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**THE LAW
SPEAKS**

TREASURE HIDDEN IN A FIELD

Presented by Murray McLellan

All Scripture quotations in this article are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

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INTRODUCTION

Many books have been written on the subject of “understanding the Bible.” In most books on interpreting the Bible, certain rules and principles are brought to the text in order to understand the precise meaning of the original authors of Scripture. Though many different rules and principles may make a great deal of “sense” and seem very logical as we approach the understanding of ancient writing, yet we must never forget that the Bible is a unique book. Its author truly is God. The words it contains have proceeded from the very mouth of God (2 Timothy 3:16; Matthew 4:4). Prophecy of Scripture never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). This is why Paul wrote to the Thessalonians:

*For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.
(1 Thessalonians 2:13)*

Since this is the unique Word of God, we must listen to its truth in order to know *how* we are to understand what is written. Our hermeneutics (rules for interpreting the Bible) must be derived from the Bible itself. Any other source is fallible. Our logic is fallible and can be mistaken. God's Word alone is truth. In his prayer to his Father, in John 17:17, Jesus affirmed, "*Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.*" We need to look to Scripture to interpret Scripture, for the only infallible rule of interpretation is the Scripture itself.

My desire in this study is to see what the Bible itself teaches us about how to interpret its writings. The following notes are taken from sermons delivered at Grace Fellowship as we studied the epistle to the Galatians. Thus, it was not designed to be an exhaustive study on Bible interpretation. However, in the process of working through Galatians 4, many principles for understanding the Scriptures became clear. It is these foundational instructions to which we want to give our attention. Dear reader, please do not be prejudiced by pre-established rules and ideas, for prejudice inhibits judgment. May you be free to examine the Word of God, as one who thirsts for truth, to make sure that your method of reading and understanding the Scripture is indeed based on the instruction of God himself. I am afraid that many rely too much on books written by scholars, as opposed to a humble and prayerful search and study of the Bible itself (See Matthew 11:25-26; Proverbs 2:1-5; James 4:6).

As you continue in this study, may you be refreshed and amazed by the wonder and wisdom of our incredible God. May you be like the wise man that listens to the whole matter before he draws conclusions prematurely (See Proverbs 18:2, 13).

HIDDEN TREASURE

To begin this study we will examine two passages from the Scriptures.

*And the disciples came and said to Him [Jesus],
“Why do You speak to them in parables?”*

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

*But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears
for they hear; 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."*

(Matthew 13:10-17)

One example of these *mysteries of the kingdom of heaven* is provided in verse 44:

*"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden
in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over
it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."
(Matthew 13:44)*

What is it that this man finds in this field? He finds treasure, but it is hidden. It would be a mystery to his neighbors as to why he would sell everything he had to buy that field. All they would see would be a field of dirt. Why would he pay that much for it? He sees something more than merely the land that everyone else can see. Something has been revealed to him that is not seen by those who cannot see beneath the surface.

This man did not buy that field because it was the best soil that he had ever seen. It was not the physical land that motivated this man and thrilled his soul. It was what was beneath the surface and hidden in the field. This is the way it is to see the mystery of the kingdom of heaven.

DO YOU NOT HEAR THE LAW?

In Galatians 4, Paul will uncover for us some of the incredible truths to be found in the law. He shows that there is greater treasure to be gained in the record of Abraham and his two sons than appears on the surface to the natural eye.

My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you. Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written:

*“Rejoice, O barren,
You who do not bear!
Break forth and shout,
You who are not in labor!
For the desolate has many more children
Than she who has a husband.”*

*Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.
(Galatians 4:19-31)*

We are about to embark on a delightful study in an incredible passage that teaches us much about understanding the Word of God.

In Galatians 4:21, Paul asks the Galatians, who had been giving ear to false teachers, *“do you not hear the law?”* Literally this reads, *“The law do you not hear?”* Paul says that the law speaks a message. It is as if Paul is asking, *“Do you not have eyes to see and ears to hear what the law is really proclaiming?”* If they did, they would not *“desire to be under the law,”* for they would *“see”* the better treasure. They would not put themselves under the *“weak and beggarly elements”* of the Old Covenant, for they would *“hear”* of the glorious New Covenant. (See the context of Galatians 3:1-4:18).

Paul is concerned because the Galatians were concerning themselves with the look of the “field”—the physical and beggarly elements of the law. The false teachers (Judaizers) were telling them that they needed to be circumcised and keep the Old Covenant law in order to be saved. The Judaizers were extolling the glories of the Old Covenant. What the false teachers did not recognize was that the law was speaking of and pointing to a far greater, glorious covenant built upon better promises (see Hebrews 8:4-13).

To expand the field analogy, it was as if the Galatians, who had a field consisting of mostly sandy soil with bush land that needed to be cleared, were beginning to be swayed because the Judaizers were pointing to a field of rich soil with lush gardens. Paul is trying to remind them that the issue is the treasure hidden in the field—not the field for its own sake. The field can profit you some in this world, but not in the world to come. Paul is saying, “Have you forgotten why you sold all you had to buy this field?” It was not for the field itself, but for the treasure which lay beneath its surface. Do you not hear what the law is really proclaiming?

This question brings us squarely into the area of hermeneutics. What does the Scripture really teach? How do we determine its teaching? We are going to identify and examine how the Judaizers interpreted the Bible. How did the other Jews of Jesus’ day interpret the Bible? How does Jesus say to interpret it and how do his apostles, like Paul, say to interpret it? What do they teach by precept and by example? Where do we get our “rules” for interpreting the Bible?

We must get our rules from the Bible itself. If we obtain them from outside the Word of God, then regardless of how “common-sense” or rational and logical they seem, the Bible rests on these rules. Something outside the Bible, called the hermeneutical rules of biblical interpretation, becomes the foundation upon which the Bible rests. We would then interpret the Bible through those “lenses”. These rules become the key to unlock the meaning of the Bible. They are the glasses we must put on in order to “see” the true interpretation of Scripture. But who says those are the right glasses? Who says that is the key? Who says that is the proper foundation on which to lay the Bible?

What is the only thing that we know that cannot be broken? Jesus tells us, “*The Scripture cannot be broken*” (John 10:35). He tells the Sadducees that they are mistaken because they do not know the Scriptures (Matthew 22:29)! We need to make sure that any rules we use to interpret the Scripture come clearly from the Scripture itself. We need to let the Word of God produce the key and any “lenses” through which we will examine the Bible. Our hermeneutics must be solidly rooted in the clear teaching of the Word of God. Indeed, as we would expect, the Word of God does teach us how it is to be interpreted^{<?>}

THE LAW PROPHECIES

In Matthew 11:13, Jesus makes this statement:

For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

In the context of this passage, Jesus has been speaking of John the Baptist. In verses 9-10, Jesus had stated, “But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written:

*“Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,
Who will prepare Your way before You.”*

This introduces the contrast that Jesus makes between the times prior to the coming of the kingdom, and his time, the inauguration of the kingdom. It is with this in mind that he states: *“For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.”* What did the prophets do? They prophesied. They foretold the things of God, and they did so until John. John is the final one. He prepares the way for the Son himself to speak (Hebrews 1:1-3; Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Matthew 17:5). God sent his servants first of all, but now he sends

his only begotten Son - the heir himself (See Matthew 21:3–46).

Immediately following this statement, in verses 14-15, Jesus utters this somewhat startling pronouncement:

“And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

John the Baptist is Elijah? It wouldn't seem to be, on the surface. Elijah is Elijah, isn't he? Yes. But beneath the literal, for those who have ears able and willing to hear, Jesus is teaching that John the Baptist is represented in those prophecies of the coming of Elijah.

There is something important beneath the surface of the literal, historical words of the prophets. Jesus says that when the Bible proclaims that Elijah will come again, its ultimate reference is to John the Baptist. Not everyone, however, is *“willing to receive it”* for they have ears that are only able to hear the natural and surface statements. Are we willing to hear the words of the Son of God? This is the Father's beloved Son. Hear him!

In the exact same context, Jesus also mentions the law. What did the law do? It also prophesied, Jesus tells us. It spoke forth truth and foretold the things of God until John; until the coming of the reality—that which was pictured and foretold by the prophets and the law.

Does the law function in the same manner as the prophets? Is there a deeper, more profound message in addition to that which lies on the surface? According to Jesus, the law prophesies. It also

teaches. The law teaches the same thing, in the same manner as the prophets do. That is why Paul asks the Galatians, “Do you not hear what the law taught?” Many did not hear the prophets and many did not hear the law. Many still don’t. Why? “*He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*” Jesus said, “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me*” (John 10:27). And to his disciples, he said, “*...Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear*” (Matthew 13:16).

Consider Jesus’ words in Matthew 13:10-11:

And the disciples came and said to Him [Jesus], “Why do You speak to them in parables?”

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.”

What two things does Jesus tie together here? “Parables” and “mysteries.” He teaches about the kingdom of heaven in a mystery or parable form. Over and over Jesus states, “The kingdom of heaven is like ...” The teaching is indirect and veiled. There is no concrete definition of the kingdom of heaven offered. If it were anyone else speaking, we might suppose that his understanding of the subject and/or his vocabulary were insufficient to allow him to clearly and definitively describe the kingdom. Since it is the Lord and Creator of the kingdom who speaks, we must assume that the peculiar nature of the teaching is intentional.

According to Paul, this is also how the law speaks. There is

something beneath the surface of the obvious literal story. In Galatians 4:22-23, immediately after asking, “...do you not hear the law?” Paul relates the summary of the historical narrative of Abraham’s two sons, as written in the law (the Pentateuch—the books of Moses). “For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise...”

What Jew did not know that story? They all knew it. This is the historical narrative that any natural man can read and understand. “Flesh and blood” can reveal this to you. Any reader can see this “field.” Ishmael was born to Abraham through his servant Hagar. This was an act of the flesh. Isaac could be born through Sarah only by a miraculous act of God. Isaac was the promised one and God fulfilled his promise.

So far nothing is mysterious or obscure. After asking if they hear the law, Paul relates the obvious surface story. There is more to his question, though, than just a history test. It is as if he asks, “Is that *all* you hear? Do you not hear something more? Is that all you see—what is on the surface? Do you only see a historical plot about a man and his wife and their scheming?” Paul then reveals the purpose behind his question with this proclamation: “*which things are symbolic.*”

The word translated *symbolic* is the Greek word, *allegoroumena*. Paul is saying, “Which things are allegoric.” Verses 22-23 recount the obvious, literal, surface reading that any natural man could read

and understand. This is generally what you get when you buy children's Bible storybooks. They give you what natural man can read. They give you the plot. They give you the history. Then they try to draw out moral lessons, in the manner of Aesop's fables. They teach moral lessons from the physical story. Any natural man can do that. If you read the rabbinical writings you will see that is exactly what they are all about. They see the "field" and get some "good lessons" there. But their focus is on the field (i.e., If you don't take care of your field, it will become overgrown with weeds, etc.). But is that really what the law is saying? Is that really what the Bible is all about?

Paul says that this is allegoric. Yes, it is true history that did actually happen in time and space; God ordained it, brought it to pass, and then had it recorded. The pressing question is why. What purpose lies behind these particular events and their preservation in recorded history? Many other historical events occurred from which moral lessons surely can be drawn. Why are those lost in the mists of antiquity while this account is carefully preserved? It is because God has a message that is more than mere moral instruction! The law is speaking to those who have ears to hear.

The word *allegoric* means "to have another meaning." Paul is saying that those events recorded in Genesis, regarding Abraham and Sarah and Hagar and Ishmael and Isaac, have another meaning—not just a surface meaning.

The root word of *allegoric* is used in Matthew 2:12, where it says, "*they departed for their own country **another** way.*" It is also used in

Galatians 1:7 where Paul says that the Judaizer's gospel "*is not another*" (i.e. it is not another of the same kind).

Paul's use is consistent with this meaning. After recording the historical events, he says there is another meaning. What is this other meaning? "...*these are the two covenants...*" That's the "another" meaning. Verses 22-23 are the surface story, the field. In verse 24, Paul begins to unveil the other meaning. Verses 24-31 are the hidden treasure that not everyone has eyes to see, or ears to hear.

In bringing out the fact that the Old Testament Scriptures have another meaning—not just the literal, surface meaning, Paul follows the same pattern as his Lord. The surface lesson is one that any natural man can understand, but the treasure is for those whose minds have had the veil lifted. The New Testament Scriptures bring this out over and over again; this will become more obvious as we continue this study.

THE VEIL TAKEN AWAY IN CHRIST

Consider what Paul teaches in 2 Corinthians 3.

But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:14-18)

Whose minds were blinded? The Jews. They read the Old Testament Scriptures, but with a veil over their minds. The veil is taken away in Christ; when it is lifted, one can, along with the New Testament writers, “*look back at the whole of (previous) history as one long, extended object lesson portraying some aspect of Christ’s person and*

work”^{<?>}. The Old Testament Scriptures are full of foreshadowing and word pictures about Christ. Suddenly, one sees beyond the surface—beyond the field—to see the treasure that lies hidden. This is about the spiritual reality of the New Covenant—the kingdom of Christ!

This veil is not confined to the Jews of Paul’s day. People today can read the Old Testament and understand the natural plot and storyline. Yet, they miss the whole point, if they miss Jesus and the New Covenant that he has instituted.

As Jesus said in Matthew 13, this treasure is not seen or recognized by many. It is beneath the surface “that seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” (Matthew 13:13) Thus the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled (see Isaiah 6:9-10; and Matthew 13:13-17). Even to this day, when Moses is read, they “do not hear the law.” When they read Galatians 4:22-23, they read about Abraham, and Hagar and Ishmael, and Sarah and Isaac, the child of promise. They read a historical account and can understand that. But that is all they see, because a veil lies on their hearts and minds, blinding them to the ultimate reality. They do not see that beneath the surface story is the story of the two covenants. They do not see the Christ, who is the real King of kings—the greater David. They see neither the Prophet greater than Moses, nor the greater Solomon, who is building a temple for God. The New Covenant kingdom that is not of this world, and the greater nation built from every tribe and tongue and people are

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Fred G. Zaspel, *The Theology of Fulfillment* [Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1993], 17, italics in the original)

not evident to them. They do not see the circumcision of heart.

Why do they not see? A veil blinds their minds to the truth. They do not have ears to hear or eyes to see. They do not understand the spiritual reality that is hidden in the field.

The veil is removed in the light of Christ! All the surface things are real enough, but at the same time “*are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ!*” (Colossians 2:17).

The Spirit of the Lord frees us to see and live for the treasure. We who have turned to the Lord have “*unveiled faces.*” Therefore, we can now see the other meaning—the true and greater story.

Where do we, who have unveiled faces, behold the glory of the Lord? His glory is revealed in the law, in the writings of Moses, and all throughout the Old Covenant. Just as a mirror reflects an image, so too, the image of the glorious Lord Jesus Christ is reflected in the Old Testament Scriptures.

When we read of Abraham taking his son to Mount Moriah (Genesis 22), why do smiles come to our faces? Is it not because we behold the glory of the Lord there as we think of another Father who gave his Son as a sacrifice?

When we see the ram caught in the thicket by its horns, becoming the substitute sacrifice, why do our hearts begin to pound? It is because we, with unveiled faces, are beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord. Our hearts don't pound because we see a ram caught in a thicket. Our thrill comes from seeing the greater substitute sacrifice of Jesus reflected in that story – who died in

our place on that very same Mount.

When we read in Leviticus 16 of the scapegoat that takes sins far away, is it a goat that brings praise to our lips, or is it the fact that we behold the better and eternal glory of the Lord, who has borne our sins away forever?

The one whose mind is unveiled reads the Scriptures very differently from the one whose mind is veiled. One delights in the law of the Lord far beyond the one who reads mere history. The Spirit of the Lord uncovers the glory of Jesus and his kingdom—his everlasting covenant. As we behold the glory of the Lord as he is revealed in the Scriptures, the Spirit of the Lord transforms us to reflect his image in our lives. Our “faces” and lives manifest the life of this glorious Lord of lords, as we are gloriously being transformed into his likeness. Oh, that Jesus might be manifest in my mortal flesh!

Listen to the words of the writer of Hebrews:

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, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer. For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the

copy and shadow of the heavenly things, 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.” 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.
(Hebrews 8:1-6)

There were surface, earthly priests who ministered in an earthly tabernacle, but our High Priest is a minister of the true tabernacle! It was so important for Moses to follow the pattern given to him in the “surface” and temporary tabernacle because this was the copy and shadow of something far greater—the heavenly reality. The Old Covenant pictured and foreshadowed a better covenant, which was established on better promises!

That is the true fulfillment of the promises given in the Old Testament Scriptures. That is the heavenly reality that was pictured by the law. Oh, do you not hear the law?

SPEAKING IN PARABLES

Following a description of the law, its tabernacle, priesthood, sacrifices, objects (i.e. manna, Aaron's rod, the mercy seat), and events, Hebrews 9:9-11 reads:

It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

The word *symbolic* is the Greek word *parabole*, usually translated *parable*. The writer to the Hebrews proclaims that all of this—the old system in its entirety—was a parable. The tabernacle, the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, all the services of the tabernacle, the priests, the sin offerings, the Day of Atonement—these things

are a parable. Parables are mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, Jesus told us. This word “symbolic” is the same word “parable” used in Matthew 13. Jesus spoke to the people in parables—in symbolic language—in allegories—in mysteries.

“It was symbolic for the present time”—

the items to which the pronoun “it” refers were a parable. What is the story beneath the surface? The “*present time*” was the message beneath the surface. The present time is the New Covenant age—with its greater and better Mediator, High Priest, and promises! This is the story behind the story—the greater truth which now is!

“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come...”

(Hebrews 9:11a)

“... with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.”

(Hebrews 9:11b)

The Old Testament Scriptures are allegoric. The tabernacle is a parable. The substance of it all is Christ!

So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

(Colossians 2:16-17)

All these other details were simply shadows that gave pictures of the reality, which is Christ. The law prophesied. The law speaks. It speaks of Christ!

In Matthew 13, we saw how “parables” were tied to the term “mysteries.” The Old Testament Scriptures were mysteries. Look at what Paul calls himself in 1 Corinthians 4.

*Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and
stewards of the mysteries of God.*

(1 Corinthians 4:1)

Paul viewed his role as that of an apostle to make known the mysteries of God. He is like a steward of his master’s household, who presents that household with a covered dish, lifts off the lid and says, “Check this out!” Look what’s under the surface. We know that Paul preached Christ, but from which Scriptures? The Old Testament Scriptures! Jesus is in the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus is the theme of the law. “*In the volume of the book it is written of Me,*” Jesus said (Hebrews 10:7).

Paul says that he is a steward of these mysteries of God and that we who are in Christ are the ones who have eyes to see. Thus, we proclaim to those who have not yet seen—to those who have only read the surface stories but have not yet caught the message beneath the surface; to those who only see the field. Paul proclaimed mysteries like Hagar and Sarah, unveiling that this is an allegory of two covenants.

Paul refers to this concept in Romans 16:25-27. The gospel of Jesus Christ was kept secret—it was hidden as a mystery. Now however, through his apostles, Jesus Christ makes himself manifest in the prophetic Scriptures.

“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 but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.”
(Romans 16:25-27)

Paul is not alone in viewing the gospel as a hidden treasure in the Old Testament Scriptures. In 1 Peter 1:10-12, after extolling this so great salvation in Jesus Christ, Peter writes,

“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 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. 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.”
(1 Peter 1:10-12)

Notice that the prophets searched the very prophecies that they had written. They knew that there was more to what they had written than simply the prediction of historical facts. They knew

that they were writing for a people yet to come who would see all the revealed mystery of what they were writing. Hidden in their writings, was the testimony of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

1 Corinthians 2:7-10, 14 states:

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 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.”

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

(1 Corinthians 2:7-10,14)

The Jewish rulers, who crucified the Lord, though they knew all that flesh and blood could discover in the Scripture, did not know

the mystery. They did not know the hidden wisdom of God, which the Spirit of God had revealed to the apostles of Christ (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-15, 25). They did not know the story of the Christ hidden within the Scriptures. If they had known, they never would have crucified him. They could read all the facts and likely knew the Scriptures better than you or I. Yet, despite the fact that they knew every inch of the field, they did not know of the treasure beneath the surface. Their eyes did not see the glorious gospel message of Jesus. The spiritual reality of Jesus was not heard, nor did it enter their heart. They read of David and Goliath, and all they saw was David and Goliath. Paul saw the Greater David! He knew of the greater victory in which Jesus, in such a weak, humble, and small form gained the victory for his people, and was crowned as King with glory and honor.

Ephesians 3:3-11 also brings out this same idea. The mystery of the kingdom, which is the New Covenant church, was hidden in the Old Testament Scriptures in shadows and symbols and parables and allegories, and is now clearly revealed in the New Testament Scriptures.

Colossians joins in with the same proclamation, as Paul declares that his stewardship is to make known to others what God has now made known through his apostles. Paul states,

“I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the Word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 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. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 1:25-28).

WHAT IS A PARABLE?

Even as Hebrews 9:9 states that the tabernacle and the Old Covenant rituals were a parable (remember the word *symbolic* is literally *parable*), so, too, when Jesus the Christ came on the scene in Galilee, he spoke in parables.

What exactly is a parable? A common definition is that a parable is an illustration or story used to make things more clear. According to this explanation, parables are used to enlighten; to help one understand; to throw light on a dark subject.

Let's see if this definition stands the test of Scripture.

*Give ear, O my people, to my law;
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings of old.”
(Psalm 78:1-2)*

Hebrew poetry repeats phrases; saying the same basic thing in two different ways. In verse one, we can see the parallel phrases, “*give ear/incline your ears*” and “*my law/ words of my mouth.*” In verse

two, we see that “*I will open my mouth*” is a parallel phrase for “*I will utter.*” When the psalmist chooses a synonym for *parable*, what does he use? He refers to it as *dark sayings of old*. The word here translated as *dark sayings of old* means “an obscure saying” or “riddle.” When the psalmist defines *parable* with a synonym, he does not say that it throws light on a subject, but rather, that it is a dark saying that is not simply seen clearly on the surface.

Ezekiel 20:49 uses the same Hebrew word *mashal* translated in Psalms as *parable* and synonymous with *chýdáh*, translated as *dark sayings*.

Then I said, “Ab, Lord God! They say of me, ‘Does he not speak parables?’”

This is what the people said about Ezekiel’s words. Again we can see that the expression “parables” is synonymous with the idea of riddles or dark and obscure sayings.

In Ezekiel’s writings, one finds a baby tossed out and lying in its blood (Ezekiel 16), eagles and vines (Ezekiel 17), a cooking pot (Ezekiel 24), a valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37) and many other elements that were dark and obscure to the people. These were parables. Ezekiel did this under the direction of the Lord himself. “*And the word of the Lord came to me saying, ‘Son of man, pose a riddle, and speak a parable to the house of Israel...’*” (Ezekiel 17:1-2; see also Ezekiel 24:3). Again, the term “riddle” and “parable” are used as synonyms. [These are the same two Hebrew words used in Psalm 78:2, only the term “dark sayings” is translated “riddle” in Ezekiel 17:2.] These same words can also carry the idea of perplexing sayings or allegories.

In Daniel 8:23, speaking of the latter time of the kingdom of Greece, Daniel prophesies that a king shall arise. He is described as one *“who understands sinister schemes.”* Here we have the same word that is elsewhere translated by “riddles” or “dark sayings” and synonymous with “parables.” The NIV translates this as *“a master of intrigue.”* In other words, this king is skilled in double dealing (see the context of Dan. 9:25). He hides his true intentions. This is the same word used of the words of the prophets of God. There is something on the surface, but underneath there is another agenda! This hidden story is revealed to whomever God wills to reveal it. Jesus himself said, *“I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for it seemed good in Your sight”* (Matthew 11:25, 26). It is Jesus that is hidden from them, as verse 27 goes on to say.

The same Hebrew word is used in Judges 14, verses 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19. It is translated as “riddle” there. Samson used a riddle or dark saying to hide the truth from the Philistines. He did this to obscure the answer, so that they would not know what he was talking about, in order to win a bet.

Scripture teaches that a riddle or parable has the purpose of hiding knowledge. It hides the true and ultimate meaning that is known only by the author and those to whom it is revealed. The true meaning remains hidden to his enemies; those who oppose him.

Read Proverbs 1:5-6, where the terms are used again. *“A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel, to understand a proverb [same word as parable] and an enigma, the words of the wise and their riddles.”*

The Old Testament Scriptures—the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets—contain parables (obscure sayings), designed to hide the true message of God. It is done this way on purpose. Why did Samson tell the story of the honey in the lion carcass in riddle form? It was so the Philistines would not comprehend; so that they would not understand. If we could have eavesdropped on a conversation between Jesus and his disciples concerning the obscurity of the message in the Scriptures, we might have heard this:

“Jesus, why do you speak to them in parables?” the disciples asked.

“So that they will not understand,” replied the Lord, who gives life to whom he will (see John 5:21 and Matthew 11:25-27).

“This is a hard saying,” they responded. “Why did you tell the story of the Messiah (Christ) the way you did, in the Hebrew Scriptures?”

“So hearing, they would hear and not understand. So seeing they would see, but not comprehend.”

The Old Testament Scriptures—dark sayings—riddles—parables—obscure sayings. Do you want to know of what the Old Testament Scriptures speak? Read the New! Paul says this is the unfolding! He does not tell his readers to read the Old and make

whatever mystery they want out of it; limited only by their own imaginations. In order to decipher the mystery of the Old, read the New. Jesus' apostles, in the New, explain the mystery. These stewards of the mystery of God have written the New Testament Scriptures to us to unfold and uncover the eternal plan of God (cf. Ephesians 3:8-11).

WHY PARABLES?

All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:

*I will open My mouth in parables;
I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of
the world.'*
(Matthew 13:34-35)

In the above passage, Matthew quotes from Psalm 78, which we looked at earlier. He has just stated that Jesus continually spoke to the people in parables; riddles; veiled sayings; mysteries; allegories; symbolic words; dark sayings. Read through the Gospels and you will see that every time Jesus addresses the multitude, he speaks to them in riddle form. They hear his words and see the physical acts he performs, but they miss that about which Jesus ultimately speaks; that which has a spiritual meaning (e.g. John 2:19-21).

Asaph, the writer of Psalm 78, is called a prophet, for he too spoke the Word of God: he told of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, as clearly stated by Matthew. Asaph foretold of Jesus'

speaking in parables.

It is interesting to note that when Matthew quotes from Psalm 78, the translators render the term *dark sayings* in the Psalm by the phrase *things kept secret from the foundation of the world* in the Gospel. This is very much in tune with what Paul stated about mysteries hidden from ages and from generations, now revealed to his saints (Colossians 1:26; see also Ephesians 3:9). The truth has been withheld. It has been hidden; buried. It is like a fog that covers what is really there. The fog prevents those in it from seeing what is really there. This is what Jesus does when he speaks in parables. His parables make it difficult to see the truth—though it is there for those for whom “a mighty rushing wind” has blown away the fog.

And the disciples came and said to Him [Jesus], “Why do You speak to them in parables?”

He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven [i.e. to know the reality beneath the fog], but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; (Matthew 10:10-12a)

Do you not find that to be true? Do you not find that the more of the reality you see, the more reality you continue to have opened up to you, as you continue in the Word of God? Is not more of the fog being blown away and unveiling for you the glory of Jesus?

but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 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;
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.'
But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; 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."*

(Matthew 13:12b-17)

Parables were not designed to make it easier for the Jews to understand. Only those who had received grace—Jesus' disciples—could see the other meaning beneath the surface, because the Spirit had given them eyes to see and ears to hear. Even these disciples did not really clearly see these things until the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost. Parables were a judgment

on unfaithful, self-worshipping Israel, who would hear the truth but not understand it. A parable is a dark saying, a riddle, an enigma, designed to cloak the truth in an obscure and dark way so that it is accessible only to certain hearers who are given the key (See Revelation 3:17-18; Matthew 16:13-19). We must remember that what comprises biblical parables is more than just the stories told by Jesus when he walked upon this earth. The Old Covenant is a parable. It emits sweet aromas of Jesus over and over, but only those who have spiritually awakened noses can smell that scent. The prophets of old spoke in parables. The Old Testament Scriptures also are the Word of Christ, who speaks in parables.

SPIRITUAL HEARING AND SIGHT

In Acts 7, Stephen, after setting forth the physical history of God's dealings with his chosen nation, begins to show that there is a spiritual reality behind the physical substance, and that the physical could never have been the ultimate eternal plan. In verse 47, he tells of the physical temple that Solomon built. He digs into the treasure beneath the surface when he says, "*However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands.*" Stephen knew that David's greater Son, Jesus Christ, would build God a temple—not made with human hands! It would be a temple built with living stones.

Stephen then continues in verses 51 and 52,

"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers."
(Acts 7:51-52)

Stephen's hearers were circumcised in their flesh and had physical hearing. Stephen's indictment of them is that all they could see was the physical. They could not get behind the physical to see the reality of Jesus. They could see and hear the factual history as proclaimed by Stephen, but they missed the whole point, because they were not circumcised in heart. They did not have spiritual ears. Stephen saw heaven opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God; all they saw was a physical land, a temple and a mercy seat covered with gold, and goats and bulls for sacrifice, etc. They saw all those things, but they did not see the glory of Jesus Christ. They did not see the kingdom of the ascended Christ or the Jerusalem that is above and free (Galatians 4:25-26).

Paul explains this blindness in 1 Corinthians 2. Please read it carefully.

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. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 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.”*

*But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 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. 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. Those things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 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.
(1 Corinthians 2:6-14)*

Natural man can only see the natural things. Indeed, the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Paul wrote to the Ephesians,

...if indeed you have heard of the dispensation [stewardship] of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed

by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel (Ephesians 3:2-5).

The “mystery” about which Paul had been writing was the New Covenant—the kingdom of God—salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ—a new holy temple. The apostles were given the stewardship of lifting off the veil—of blowing away the fog—of unearthing the treasure, who is Christ. We remember our Lord’s words in Matthew 13:11, where he told his apostles, “*It has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.*”

Our Lord goes on to speak of these mysteries of the kingdom of heaven in riddle form—parables. Parables such as:

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. (Matthew 13:44)

Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure—a hidden treasure. Anyone can see the physical soil, but only this man knows the treasure that is hidden in this field. This man’s joy springs from the treasure, not from the field in and of itself.

FINDING THE TREASURE

When you read from Exodus, of God sending Moses as a deliverer to free his people, Israel, do you rejoice only in seeing a people redeemed from slavery? Or do you have exceeding joy in the picture that it portrays of another Deliverer greater than Moses? Is not your joy in seeing that to which the exodus points: the ultimate Passover Lamb; the ultimate Redemption from the slavery of sin and death?

When you read of the kingdom established under Solomon, do you rejoice along with the Queen of Sheba in seeing the fame and glory and wisdom of this king, and the temple he had built? Or do you have exceeding joy in the picture it portrays of a Greater than Solomon, whose name is above all; who is all wise; and who, in great glory, has built a house for God to the praise of the glory of his grace! Christ Jesus the Lord has established a kingdom that so exceeds the kingdom of Solomon that Solomon's seems to have "no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels" (2 Corinthians 3:10). It is worth forsaking the entire world to gain a portion in this kingdom in which there is the forgiveness

of sins. Our Sovereign Lord will once more shake heaven and earth and it will all pass away, but we who believe are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken! All that is in the world cannot be compared with what is ours to enjoy in the kingdom of God's dear Son.

The reality of the kingdom of heaven is hidden in the teaching about the physical event. Stiff-necked Israel saw a political kingdom and an earthly land, but for those who have been given eyes to see and ears to hear, Jesus says, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Jesus told Nicodemus, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). A spiritual birth is needed for recognition of and entry into a spiritual kingdom—the physical birth from a mother's womb does not qualify anyone, but rather the work of the Spirit in the heart, transforming the one who is dead in trespasses and sins into a living citizen of God's heavenly kingdom. This kingdom is not identified by physical circumcision, but by the circumcision of the heart as evidenced by faith. Christ's kingdom is peopled by his redeemed church—his redeemed people—his bride—his ekklesia—the members of the New Covenant. Salvation makes one a subject of this kingdom. This kingdom lies entirely outside the understanding of the natural Jews to whom Jesus was speaking. Their idea of the kingdom was an entirely earthly conception. That is 'the field'; the understanding that a natural man can get from reading the Scriptures.

Even the disciples at first only "saw" dimly, in the same manner as the man given sight in Mark 8:22-25.

Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking." Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly.

The first touch enabled this man to see, but it was shadowy sight. There was light, but it was not focused clearly. The next touch enabled him to see clearly. This is what it was like for the disciples. Jesus spoke to them in riddles and parables, and what did they see? They saw men like trees, walking. They caught some of the light, but they did not yet fully and clearly understand. Immediately after the above episode, Jesus asks the disciples who he is. It is then that Peter expresses that Jesus is the Christ. In verses 31-33, Jesus begins to teach about his crucifixion, and Peter rebukes him. They understood, but only dimly. They did not yet fully see the light regarding this King and his kingdom. Peter's rebuke demonstrates that he did not yet see clearly. He was still much too mindful of earthly things as opposed to heavenly things (see Mark 8:33). He understood that Jesus is the Messiah and that he will bring in the kingdom—but Peter was still thinking too much in physical terms. Later in the upper room and on the road to Emmaus, the disciples understood more—more light was given. At Pentecost, the Spirit was poured out and they no longer talked in terms of the physical

and earthly. There Peter says that the events of that day fulfill that which was spoken by Joel (Acts 2:16). At that point, the disciples clearly saw the spiritual nature of the kingdom.

Jesus said in Luke 17:20, “*The kingdom of God does not come with observation*” (literally—in a way you can see physically). The kingdom of heaven is Jesus’ New Covenant kingdom. Unlike the kingdom of Israel of the Old Covenant, this kingdom is not restricted to an isolated place, time, or race. It includes people from every nation, who become citizens of heaven by a spiritual birth. It has come and is growing (like leaven hidden in three measures of meal ... Matthew 13:33). Unlike the kingdoms of this world, it is invisible and known only to those of faith. It is the kingdom of which Jesus Christ is king. Its subjects are called by the writer of Hebrews “*partakers of the heavenly calling*” (Hebrews 3:1), distinguishing them from partakers of the earthly calling. This kingdom—this New Covenant, centered in Christ, is wisdom from God (1 Corinthians 1:30).

The mystery of the kingdom of heaven is like buried treasure in a field. As it says in Proverbs 2:1-10; the wisdom and understanding of the knowledge of God, which is found in the Scriptures, is worth pursuing. It needs to be sought after and searched for, “as for hidden treasures.” The Scripture passages that deal with the physical land of Canaan and the Old Covenant hide a treasure—the mystery of Christ and the New Covenant. It is there, but it is buried. Those who find it forsake all to have it!

Look at what Paul writes in Philippians 3:1-9, 17-20. The text of

the passage is in italics, the use of bold type indicates an emphasis not in the original, and my comments are in brackets:

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!
(*Philippians 3:1-2*)

Paul here is just like his Lord, for he is talking in riddles! Is it dogs he is talking about? No, it is the false teachers—the mutilation, that is those who cut themselves. How did they mutilate themselves? They practiced physical circumcision. That only mutilates their flesh, and doesn't profit them anything. Beware of those who want to mutilate your flesh, Paul says.

For we are the circumcision [It is not about physical circumcision. Paul says, "we are the circumcision."], who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh [It is not about the flesh. The flesh profits nothing.], though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things,

and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; (Philippians 3:3-9)

Paul declares all the external marks—all the physical features—as rubbish. Do you want a physical land of Canaan? Paul says you can have it, for he's looking for a better; a heavenly country! This is the difference Paul illustrates in Galatians 4 with Hagar and Sarah and their children. Paul says that he can establish his own righteousness in his flesh, just like Abraham can have a child—Ishmael—through Hagar, of his own doing.

That's all Old Covenant matter. But Paul says that he is rejoicing in Christ—in the reality of the New Covenant. All the other, Paul lets go. It is all physical substance that perishes with use.

*Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is their shame—**who set their mind on earthly things.** For **our citizenship is in heaven,** from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philippians 3:17-20)*

Consider some of the earthly things that are presented in Scripture:

The Passover lamb—what value is that now that Christ has come? What value is there in the killing of a sheep and spilling its blood on a gold covered box? What value is that?

The physical tabernacle—the temple—what value is that? Remember when the disciples were impressed by the stones and gold? The Lord said that not one stone is going to remain upon another. What value is that building?

The scapegoat—what value is that? What value is it to sprinkle some blood on a goat and drive it into the forest?

The sacrifices and burnt offerings—what value are they?

Hebrews 9:9 tells us that these things were symbolic. They were all real enough, and the Israelites were commanded to observe them all, but they were not an end in themselves. They were a parable. The value is in the reality of what all those things pictured—what they foreshadowed. Jesus Christ is the substance of it all!

The field has no ultimate value except for the treasure it hides. The Old Covenant has no ultimate value except for the treasure it hides.

Only in Jesus is the true significance of the “field” understood. The land—the law—Israel—the tabernacle—the temple—the

sacrifices—exist to set forth Jesus to those who see below the surface, and to hide him from the others. Dig below the surface; the obvious literal and historical reading, and you'll find treasure, because "in the volume of the Book, it is written of [him]."

Then He [Jesus] said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. (Luke 24:25-27)

Then He [Jesus] said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. (Luke 24:44-45)

There is no greater place to fix your attention than on the Lord Jesus Christ. People cry out for so many things. God says, 'I give you Jesus! Look unto him! He is the alpha and the omega—the beginning and the end! There is nothing so suited to our growth in grace as an ever-increasing acquaintance with Jesus Christ. Our sanctification does not come from merely reading just the words of the Bible, the historical facts, like those who still have a veil over their minds. It comes from the wonder of knowing and loving the one who loved us and gave himself for us.

Read the context of 2 Corinthians 3, which concludes with these words:

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Beholding the glory of the Lord in the Scriptures becomes the means of our transformation and growing into his image. Too often Christians struggle against some sin, wishing all the while they knew how to gain victory over it. The answer for them is the same as for those who search for salvation in the first place—Jesus! Read the Scriptures. Think; meditate on the lovely picture of Jesus you see there. Behold him! Behold the man! Behold the Lamb of God! Fill your mind with thoughts of him. Meditate on these things, commune with him, and holiness will become more and more a realized goal.

When we lose sight of Jesus, our love for him begins to dwindle and we begin to fail. When we are faced with some “besetting sin,” the best way for us to overcome is not to concentrate on *it*, but to concentrate upon *him* (Hebrews 12:1-3)! We must set our thoughts and affections on his loveliness and glory and desirability.

The Bible gives a wonderful presentation of Jesus throughout the volume of the Book. Why? So that as we look to him, we will be saved, and so that continuing to look, we will grow to be like him. This is why Peter closes his second epistle with, “*Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*”

After thirty years of following Christ, Paul's chief aim in life was still, "*that I may know Him...*" (Philippians 3:10). May this also be our prayer and goal.



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