerful instrument. And they received riches. They told him - you have the fame and we have the money. And that balances the account.

The young man was only 22 when Nellie Grey was published. He was not discouraged in his failure to reap material reward. But he gave up the ministry and he wrote several other popular songs. Like Little Tilley's Grave. Old Shady. And he was known as an athlete and gentleman and he died in 1867. At the beginning of what promised to be a brilliant musical career.

But the thing that I want to point out is - the mystery and the nature of this thing. He could not stand to see Nellie Grey snatched away. And that's something that we think that Paul had in mind here - identical here. When he was talking about God in the creation of the man in the first place. That when the Lord finished the stars, the Heavens, and all of this handiwork - the Milky Way. And here was man made in his own

image and likeness, and then the woman was made out of his side. And that was a creation of mystery to help him.

There is something there that we respond to in Nellie Grey. The nature of it. It is a mystery. There is a story of Naomi - a blind girl, her mother died. And her father was rearing her. The father said that many times he would wake up in the middle of the dark night, and there standing by his bed, as close as she could get - was this little girl. In her little white nightgown and her flowing hair over her shoulders. Standing there in the dark - for the days and the nights were all alike to her. She just wanted to be close.

It is not good for man to be alone - and I will make him a help-meet for him. And out of his side, he created the woman, and brought her to the man and said - this is now bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, Gen. 2:23. This is a great mystery but I speak, Paul says, concerning Christ and his church.

Now we have the same nature as our Lord - he took this beautiful and eloquent passage, in Hebrews 2 - for verily, he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore, in all things it behooves him to be made like unto his brethren. That he might be a merciful and a faithful high priest. Heb. 2:16-18. He took our nature - he was made one of us. Born of a woman - he had a human mother. He grew up in a despised world. The sun and its heat. The rain and its cold, beat upon his head. The ground yielded briars and thistles. His head was crowned with thorns. He knew what it was to be hungry, thirsty, and to sorrow and hurt and bear grief. He was made like one of us. He took our human nature. And he had given us this divine nature.

I Cor. 15 - Paul wrote - and as we have born the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the Heavenly. We should be like Christ. And we shall see him face to face. This house that we live in will be buried - planted. Planted in this honor but raised in glory. Planted in weakness - raised in power. Planted a mortal body but raised a spiritual body. Whereby he gives us these exceedingly great promises. Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh.

### III. THE MYSTERY OF THE UNION

Now the mystery of the church is also one of vital unity. We are members of his body. And of his flesh, and of his bones. We are no longer two - but we are one flesh. It is the great mystery that I speak of. It is the mystery of the unity of oneness. There is no relationship in life comparable to that between a man and his wife. Within the bonds they are joined together.

They share in joys, in sorrows, in triumphs, in success, in despair - they are one flesh. Paul speaks concerning Christ and his church. With him, and there could be no head without a body. No Saviour, without being saved. No King without the subjects. No shepherd without a flock. Crucified with him, buried with him, raised with him, and we will triumph and be victorious with him.

Did you know this is the deep meaning of baptism and the Lord's Supper. We are identified with him. Listen, Paul says, the cup of blessing which we bless - is it not a communion, the fellowship, the blood of Christ. The bread which we break, is it not the communion, the sharing of the body of Christ. We, being, many are one bread. One body, and all are partakers of that one bread.

I Cor. 10:16-17. We are one with him, in this invisible bond. Now this is the mystery I speak concerning the church, Paul said, of the union.

#### IV. MYSTERY OF THE DESTINY

The mystery of the church - is finally the mystery of an ultimate salvation - we are one with him. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh. But he nourishes it, he cherishes it, as Christ does the church. We are members of the church, we are one body, and we are bone of his bone. Even a Christian ought to remind himself of this destiny. Christ nourishes the church - so every member of the body of Christ is treasured and loved by him.

Tell me - did you ever read in the Bible saying - take these poor away. Take these sick people away. And the Scripture always says - and he healed them. Precious in his sight is every member of his body.

When the soldiers of the crucifixion of Jesus came and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. They had come to other crosses and broke the legs of the first criminal - but when they came to Jesus - he was dead. They broke not his bones. John said, and he that saweth their record, and his record is true, that he knoweth and saith truth. That ye might believe - these things were done - that the Scripture might be fulfilled. A bone of his body shall not be broken. John 19:35-36.

Now this is a sign fulfilled in our Lord's body. The church. There shall not be one of the least of the members of the body of Christ, lost or broken.

It will not, cannot, and shall not be. We are members of his body - and he will nourish us and cherish us.

No wonder Paul uses this mystery - wives submit yourselves to your own husbands. Standing alone is not a Christian statement on marriage. But the statement here is not an isolated thing here that men should take. Paul certainly would be misunderstood if he took it this way. Because, he is talking about marriage and what it can mean, the purpose and the guarantee to each. And who practices love. You know the word practice is not like a Doctor practices. Like Reggie Jackson pushing batting practice. Or Borg practicing tennis. But here is a divine mystery. But it is a love that is practiced. We have been looking at marriage and the church, in general. And this is the business that Paul is talking about - practicing Christians. They have nothing to practice but love. Divine love.

What a beautiful situation and what a foundation of a tremendous mystery that Paul gives us here.

I read about a sainted woman who was in a hospital - terminally ill - and she died. Then the Doctors used chemicals and tubes, and medicines, etc. All of these other things and brought her back to life. When she became conscious again - for just a little while, she exclaimed - oh, and now I must die again. What a strange persuasion some people have. When our life is done, when our task is ended, and we are plunged out yonder - if the human arrangers can just delay by a half a dozen more breaths - our escape. If they can use chemicals, etc. - we would say, oh Lord, no. When the task is done and the life is ended, and the age has taken our faculties away. It is not the comfort of the Christian - translated in victory and triumph to the glorious world

and joined with Christ.

For those outside of the Lord, death is blackness. It is despair. It is an awesome prospect - it is death forever. For the child of God, joined to the body of Christ, death is a triumph. It is our ultimate victory. All of us shall enjoy it - that wonderful experience, we cannot be lost. We belong to the body and Paul says, that is the mystery of which I speak.

We must trust God to see us through. He never has lost a battle - nor will he ever lose one. His body will be full and complete. We are part of it. Bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh.

The question tonight is - do you belong to him? Have you given your heart to Jesus? Will you say, here I come to join myself to God. Here I am, I make the choice and the decision now in my heart. If you would find out this great secret and mystery - then you must become a part of Christ and his church.

*Mystery*  
*But greater mystery*  
*is*  
*in the family*  
*church*  
*Watermark of the Holy Spirit*  
*Come & see me*  
*Now - 10:30 - 11:00*  
*First thing*  
*Hope you can*  
*Mystery - How*  
*the man lives*  
*Love gemini*  
*- church -*

and joined with Christ.

### Singing a New Song

For those outside of the Lord, death is an awesome prospect - it is death forever. For Christ, death is a triumph. It is our ultimate that wonderful experience, we cannot be lost that is the mystery of which I speak.

We must trust God to see us through. We never lose one. His body will be full and of bone, flesh of his flesh.

The question tonight is - do you believe in Jesus? Will you say, here I come to join you and the decision now in my heart. If you believe - then you must become a part of Christ and

On November 28, 1925, a radio program began that is still heard every week. It is the Grand Ole Opry, and it is not only the oldest program on the radio, it is also the longest - four hours each Friday and four more each Saturday. Each year,

more than two million people travel to Nashville to see it, and untold millions hear it on the radio. More than twenty million people see it each week on television.

The Grand Ole Opry got its beginning as a long program when an old dirt farmer, Uncle Jimmy Thompson, who claimed to know more than a thousand fiddle tunes, played for an hour and then claimed that he was only getting warmed up. After the time was extended to two, three, and then four hours, more entertainers appeared, some known by such quaint names as the Possum Hunters, the Gully Jumpers, and the Fruit Jar Drinkers.

The hall where the Grand Ole Opry was presented each week from 1941 until 1974 is called Ryman Auditorium. Inside, it looks like a church - because it once was a church. A steamboat captain, Tom Ryman, landed his sidewheeler at Nashville on a hot summer night in 1891 and, with his crew, set out to break up a revival service. But the preacher, Sam Jones, got Ryman's attention, and the crusty old captain was converted. He announced that on the very spot where he was converted he would build a tabernacle dedicated to the gospel. Ryman Tabernacle eventually was no longer used for religious services, and it became the home of the Grand Ole Opry in 1941.

Since 1974, the program is produced each week in an elaborate fifteen-million-dollar auditorium located nine miles from downtown Nashville. When performers were told that the Ryman Auditorium would no longer be the setting for the program, many of them could not imagine the program originating from any other location. At the last performance in the old tabernacle, Johnny Cash sang the final song. As he did, many singers and pickers shed tears. Leaving the Ryman and going to a multi-million-dollar complex would be singing the old songs in a strange land. Their hearts, they felt, would remain in the place they were leaving.

That is a mystery  
The psalm we have heard today begins with the words, "O sing to the Lord a new song." Each year, the Jews have in September (on the Gregorian calendar), a new year festival—

*Mystery*  
*But greater mystery*  
*Justification family*  
*Church*  
*Waterman*  
*Come to see me*  
*NO. 97 - Prop. 41*  
*First thing*  
*Hope you can*  
*Mystery - Never*  
*That the man life*  
*2000 gemini*  
*Church*