

The Mystery of the Gospel

MEMORY TEXT: “*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*” (*Colossians 1:27*).

“We can so far comprehend His dealing with us, and the motives by which He is actuated, that we may discern boundless love and mercy united to infinite power. We can understand as much of His purposes as it is for our good to know; and beyond this we must still trust the might of the Omnipotent, the love and wisdom of the Father and Sovereign of all.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 699.

Suggested Reading: *Education*, pp. 169-172. (At the bottom go this page)

Sunday February 12

1. SCRIPTURES HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD

a. **What does Peter observe about some of Paul’s writings? 2 Peter 3:14–17. What should we realize about some things in Scripture? Deuteronomy 29:29.**

2 Peter 3:14-17 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. **15** And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; **16** As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. **17** Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.

Deuteronomy 29:29 The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

“Men of ability have devoted a lifetime of study and prayer to the searching of the Scriptures, and yet there are many portions of the Bible that have not been fully explored. Some passages of Scripture will never be perfectly comprehended until in the future life Christ shall explain them. There are mysteries to be unraveled, statements that human minds cannot harmonize. And the enemy will seek to arouse argument upon these points, which might better remain undiscussed.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 312.

b. **With what attitude must we approach the Scriptures? John 7:17.**

John 7:17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

“The spirit in which you come to the investigation of the Scriptures will determine the character of the assistant at your side. Angels from the world of light will be with those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance. But if the Bible is opened with irreverence, with a feeling of self-sufficiency, if the heart is filled with prejudice, Satan is beside you, and he will set the plain statements of God’s word in a perverted light.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 108.

Monday February 13

2. DISCERNING SECRETS

a. What specific things did God reveal to Paul for the purpose of sharing with the rest of the world? Romans 16:25, 26; Colossians 1:27.

Romans 16:25-26 Now to him that is of power to stablish 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, **26** 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:

Colossians 1:27 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:

“To Paul the cross was the one object of supreme interest. Ever since he had been arrested in his career of persecution against the followers of the crucified Nazarene he had never ceased to glory in the cross. At that time there had been given him a revelation of the infinite love of God, as revealed in the death of Christ; and a marvelous transformation had been wrought in his life, bringing all his plans and purposes into harmony with heaven. From that hour he had been a new man in Christ. He knew by personal experience that when a sinner once beholds the love of the Father, as seen in the sacrifice of His Son, and yields to the divine influence, a change of heart takes place, and henceforth Christ is all and in all.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 245.

b. If something in Scripture is difficult to understand, why should we even attempt researching into the matter? 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: **17** That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

“The cross of Christ is all covered with reproach and stigma, yet it is the hope of life and exaltation to man. No one can comprehend the mystery of godliness so long as he is ashamed to bear the cross of Christ. None will be able to discern and appreciate the blessings which Christ has purchased for man at infinite cost to Himself, unless they are willing to joyfully sacrifice earthly treasures that they may become His followers. Every self-denial and sacrifice made for Christ enriches the giver, and every suffering and reproach endured for His dear name increases the final joy and immortal reward in the kingdom of glory.”—*Confrontation*, p. 93.

c. Explain what we need in order to come to right conclusions. John 16:13.

John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

“Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit we shall be continually liable to wrest the Scriptures or to misinterpret them. There is much reading of the Bible that is without profit and in many cases is a positive injury. When the word of God is opened without reverence and without prayer; when the thoughts and affections are not fixed upon God or in harmony with His will, the mind is clouded with doubt; and in the very study of the Bible, skepticism strengthens. The enemy takes control of the thoughts, and he suggests interpretations that are not correct.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 704, 705.

Tuesday February 14

3. THE ROYAL MORAL LAW

a. Contrary to common belief, how do we know that the law of Ten Commandments were not done away with at the cross? James 2:8, 9.

James 2:8-9 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: **9** But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

“Many religious teachers assert that Christ by His death abolished the law, and men are henceforth free from its requirements. There are some who represent it as a grievous yoke, and in contrast to the bondage of the law they present the liberty to be enjoyed under the gospel.

“But not so did prophets and apostles regard the holy law of God. Said David: ‘I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy precepts.’ Psalm 119:45. The apostle James, who wrote after the death of Christ, refers to the Decalogue as ‘the royal law’ and ‘the perfect law of liberty.’ James 2:8; 1:25. And the revelator, half a century after the crucifixion, pronounces a blessing upon them ‘that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.’ Revelation 22:14.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 466.

“When one surrenders to Christ, the mind is brought under the control of the law; but it is the royal law, which proclaims liberty to every captive. By becoming one with Christ, man is made free. Subjection to the will of Christ means restoration to perfect manhood.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 131.

b. Which law defines loving our neighbor as ourselves? Romans 13:9; compare Exodus 20:1-17.

Romans 13:9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Exodus 20:1-17 And God spake all these words, saying, **2** I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. **3** Thou shalt have no other gods before me. **4** Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in

the water under the earth. **5** Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; **6** And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. **7** Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. **8** Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. **9** Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: **10** But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: **11** For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. **12** Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. **13** Thou shalt not kill. **14** Thou shalt not commit adultery. **15** Thou shalt not steal. **16** Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. **17** Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

"The first four of the Ten Commandments are summed up in the one great precept, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' The last six are included in the other, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Both these commandments are an expression of the principle of love. The first cannot be kept and the second broken, nor can the second be kept while the first is broken. When God has His rightful place on the throne of the heart, the right place will be given to our neighbor. We shall love him as ourselves. And only as we love God supremely is it possible to love our neighbor impartially. . . .

"Christ taught His hearers that the law of God is not so many separate precepts, some of which are of great importance, while others are of small importance and may with impunity be ignored. Our Lord presents the first four and the last six commandments as a divine whole, and teaches that love to God will be shown by obedience to all His commandments."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 607.

Wednesday February 15

4. JUDGED BY THE LAW

a. Explain the far-reaching extent of the judgment upon humanity. Ecclesiastes 11:9; Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27.

Ecclesiastes 11:9 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

Romans 14:10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

"All will be judged according to the light that has been given. The Lord sends forth His ambassadors with a message of salvation, and those who hear He will hold responsible for the way in which they treat the words of His servants. Those who are sincerely seeking for truth will make a careful investigation, in the light of God's word, of the doctrines presented to them."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 232.

b. What standard will be used in the judgment? James 2:12.

James 2:12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

c. Which law is this? James 2:11; compare Exodus 20.

James 2:11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

Exodus 20 And God spake all these words, saying, **2** I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. **3** Thou shalt have no other gods before me. **4** Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. **5** Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; **6** And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. **7** Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. **8** Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. **9** Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: **10** But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: **11** For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. **12** Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. **13** Thou shalt not kill. **14** Thou shalt not commit adultery. **15** Thou shalt not steal. **16** Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. **17** Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's. **18** And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. **19** And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. **20** And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. **21** And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was. **22** And the Lord said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. **23** Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold. **24** An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. **25** And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. **26** Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.

"In His teachings, Christ showed how far-reaching are the principles of the law spoken from Sinai. He made a living application of that law whose principles remain forever the great standard of righteousness—the standard by which all shall be judged in that great day when the judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 211.

"The law of God is the standard by which the characters and the lives of men will be tested in the judgment. Says the wise man: 'Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment.' Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14. The apostle James admonishes his brethren: 'So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.' James 2:12."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 482.

"When the judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened, and every man shall be judged according to the things written in the books, then the tables of stone, hidden by God until that day, will be presented before the world as the standard of righteousness. Then men and women will see that the prerequisite of their salvation is obedience to the perfect law of God. None will find excuse for sin. By the righteous principles of that law, men will receive their sentence of life or of death."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 225.

Thursday February 16

5. THE LAW AS THE SCHOOLMASTER

a. What is the purpose of understanding the law or knowing the truth? John 3:18–21; Romans 7:7.

John 3:18-21 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. **19** And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. **20** For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. **21** But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Romans 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

"The first step in reconciliation to God is the conviction of sin. 'Sin is the transgression of the law.' 'By the law is the knowledge of sin.' 1 John 3:4; Romans 3:20. In order to see his guilt, the sinner must test his character by God's great standard of righteousness. It is a mirror which shows the perfection of a righteous character and enables him to discern the defects in his own."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 467.

b. By exposing our real condition, what does the law do with that revelation? Galatians 3:24.

Galatians 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

"I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments.

“Christ was the foundation of the whole Jewish economy. The death of Abel was in consequence of Cain’s refusing to accept God’s plan in the school of obedience, to be saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, typified by the sacrificial offerings pointing to Christ. Cain refused the shedding of blood, which symbolized the blood of Christ to be shed for the world. This whole ceremony was prepared by God, and Christ became the foundation of the whole system. This is the beginning of its work as the schoolmaster to bring sinful human agents to a consideration of Christ.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary [E. G. White Comments]*, vol. 6, p. 1109.

Friday February 17

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1. How important is personal heart preparation in Bible study?**
- 2. How is it possible to properly understand something as mysterious as the gospel of salvation?**
- 3. What are the reasons for understanding that after the cross, the law of God is still in force?**
- 4. What is the great standard of character as a prerequisite for eternal life?**
- 5. Why is it necessary for the law, our truant officer, to bring us to Christ?**

Suggested Reading: *Education*, pp. 169-172.

No finite mind can fully comprehend the character or the works of the Infinite One. We cannot by searching find out God. To minds the strongest and most highly cultured, as well as to the weakest and most ignorant, that holy Being must remain clothed in mystery. But though “clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His throne.” Psalm 97:2, R.V. We can so far comprehend His dealing with us as to discern boundless mercy united to infinite power. We can understand as much of His purposes as we are capable of comprehending; beyond this we may still trust the hand that is omnipotent, the heart that is full of love. (**Ed 169.1**)

The word of God, like the character of its Author, presents mysteries that can never be fully comprehended by finite beings. But God has given in the Scriptures sufficient evidence of their divine authority. His own existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. True, He has not removed the possibility of doubt; faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration; those who wish to doubt have opportunity; but those who desire to know the truth find ample ground for faith. (**Ed 169.2**)

We have no reason to doubt God’s word because we cannot understand the mysteries of His providence. In the natural world we are constantly surrounded with wonders beyond our comprehension. Should we then be surprised to find in the spiritual world also mysteries that we cannot fathom? The difficulty lies solely in the weakness and narrowness of the human mind. (**Ed 170.1**)

The mysteries of the Bible, so far from being an argument against it, are among the strongest evidences of its divine inspiration. If it contained no account of God but that

which we could comprehend; if His greatness and majesty could be grasped by finite minds, then the Bible would not, as now, bear the unmistakable evidences of divinity. The greatness of its themes should inspire faith in it as the word of God. (**Ed 170.2**)

The Bible unfolds truth with a simplicity and an adaptation to the needs and longings of the human heart that has astonished and charmed the most highly cultivated minds, while to the humble and uncultured also it makes plain the way of life. “The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein,” Isaiah 35:8. No child need mistake the path. Not one trembling seeker need fail of walking in pure and holy light. Yet the most simply stated truths lay hold upon themes elevated, far-reaching, infinitely beyond the power of human comprehension,—mysteries that are the hiding of His glory, mysteries that overpower the mind in its research,—while they inspire the sincere seeker for truth with reverence and faith. The more we search the Bible, the deeper is our conviction that it is the word of the living God, and human reason bows before the majesty of divine revelation. (**Ed 170.3**)

God intends that to the earnest seeker the truths of His word shall be ever unfolding. While “the secret things belong unto the Lord our God,” “those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children.” Deuteronomy 29:29. The idea that certain portions of the Bible cannot be understood has led to neglect of some of its most important truths. The fact needs to be emphasized, and often repeated, that the mysteries of the Bible are not such because God has sought to conceal truth, but because our own weakness or ignorance makes us incapable of comprehending or appropriating truth. The limitation is not in His purpose, but in our capacity. Of those very portions of Scripture often passed by as impossible to be understood, God desires us to understand as much as our minds are capable of receiving. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” that we may be “thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” 2 Timothy 3:16, 17. (**Ed 170.4**)

It is impossible for any human mind to exhaust even one truth or promise of the Bible. One catches the glory from one point of view, another from another point; yet we can discern only gleamings. The full radiance is beyond our vision. (**Ed 171.1**)

As we contemplate the great things of God’s word, we look into a fountain that broadens and deepens beneath our gaze. Its breadth and depth pass our knowledge. As we gaze, the vision widens; stretched out before us we behold a boundless, shoreless sea. (**Ed 171.2**)

Such study has vivifying power. The mind and heart acquire new strength, new life. (**Ed 171.3**)

This experience is the highest evidence of the divine authorship of the Bible. We receive God’s word as food for the soul, through the same evidence by which we receive bread as food for the body. Bread supplies the need of our nature; we know by experience that it produces blood and bone and brain. Apply the same test to the Bible; when its principles have actually become the elements of character, what has been the result? what changes have been made in the life? “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” 2 Corinthians 5:17. In its power, men and women have broken the chains of sinful habit. They have renounced selfishness. The profane have become reverent, the drunken sober, the profligate pure. Souls that have borne the likeness of Satan have been

transformed into the image of God. This change is itself the miracle of miracles. A change wrought by the word, it is one of the deepest mysteries of the word. We cannot understand it; we can only believe, as declared by the Scriptures, it is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Colossians 1:27. (**Ed 171.4**) **2 I**

A knowledge of this mystery furnishes a key to every other. It opens to the soul the treasures of the universe, the possibilities of infinite development. (**Ed 172.1**)

And this development is gained through the constant unfolding to us of the character of God—the glory and the mystery of the written word. If it were possible for us to attain to a full understanding of God and His word, there would be for us no further discovery of truth, no greater knowledge, no further development. God would cease to be supreme, and man would cease to advance. Thank God, it is not so. Since God is infinite, and in Him are all the treasures of wisdom, we may to all eternity be ever searching, ever learning, yet never exhaust the riches of His wisdom, His goodness, or His power. (**Ed 172.2**)