

The Mystery Revealed

Ephesians 3:1-12

Introduction

People love a good mystery. At least, enough do to warrant having tons of serial-documentary reality TV shows about them. Off the top of my head, there are *The UnXplained* with William Shatner, *Unsolved Mysteries*, and how about *The Mystery of Oak Island*. Oak Island is a small (roughly 140 acre) island off the south shore of Nova Scotia. Supposedly, in the 18th Century, a massive amount of treasure was buried there. For 9 years, PBS has run this series about two brothers and their search for this treasure. How long does it take to dig up 140 acres? Fans are glued to their TV sets because they keep finding “clues” to the treasure’s location. I like mysteries, too. But I also like closure. That’s why I prefer Sherlock Holmes. The mysteries were confounding, yet he solved them. Today, we read about a mystery that has been revealed. We couldn’t solve it, but God gave us closure by revealing it to us. This is what the Epiphany of Christ is all about, the mystery revealed.

Mystery—General & Special Revelation

There are two types of revelation. God reveals Himself in general terms in nature and reason. This is General Revelation. For instance, we can look at the scientific intricacies and patterns in nature and deduce that there is a God because these details could not have sprung from nothing. But to know anything about this God, we must turn to His Word, where He reveals specifics about Himself. This is Special Revelation. In Scripture, God reveals things we could never figure out on our own. God’s Word is Law and Gospel. The Law reveals how God wants us to live. The Gospel reveals how we are saved. The only place to learn how to live and how to be saved is Holy Scripture.

The Mystery of Salvation BC

In the Old Testament, we see that God chose to reveal His plan of salvation to the world through His chosen people, Israel. In **Genesis 12:3**, God promised Abram that *all the families of the earth will be blessed through him*. But when Israel would get close to other nations, they would be led astray by them to worship other gods. So, God was forced to keep them separate from others for their own sakes. There were a few foreigners who converted and worshipped Israel’s’ God Yahweh. But the only ones who saw the nations coming to salvation through Israel were the prophets like Isaiah (Read **Isaiah 49:6-5-6**). As we read earlier, *“And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising” (Isaiah 60:3)*.

The Mystery Revealed through Christ

The One whom the prophets saw bringing light and hope to the world was the Servant of the Lord, the Messiah, the Christ. As we observe the Epiphany, we read the story of the wise men from the east who followed the star to worship the infant Jesus. They represent all Gentiles, telling us that Christ has been revealed to the world as the Son of God. As Christ is revealed to be the Son of God, He is also revealed to be the Savior of the world. John the Baptist reveals Him as *the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)*. Jesus reveals Himself to be the *Light of the world (John 8:12)*, the *Bread*

of Life (John 6), the *Resurrection and the Life (John 11:35)*, and *the Way* of salvation (*John 14:6*). The Gospel is now revealed that Jesus is salvation for all, for Jews and Gentiles alike.

The Mystery Revealed through the Church

But the revelation of the mystery of the Gospel doesn't end there. (Read *Ephesians 3:8-10*). God's plan for revelation is this: He has revealed salvation through the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the church through the prophets and apostles for the purpose of the church passing on that revelation to the rest of the world. It is not God's desire to keep this revelation hidden from anyone. He wants all people to know and believe in the atoning death of His Son for the forgiveness of sins.

The Real Rainbow

To disseminate this revelation, God has given His church Word and Sacrament. Some months ago, someone had taken pictures of a rainbow over the church and sent them to me on Facebook. I thought, "How appropriate, especially when you understand what the rainbow really means." In *Genesis 9*, God put the rainbow in the sky as a sign of His promise of life, that He would never again destroy the world with water. That promise of life was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. When you see the rainbow over the church, it's like God is saying, "Come, all who want to live, to the church and receive salvation and life through the Means of Grace offered here." **THE MYSTERY IS REVEALED** here through the Word and Sacrament.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
