

The Keys to Understanding the Mysteries of God

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I'm sure most of you at one time or another in your lives have been in a bookstore or a video store or realistically, in modern days, on the internet shopping. Whether you are shopping for a book or a movie, you've probably noticed that whether you are in the store or on an online site, how they are classifying the books and movies. There is usually a section dedicated to mysteries. It's either books or movies that are a "who done it" or some kind of mystery they are solving, to figure out some important knowledge or something. People are intrigued by the idea of a mystery and figuring out a mystery.

The Bible itself speaks quite a bit about mysteries as well. It refers to *the mysteries of God*. It also refers to various terms, that we are going to see today, which refer to something as a mystery. We're going to see that there is a common theme in the subjects it's referring to as *the mysteries of God*. We're going to look at that particular subject in this sermon and more particularly we're going to focus on the keys to understanding these mysteries. If you would like a title for this sermon it's:

The Keys to Understanding the Mysteries of God

We're going to see today, there are really two major important keys to understanding what the Bible refers to as *the mysteries of God*. We, in the New Covenant church of God, have the opportunity to understand these *mysteries* and we should find them important. The Bible places a very big importance on them.

To start off with, let's notice what the Bible is referring to when it refers to *the mysteries of God* or when it uses this term *mystery* a lot. We're going to see there is a core theme to what it's getting at with this. Let's go to Romans 16 and we'll see that Paul mentions a couple of times in his epistles that the message he is preaching here is directly tied to these mysteries.

Romans 16:25 *Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began ... (NKJV)*

Notice he is referring to a *mystery that has been kept secret since the world began*. The New Covenant church, as we're going to see, gets to reveal this mystery and it has something to do with the revelation of Christ.

Continuing in verse 26) ...

26) *but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures [notice it has something to do with prophetic scriptures] made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—*
27) *to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen. (NKJV)*

Paul mentions this again over in Ephesians 3. We'll see he specifically mentions, the New Covenant church is what makes these mysteries available to the world; it reveals this. They are basically given the responsibility of revealing these mysteries not only to mankind, but notice it's going to specifically talk about *in the heavenly places*. In other words, the angelic realm also learns this from the New Covenant church—as he's going to mention. This is in Ephesians 3:8.

Ephesians 3:8 *To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,*

9) *and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, [Notice we're talking about a mystery] which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;*

10) *to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,*

11) *according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,*

12) *in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.*

13) *Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. (NKJV)*

Notice he is specifically saying that these *mysteries* have been withheld from mankind—this has been knowledge that has not been available—but now it's being made available to the New Covenant church, not only to mankind, but even to the angelic realm. In the heavenly places, they're becoming aware of this too, at this time. He also mentions in his letter to the Corinthians, this is a primary responsibility of the ministry of the church of God. To be stewards of these *mysteries*. We'll turn to 1 Corinthians 4:1. Let me summarize the context. If you read through chapter 3, he's addressing the whole controversy of how, as he puts it—*I am of Apollos, I am of Paul*—and this whole carnal argument of, "The followers of this guy are better than the followers of that guy." We're more righteous than they are and all those kinds of disputes.

To put it in modern day context, it would be, "I am of this church of God organization" or "You're of that church of God"—"God only works through our group." or "Our group is better than their group." It's that kind of carnal argument. What he's going through in a lot of Chapter 3 is talking about how God works through numerous different servants, different ministers and not everybody has the same talents; they have different roles. But the purpose is for this to work together, for the good of everyone. He's telling them to stop these carnal arguments; that's not what this is about. God is working with all of them and they all serve different roles. That's the context he's referring to when he gets

into the beginning of chapter 4. He's talking about these different leaders, these different ministers in the church.

1 Corinthians 4:1 *Let a man so consider us [we understand the context of us from chapter 3], as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.
2) Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. (NKJV)*

He's saying that one of the responsibilities the ministry of the New Covenant church is to be faithful stewards of the mysteries of God. This same type of comment is made specifically in the duties of a deacon as well. Part of being faithful with the mysteries of God is one of the things that is part of their requirements as well. In 1 Timothy 3 we'll read the first couple of verses that are part of the qualifications that Paul lists for what you should look for when ordaining a deacon.

1 Timothy 3:8 *Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money,
9) holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. (NKJV)*

You see the same type of concept that what we're seeing is the leadership of the New Covenant church—being faithful stewards of the mysteries of God—is one of their responsibilities given to the New Covenant church.

What are we talking about with the mysteries of God? What really is the point that we are getting at? We're going to look at several verses that mention *mysteries of God* or use *mystery* in a number of contexts. To sum it up in a sentence, what we are going to see is that *the mystery of God* basically refers to the plan of salvation for mankind. We're going to see this talked about in a number of different contexts but you see if you put it all together, you can sum it up by saying it's referring to the plan of salvation for mankind.

To start seeing this, look at Matthew 13. We're going to break into the middle of the chapter. What we're going to see in this section is where Christ is explaining to the apostles why it is He taught in parables. He taught in parables specifically because He was hiding the meaning of what He was saying from the world in general; from the audience in general that was hearing Him speak. He spoke in parables because, as he explained here, for those who were being called as New Covenant Christians, they were being given the opportunity to understand what He's saying. But for the rest of the world it would just be nonsense because they would hear this parable and not know what He's talking about. Start in verse 10.

Matthew 13:10 *And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"
11) He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.
(NKJV)*

This term *mystery—the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*. That's another way of saying "the Kingdom of God". This term *kingdom of heaven* is unique to the book of Matthew. But if you compare Matthew's account with the other gospels, you'll see the other gospels using the term *kingdom of God* and Matthew using the *kingdom of heaven* in the exact same story. So, he's referring to the same concept, he just uses a different term. When we look at the gospel of the kingdom of God, what are we getting at? It's the plan of salvation for mankind—that mankind has the opportunity obtain eternal life and be born in the Kingdom of God. Keep reading now.

12) *For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.*

13) *Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.*

14) *And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive;*

15) *For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'*

16) *But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear;*

17) *for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. (NKJV)*

We're going to come back to verse 16 and 17 later in the sermon, but just take note of the fact that *prophets and righteous men have desired to understand the things that you are now being given the opportunity to understand* and they didn't fully understand it either. He's referring to people in the Old Testament. Those who had had the opportunity to receive the Holy Spirit; prophets and righteous men. We're going to come back to this but just take note of that as we see this.

We talked about the *mysteries of the kingdom of heaven* as Matthew words it. Turn over to Ephesians 6 and we'll see Paul refer to the gospel as a *mystery* as well. What is the gospel about? It's the gospel of the Kingdom of God. We are getting at the same concept. We're going to pick up in verse 17, we're in the middle of a context. What Paul is addressing is the whole armor of God. We're going to skip a good bit of that and pick up in verse 17 because the verse we want to focus on is the latter part of this.

Ephesians 6:17 *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;*

18) *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—*

19) *and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,*

20) *for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. (NKJV)*

Notice he's referring to the gospel as the mysteries he's referring to. The *mysteries of God* are directly connected; they are one and the same. What is the *mystery of God*? It's the plan of salvation for mankind. With that overview, what I want to also show you is, we can look at several scriptures—if we look at the whole process of salvation for mankind. We're going to see different elements of this, directly referred to as *a mystery*. We'll even see, concluding with the resurrection to eternal life, that being referred to as *the conclusion of the mysteries of God*. Which directly tells you, *the mysteries of God* are referring to the plan of salvation for mankind. The whole plan that mankind can be offered the opportunity to ultimately receive eternal life and be born into the Kingdom of God.

To see this, we will go to 1 Timothy 3:14.

1 Timothy 3:14 *These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; 15) but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*

16) And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: [let's notice what is referred to as the mystery of godliness] God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory. (NKJV)

Obviously, what we're referring to is Jesus Christ being born as a human being and then being the sacrifice for mankind and then being received back into heaven, going before the Father to be accepted as the sacrifice for mankind, enabling the whole plan of salvation for all of us. Without a Savior, without Christ going and paying the penalty for all of us so we can receive forgiveness of sins, there would be no plan of salvation. There would be no opportunity to be reconciled to the Father or anything beyond that. *The wages of sin are death*; we've all sinned and deserve the death penalty. The only way we get around all of that is because of Christ. He was willing to sacrifice Himself and enable all of us to have the opportunity to be forgiven and reconciled to the Father. The plan of salvation starts with Christ coming to earth and fulfilling His role. Without that, there is no plan; there is no possibility for a plan.

Notice that that's referred to as *a mystery*. What's the next major thing that happens in that plan? It's that mankind can now claim that sacrifice and receive the Holy Spirit and have God living in us through the Holy Spirit. That's how the plan of salvation works. Now let's notice the Holy Spirit living in human beings, also referred to was *a mystery*.

Colossians 1:24 *I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, 25) of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God,*

26) *the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.*

27) *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. (NKJV)*

In other words, human beings being able to receive the Holy Spirit, have the presence of God living inside them is directly tied to *the mystery*.

28) *Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*

29) *To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily. (NKJV)*

You can see when we refer to Christ coming to earth, fulfilling His role to be the sacrifice for mankind as *a mystery*, now referring to the Holy Spirit living inside carnal human beings, enabling conversion and the chance to receive salvation as part of *the mystery* as well. What's the conclusion of the process? The resurrection to eternal life—we're going to notice that not only referred to as *a mystery* but also referred to as *the conclusion of the mystery of God*. Let's look at 1 Corinthians 15:50.

1 Corinthians 15:50 *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.*

51) *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—*

52) *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

53) *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

54) *So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."*

55) *O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"*

56) *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.*

57) *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

58) *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. (NKJV)*

Notice when he started off with this, describing the resurrection to eternal life and that we can be changed to spirit beings, he said, "I'm going to reveal to you *a mystery*." In other words, I'm showing you *a mystery*. What have we seen here?

- It started off with referring to the mystery of Christ coming to earth to play His role as the sacrifice for mankind for there even to be a plan of salvation.

- Then you have the Holy Spirit being given to carnal human beings as part of the mystery.
- And now we have the resurrection to eternal life; we have the whole process of salvation for mankind. It's also referred to as the conclusion of this process.

We're going to read several verses beginning in Revelation 10:1. Speaking about a vision that the Apostle John received which involves a little book he receives. We're not going to get into all the details of that, but I want you to notice we're going to read the context and verse 7 is what we are going to focus on because it refers to the conclusion of the mysteries here.

Revelation 10:1 *I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire.*

2) He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land,

3) and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices.

4) Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them."

5) The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven

6) and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer,

7) but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets. (NKJV)

Notice the time reference he is giving—at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. This is when the mystery is finished. What happens at the sounding of the seventh trumpet? The resurrection to eternal life in terms of the Firstfruits—the rest of mankind get their chance at salvation later—but this salvational process for the Firstfruits concludes at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. By then you have either made it into the Kingdom of God or you haven't. For all of those who make it, that's the point where they are changed into God beings and receive the resurrection into eternal life. You see the whole process playing out what *the mysteries of God* is. It's the plan of salvation for mankind. Starting with the sacrifice of Christ, all the way through the resurrection to eternal life. We see all the elements referred to as a mystery because what are the mysteries of God? It's the plan of salvation and that is really what the Bible is referring to here.

As I mentioned when I started the sermon, one of the things we're going to focus on is the keys to understand this mystery. If you notice, there are several references all throughout these scriptures that this knowledge has been hidden from mankind. They are basically saying at the beginning of the New Testament, even those God worked with in the Old Testament didn't fully understand what this was all about. This is something that is now being revealed to mankind who now have the opportunity to understand it. So, this is something we should be paying attention to. What are the keys so that we can properly understand *the mysteries of God* and be a part of this?

One of the obvious keys is receiving the Holy Spirit. That's what enables us to understand spiritual truth. Let's notice 1 Corinthians 2 as it directly speaks of it in terms of revelation of what *mysteries*.

1 Corinthians 2:6 *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.*

7) *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, [we're about to see what reveals the mysteries] the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,*

8) *which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

9) *But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

10) *But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.*

11) *For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.*

12) *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.*

13) *These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

14) *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

15) *But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.*

16) *For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ. (NKJV)*

As we can see, one of the big keys to this is kind of obvious—having the Spirit of God. Of course, it's a sermon all by itself that it's not just a matter of receiving this spirit of God from baptism—that's where it all starts—but we have to be actively yielding to that spirit. Utilizing it in our lives and not quenching it. Constantly repenting of our sins as we become more and more aware we've messed up and changing our lives to commit to God and always putting Him first. We'll always be tested in our lives with, are we willing to put God above everything else in our lives. We'll always get into those areas of our

lives where it's painful. "I want to give that up", "I don't want to change this", "That's going to hurt". We always have those tests in our lives and if we want to continue growing in the Spirit, we have to be willing to change or do whatever is required of us to be faithfully obeying God and constantly yielding and learning more. That's a sermon all by itself. I just want to make the point that it's not just a matter of, "I've been baptized and received the Spirit." That's great but we have to be continually seeking more and more of that Spirit and yielding to it throughout our lives to maintain that knowledge.

There's another very big important key to this that goes beyond just receiving the Holy Spirit. When you think about the plan of salvation and understanding the plan of salvation and the details of how it works, as the church of God has taught all of my life, one of the big keys to that understanding is understanding the Holy Days. We've always said, all of my life, that understanding the Holy Days is the key to understanding how the plan of salvation works for mankind. If you look at the spring Holy Days, they are specifically addressing the steps in the process of salvation for the Firstfruits. The fall Holy Days basically mirror the same steps and process but it's specific to the rest of mankind. It's understanding those days that is fundamental to understanding how *the mysteries of God* work. How the plan of salvation works and how all the steps of this play out. I'm sure if you look back in your own life and first started understanding the truth, one of the first things you probably came to understand is the Bible says I'm supposed to be keeping these days, but you probably didn't really understand exactly what they are about. You just first understand that they are in the Bible and they are kept in the New Testament and Christ and the apostles kept them so I should do the same. Then when you start keeping them, your eyes start opening up to, "Now I understand what these days mean."

You probably also witnessed the opposite. What I mean by that is, people that you've known for years, who attended church for decades and were a part of all this, for whatever reason they wind up walking away from the church. Then you see them years later, or talk to them or see their post on Facebook and see where they are at today, and it's like someone who never understood it at all. It's not that they just disagree with what they used to believe, it's like their understanding of it all has completely been erased. What's amazing to me at times—I'm friends with a lot of folks I went to college with on Facebook—I'll see at this time of year and it's really discouraging to see, a lot of Facebook posts with people putting their photos of Christmas and all the other stuff that they are doing. You attended four years of AC with them, you had deep conversations with them, you know that they knew better than all of this. What's even more interesting is to see some of the people posting things talking about this cult they used to be in. They talk about the days they used to keep. Then you read what their saying about the Holy Days and it's not just a matter of not believing they should keep them anymore and they have rejected what was taught. They will summarize what this was supposed to mean—the religion I was in before—and you read this and think, that's not even close to what Worldwide taught. You think, I don't know where they got this from. It's not even an issue of whether you believe that's exactly correct or maybe you had a different view on a particular scripture. Their synopsis of it and what the church taught are not even close. It's like someone just erased their hard drive and they don't understand what they

had before. The understanding and *the mysteries of God* and keeping the Holy Days are intimately tied to each other. As we're going to see, the respect that we give and the priority we give to those days is directly tied to our understanding of God's plan of salvation.

To cover some of this in scripture, turn to Colossians 2. Paul reveals an important concept in regards to the Holy Days in this chapter.

Colossians 2:16 *So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17) which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. (NKJV)*

As you're probably familiar, this verse gets used to say, now that Christ has come you don't need to keep those days anymore; they aren't important, they were just a shadow. That's not what it says. Paul is not even called until the book of Acts. So, Christ has already been killed, buried, and resurrected—all of that is completed—before Paul is even called. Here he is writing this letter and he says, the festivals are currently a shadow of things which are to come. That's still an active concept. He's not saying they were a shadow of things that only pointed to Christ and now that Christ came you don't need to worry about them. That's not what he's saying. To understand what he's getting at, the Greek word translated as *shadow* in this verse—I'm just going to give you the transliteration of it—I think in English it's *skia*, Strong's #4639 and the definition I'm going to give you is from The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates. This word can mean just a "shadow", like the sun is shining down and there is a shadow on the other side of you. It can also have a metaphorical meaning as well and that is obviously what Paul is getting at here. What Zodhiates says: "Metaphorically a *foreshadowing*." In other words, it "*foreshadows*" that.

And this is the concept that he is getting at. Zodhiates points to two scriptures in Hebrews to illustrate this point and we're going to turn to those. In Hebrews 8 we'll get an idea of how this word is to be understood.

Hebrews 8:1 *Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,*
2) *a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.*
3) *For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer.*
4) *For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law;*
5) *who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things [that's the same Greek word for "shadow"], as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."*

6) *But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. (NKJV)*

What he's saying is, the physical Tabernacle is a *foreshadowing*—a picture of—the *throne of God in heaven*. When Christ fulfilled the wavesheaf, He goes before the Father, playing out the same ceremony that takes place on the Day of Atonement, but his whole point was, these physical things were to teach us a spiritual truth. Notice this again in Hebrews 10, another verse the Zodiates points to clarify this definition.

Hebrews 10:1 *For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.
2) For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.
3) But in those sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins every year.
4) For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. (NKJV)*

He's getting at the whole point of the greater spiritual truth, that the whole sacrificial system had pointed to and was to teach us. The point is the Holy Days have a similar aspect to them. They teach to us important aspects that are a *foreshadowing* of the plan of salvation for us to understand. If we look at the fall Holy Days that are all prophetic events which point to the future, they are a *foreshadowing* of things that are to come. Paul was literally referring to things that are going to be in the future. He's not saying all this pictured Christ coming and Christ has already come so that's been done—nailed to the cross—so you don't need to keep those days anymore. That's not at all what he was getting at. He was saying, these are important things that we should keep because these teach us the plan of salvation. It reveals to us *the mysteries of God*.

I told you before we were going to come back to Matthew 13. I want you to notice, we've talked about several scriptures throughout this whole sermon that talked about with the New Covenant church; how the mysteries are being revealed to mankind and even to the angelic realm. There was knowledge that wasn't available prior to this and now it's being laid out. What I want you to see is, the spiritual meaning of the Holy Days is pivotal to that understanding. In Matthew 13 I briefly pointed this out before when we read this. We are going to continue from verse 16 and 17.

Matthew 13:16 *But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear;
17) or assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. (NKJV)*

The reason I point this out is, as I mentioned, one of the big keys to understanding *the mysteries of God* is having the Holy Spirit. That is obviously one of the things that reveals spiritual knowledge to us. Keep in mind that the prophets and the righteous men

being referred to here, are the people in the Old Testament who were the exceptions. I say the exceptions, because as a general rule salvation wasn't being offered and the Holy Spirit wasn't offered at that time. But there were exceptions as we know. The prophets and righteous men had this, but they didn't fully understand all of this. As we're going to see, the spiritual understanding of the Holy Days is directly tied to some of that. Let's notice another verse that reinforces this same point in 1 Peter 1:10.

1 Peter 1:10 *Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you,*

11) searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

12) To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into. (NKJV)

We have that concept of the New Covenant church teaching this, and that's when the angels fully grasped this whole plan. They were hearing it being proclaimed by the New Covenant church. What I want you to see in all of this is the pivotal role that the spiritual understanding of the Holy Days plays in all of this. Realize, prior to Exodus, you don't have the Holy Days until you get to the Exodus—the time of Moses and forward—because it's tied to the story of what takes place in Exodus going forward. Obviously, Abraham had some understanding that there was going to be a spiritual reward and New Jerusalem, because Hebrews 11 tells us he looked forward to that city whose Builder and Maker was God. It's referring to New Jerusalem. Obviously, he had some concept that there was a spiritual reward in store. When it comes to the details to this, probably not an understanding of how the details work out in this regard. Even if you're looking at once you have the Holy Days from Exodus forward, think of it in terms of what the Holy Days meant to Ancient Israel. For them, and how the Old Testament teaches it, there are basically two things it would tie to. One is the historical events of the Exodus—we're going to briefly look at this in a moment—even with unleavened bread, they were directly told.

“Why are you keeping this?” — To remember we came out of Egypt and the events that happened.

“And Passover—why are they keeping this?” — To remember the details of what God did.

It's not being presented from a plan of salvation standpoint; it's being presented from historical events.

There were two things they were tied to. It was not only the historical events, but also the agricultural harvest. I gave a sermon about three years ago—it's on the website and our YouTube channel—called “Spiritual Harvests”—and I talked about how the plan of

the Holy Days was directly tied to the harvests in Israel. You can see in Deuteronomy 16:9 that it's talking about the count between wavesheaf Sunday and Pentecost. It says you start the count from when you first put the sickle to the standing grain. That was the day of the barley harvest, when they began harvesting the barley—on wavesheaf Sunday. Those were tied together. You see at Pentecost; they are offering the two wave loafs—the first fruits of the wheat harvest. Those two would correlate together. You see in Deuteronomy where they were keeping the Feast of Tabernacles after they had finished harvesting all the grapes. They would associate the Holy Days to two major things; to their agricultural harvest and with historical events. They are not associating it with a plan of salvation for mankind. That's not really understood until the New Testament. To see this, Look at Exodus 12. We're going to look at the instructions that God gave to Moses and it is specifically looking to what they would teach their children about why we are keeping this Passover meal? Why are we keeping Unleavened Bread? He tells them,

“These are the instructions you are going to give to them.”

Notice it's just tied to what God did for them in historical events with the Exodus.

Exodus 12:24 *And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever.*

25) *It will come to pass when you come to the land which the LORD will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service.*

26) *And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?'*

27) *that you shall say, It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households." 'So the people bowed their heads and worshiped.*

(NKJV)

They are specifically told why they are doing this.

“You're remembering our deliverance from being slaves in Egypt. What God did to intervene to finally push Pharaoh to the point of, 'I've had enough, get out!' “

It enabled them the chance to leave. He gave them similar instructions of why they were keeping Unleavened Bread in chapter 13:3.

Exodus 13:3 *And Moses said to the people: "Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten.*

4) *On this day you are going out, in the month Abib.*

5) *And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month.*

- 6) *Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD.*
- 7) *Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters.*
- 8) *And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, 'This is done because of what the LORD did for me when I came up from Egypt.'*
- 9) *It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the LORD's law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt.*
- 10) *You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year.*
(NKJV)

Why are they keeping this from their perspective? This is about historical events. This is remembering how God delivered us, brought us out of Egypt, took care of the nation and they would attach it to that and the harvest. They would not attach this to a plan of salvation. That's not how they would see it. It's not until the New Testament that we start seeing that perspective come with this. Then what we see is that the spiritual meaning of the spring Holy Days being taught in terms of a spiritual analogy which is applied to this story. That's why I always say, one of the keys to properly understanding the spiritual meaning of the spring Holy Days is sticking to the details of the story. It's all analogies applied to that story and if your explanation of the meaning doesn't match the details of the story, that's a big indication that you got it wrong. In 1 Corinthians 5 we see that now there is a whole spiritual dimension attached to this that we don't typically see in the Old Testament. Now *the mysteries of God* are revealed. What we will see here is Paul addressing a problem that is taking place in the Corinthian church. They have a guy who has an active affair going on with his mother-in-law. They have severe sin taking place in the congregation and he is addressing that. While addressing that, he reveals some very important spiritual principles of what we see in the Passover and the days of Unleavened Bread. Not from a historical perspective of just what God did with Israel, but from a spiritual meaning of the plan of salvation. He's revealing *the mysteries of God*.

- 1 Corinthians 5:1** *It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife!*
- 2) *And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.*
 - 3) *For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed.*
 - 4) *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,*
 - 5) *deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*
 - 6) *Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?*

Notice the next couple of verses because he drops some truth bombs, you might say, that reveal the spiritual meaning of these days.

7) Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

8) Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
(NKJV)

Now we have a whole spiritual dimension being given to these days. That just wasn't a part of Ancient Israel's understanding of the days at all. So, you can see why the *mysteries* of the plan of salvation didn't really become knowledge that was understood fully in the details until the New Testament church. The Holy Days were the key, but how were they understood in the Old Testament? Memorials of God's events with the Exodus and what He had done with them. It was tied to the harvest and other physical things; they are not understanding it from a perspective of a spiritual plan of salvation and how God is working with mankind to ultimately offer them the chance in the Kingdom of God. That's not how they looked at it at all. Understanding these days is absolutely pivotal to our understanding of these *mysteries* and the plan of salvation.

This also reveals another important truth for us in the church of God to pay attention to. What I'm referring to is, really became something I paid attention to in 1995. That's when the apostasy in Worldwide really caused a lot of people to leave and then a lot of us were reexamining paradigms that we had thought of for years. A lot of us thought of the church as an organization and then you realize, no that's not how the church of God is defined. It's a set of beliefs. More of what happened there is sometimes typical of human nature. We see the middle of the road as we jump from one ditch to the other. What I mean by that is—there were a number of people I saw at that time who went from not only saying,

“It's not just an issue of God only works in one corporate organization,

(which if we had read 1 Corinthians 1 and 3, the whole point is being made there) they kind of jumped into the other ditch and said that

“Any group that is keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days, they are all the same.”

I would disagree with that. The reason being—over the years I've looked at a number of Messianic groups and they keep the Sabbath and Holy Days. They make a point of keeping the Holy Days, but look at what their explanation of what the Holy Days mean and you don't see much. They don't get much beyond the meaning of what Ancient Israel saw of the memorials of the historical events that took place. Are they really understanding the spiritual meaning and how these mapped out the plan of salvation for mankind? A lot of times that is missing. That's a big red flag for where God's Spirit is really working and where it isn't. The Holy Spirit reveals *the mysteries of God* and it's tied to the Holy Days. So just because someone says, “Yes the Holy Days are in the

New Testament and we should keep them—that's great—but do they really understand what these days mean? That's pivotal to understanding them.

If you really understand the Holy Days, what you see is a mirror effect. You see the same process playing out in the fall Holy Days that are in the spring Holy Days. The main difference being the spring Holy Days are for the Firstfruits and the fall Holy Days are for the rest of mankind. There's a big key to see that in Leviticus 23. We're going to read part of the significance of the Feast of Tabernacles and where the Feast of Tabernacles gets its name from; *the temporary dwellings*. Before we do that, remember what we just read a few minutes ago in Exodus 13.

When your children ask, why are you keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread, what do you tell them? It's a memorial of us coming out of Egypt.

I want you to notice, we're going to revisit the exact same meaning in the Feast of Tabernacles. Starting in verse 39.

Leviticus 23:39 *Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest.*

40) And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days.

41) You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

42) You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths ... (NKJV)

Notice verse 43, this is the reason for the booths and the very concept of where the Feast of Tabernacles gets its name from—the temporary dwellings.

43) that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. ” ’ (NKJV)

If you're familiar with Peter "Yogi" Berri (an America professional baseball catcher and later manager and coach), he would have these funny quotes and would say:

"This is deja vu all over again".

Think about this; what was unleavened bread about? It was the memorial of coming out of Egypt. What are the temporary dwellings about? Memorial of coming out of Egypt. "This is deja vu all over again". We are revisiting the exact same meaning. There is a simple reason why. The spring Holy Days refer to the plan of salvation for the Firstfruits,

the fall Holy Days are for the rest of mankind. That's why you have this dual meaning. This reveals to us *the mysteries of God*—the plan of salvation—how God works with mankind to ultimately offer them the Kingdom of God. Understanding the meaning of these days is the key to understanding *the mysteries of God* and how all this plays out.

This means to understand and to maintain this understanding, we need to be very careful how we give respect and honor to God's Holy Days—and the importance that we place upon them. If we disregard God's Holy Days, it can be absolutely fatal to our spiritual life, to our knowledge, our understanding and insight into His plan of salvation. Fatal to our being a part of His plan of salvation. To see that, look at 1 Corinthians 11. In this chapter, even throughout the whole book of Corinthians, the church—if you've read through these letters—had lots of problems. Paul is addressing the misbehavior going on in the Corinthian church. One of the big issues he addresses here is their misbehavior at the Passover service. People were getting drunk and treating it with complete disrespect. This is supposed to be a solemn service, remembering Christ and all that He did for mankind and our need for that. They were treating it like a party and absolutely disrespecting it entirely. Notice what Paul says about this. Pick up in verse 23.

1 Corinthians 11:23 *For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24) and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25) In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26) For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. (NKJV)*

It couldn't be more obvious that He was referring to the Passover service. If you compare this with the gospel accounts of Christ's final Passover with the apostles, this is directly what took place. This is obviously what He is talking about.

27) Therefore, whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28) But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29) For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30) For this reason, many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. 31) For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. 32) But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. (NKJV)

Obviously, he's referring spiritually here—those who are treating it like this, *many are sick and some are asleep*—he is referring to is being *spiritually sick or dead*. He is

saying that they've so disregarded this that they are quenching the Holy Spirit. They are rebelling and resisting God. They are disrespecting Christ's sacrifice and obviously they are losing their knowledge of an understanding of God's truth and their respect for it. If you're spiritually dead, that's losing the Holy Spirit. It's losing your salvation. You can see that the importance we place upon God's Holy Days is very key and fundamental to our understanding of *the mysteries of God*. In recent years I've seen some long-term ministers in the church of God come to the conclusion that it's not really important to keep the New Covenant Passover anymore; just totally disregarding it. It's no surprise to then see their whole understanding of the Holy Days and the plan of God—the plan of salvation and the details of how it plays out—become totally confused and misguided. These two things are very directly connected with each other. Our respect and the importance that we place upon God's Holy Days and keeping them properly, showing them proper honor and respect is directly tied to submitting to the Holy Spirit and properly understanding the plan of God.

This also ties to the respect we show to the fall Holy Days and not quenching the Spirit. In 1 Thessalonians 5:19, as I read through this, you are going to see it doesn't specifically mention the Holy Days, but I'll explain the connection in just a moment.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 *Do not quench the Spirit.* (NKJV)

Quench refers "to extinguishing the Spirit."

20) *Do not despise prophecies.* (NKJV)

I'm going to show you the Greek word that is translated *despise*. It's transliterated as *exoutheneo*, Strong's #1848 and according to Zodhiates it means

"To bring to naught, to despise, treat with scorn, by implication to reject with scorn."

He's saying don't treat *prophecies* with scorn. We're going to come back to that.

Continuing in Verse 21) ...

21) *Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.* (NKJV)

Sometimes people misapply verse 21 when it says *don't scorn prophecies*, thinking that means we should focus all of our emphasis on every speculative concept and date setting and getting out onto the fringes of prophecies. No, verse 21 addresses that—*test all things and hold fast to what is good*. If you test a lot of these various speculations about prophecy, you quickly see that they don't hold water and you dismiss them because they are not what is good. If you look at this from the perspective of the Holy Days—as I mentioned, from Trumpets to the 8th day—all of these are directly tied to prophetic events. This is because they're tied to the plan of salvation for the rest of mankind and none of that has occurred yet. All of these prophetic events are for the

future. We need to treat those Holy Days and their meaning with great respect and regard for the meaning that they reveal to us. It's fundamental in our understanding *the mysteries of God*. God's plan of salvation shows exactly how He's going to play this out and offer all of mankind a chance to be a part of His family.

There's also another important concept that we can't neglect in all of this. A lot of this sermon I have focused on the understanding of *the mysteries of God*. Which you could say falls into the category of knowledge. It's good that we seek knowledge but we also have to make sure that we don't ever neglect the application of God's law. We can understand everything and we still won't make it into the Kingdom of God if we are not diligently living what we know. We'll see this in 1 Corinthians 13; it directly addresses *the mysteries* we are referring to—*the mysteries of God*. That we can understand everything about them, but if we are not practicing God's agape love in our lives, actively submitting to Him and having that love affect our relationship with Him and other people—how we treat others around us—if that's not governing our lives, our understanding is not going to mean much. Notice in 1 Corinthians 13:1.

1 Corinthians 13:1 *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.*

2) *And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.*

3) *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. (NKJV)*

This isn't just an issue of, "we need to focus on feel-good emotions." Some people think love is just "doing what feels good. We need to make people feel good and not bad and that's love."

Love is what *does* good and submitting to God's law is what *does* good. My whole point in this is, we can't just focus on the knowledge. It's important that we esteem God's Holy Days, that we're submitting to His Spirit so we understand fully His plan and how He's going to play it out. But most importantly, we need to be living what we understand. Submitting in our day to day lives to following His laws and keeping this in mind in how we not only submit to Him, but how we treat people. We can have all the understanding in the world and understand *the mysteries of God* but if we are not practicing *agape love* in our day to day lives, we won't be a part of that plan. We'll lose out.

As we start in a few months keeping another cycle of God's Holy Days, let's keep in mind the importance of those days. It's not just a matter of going through the motions and keeping them like we've always done. We need to pay attention to their meaning and striving to learn more and more about that meaning. They reveal to us — "*The mysteries of God*".