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C0423 -- June 9, 2004 -- Ephesians 1:9-10 -- The Mystery of God's Will

Last week we looked at Eph 1:7-8. Remember, we're looking at the Trinity's work in the Plan of Salvation. vv. 4-6 give us the Father's plan, namely predestination and election. vv. 7-12 give us the Son's execution of that plan in history, namely redemption. In the coming weeks we'll look at vv. 12-14 which give us the Spirit's work of securing the executed plan. Presently we're in the section on the Son's work in the plan of Salvation, Redemption. We saw last week that the phrase "in whom we have the redemption" = **we presently have redemption in connection with Jesus Christ**. This redemption is a present possession if you are a believer here tonight. The word "redemption" (*apolutrosin*) means that **Jesus Christ released us by making a payment**. Turn to Revelation 1:5 to get the sense of this word. He has *released us from our sins by His blood*. That's what the word "redemption" means. You've been released from your sins. That payment is described by the phrase "through His blood". This is *dia* with the genitive indicating the *agency* or *means*. The means by which you were redeemed was the blood of Christ. It was not the life of Christ which was substitutionary or redemptive. It was Christ's death that was redemptive. And not just any death will do. If Christ was poisoned or strangled would that have provided redemption? I don't think so! The death had to be by the shedding of blood because without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Hebrews). Further, it couldn't be just any old blood, it had to be clean, precious blood. The blood of bulls and goats merely covered sin temporarily, it did not take away sin. The blood of Christ actually took away sin. Further, this blood had to be the blood of the God-man and not a supernaturally created man with clean blood because then that man would receive all the glory of redemption, and God is the only one who deserves honor and praise. It is for this reason that God had to provide Himself as the sacrifice. The God-man is the savior of the world and God receives all the glory. Therefore "through His blood" = **the payment was Jesus' Christ's blood**. Every aspect of salvation was provided in Christ's sacrificial death. The phrase "the forgiveness of sins" stands in apposition to the redemption and therefore further defines it. What did redemption accomplish? It accomplished "the forgiveness of sins". **To be redeemed means your sins have been sent away**. Your sins have been forgiven. The word for forgiven means "sent away" or "released" as a prisoner is set free. Your sins aren't sitting alongside you (*paresis*; Rom. 3:25) like OT saints who looked forward to the cross. Your sins have been permanently sent away. The word for sins here is *paraptoma* and

refers to treacherous willful acts against the holiness of God. These treacherous acts had to be punished. The gospel is that Jesus Christ took the punishment for your treachery. “according to the riches of His grace” = **the cost of your sins being sent away can only be measured by His grace, which is infinite**. Paul’s point is not that Christ forgave you out of His grace, but rather that the only way the cost of your redemption can be measured is by measuring His grace. The cost was infinite and therefore the value of the atonement is infinite. Your redemption cannot be measured in finite terms. It’s of infinite value. Verse 8 Paul says of this grace; “which He lavished upon us” = **this is the amount of the grace toward us**. The word for lavished is *perisseuo*. It’s a beautiful word. It basically means “superabundance”. He lavished grace upon you. One of the benefits of this grace in addition to your redemption is the availability of “all wisdom and insight”. This is not a reference to God’s wisdom and insight but to what God has given believers who possess redemption. He’s given you the ability to comprehend Divine wisdom and He’s given you the ability to put that to work by Divine insight. So, “with all wisdom and insight” = **this grace toward you includes piercing knowledge and discretion to live skillfully**. This means you’re able to understand the relevance of Divine revelation in the present time. This is a much-needed skill in the Church today. We looked at Solomon’s ability to combine wisdom and insight (same Greek words in the LXX) in his day (1 Kings 3:17-28). REVIEW that story.

Now, you have this kind of wisdom available to you, not a human wisdom based on pragmatism where we all get together and share our opinions to discover the best course of action, but divine wisdom graciously imparted to you which will give you the ability and motivation to apply doctrine creatively. This wisdom is based on knowledge of God’s word for God’s wisdom is found only in God’s words. The Psalmist expressed this by the words, **“In Thy light we see light”** (Ps. 36:9). That is, all knowledge, true knowledge, is derivative of God. As every lamp that gives light is derivative of the sun so every piece of true knowledge is derivative of God. God gives true knowledge that results in **wisdom** and **insight**. But how do I attain to this knowledge or what is the beginning of gaining this knowledge so that I can have **wisdom** and **insight**? The proverb tells us that **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge”** (Prov. 1:7). But what is the fear of the LORD?ⁱ It is the Hebrew word *yirah* meaning “awesome, reverence”. It is to have a reverential awe for who and what God is. This can only come when one understands particular knowledge regarding the nature of God and the nature of redemption. The prior comes through an understanding of the Creator-creature distinction; the latter through diligent prayer and study. If you wish to have a picture of this distinction which results in reverential awe, a true fear of the Lord, I suggest you read Job 38-42:6. The words there taken at face value form the thoughts that place the individual in the position of beginning to know. Do you

have that reverential awe of who and what God is? The beginning of knowledge is not Plato or Aristotle (observation of nature), it is not Bacon or Hume (logic and reason), it is not Kant (reason) or Kierkegaard (experience), it is not Marx (synthesis) or Darwin (empiricism); knowledge begins with a reverential awe of YHWH, the Creator. Knowledge is not the mere assimilation of so-called facts, for even facts must be interpreted properly. God gives just that, the divine interpretation of what we might call, the facts. Notice Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers in Eph. 1:17 (also cf. 3:10). He desires that believers come to *epignosis*, true knowledge, accurate knowledge, real knowledge! In Eph. 1:8 Paul is telling us that God, by His grace, has lavished *wisdom* and *insight* on us. If you are a believer here tonight you are at least at the beginning of knowledge. Once on that trek through continued study and prayer you will have the ability to pierce into a problem and the will to insightfully apply it as Solomon did in his day.

The Sequence

Fear of the Lord → Knowledge → Wisdom → Insight → Epignosis

This *wisdom and insight* are what enables us to understand the mystery doctrines and to see the application in the present (Eph. 4-6). Tonight, we'll look at the first mystery doctrine in Ephesians: The Mystery of the Will of God. Paul prays that all believers will have (1:17; 3:10) a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.

Greek Text: Eph 1:9 gnwri,saj h`mi/n to. musth,rion tou/ qelh,matoj auvtou/(kata. th.n euvdoki,an auvtou/ h]n proe,qeto evn auvtw/|

Translation: Eph 1:9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Him,

gnwri,saj h`mi/n to. musth,rion "having made known to us the mystery". *Having made known* is an aorist active participle (no definite article so emphasizes verbal aspect). One reason we have been given access to divine wisdom and insight is so that we might be able to understand *the mystery*. The Greek word for *mystery* is *musterion* and is used 28 times in the New Testament (Matt. 13:11; Mk. 4:11; Lk. 8:10; Rom. 11:25; 16:25; 1 Co. 2:1, 7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Eph. 1:9; 3:3f, 9; 5:32; 6:19; Col. 1:26f; 2:2; 4:3; 2 Thess. 2:7; 1 Tim. 3:9, 16; Rev. 1:20; 10:7; 17:5, 7). How one defines this word greatly affects one's theology. It is a word that divides evangelicals into three camps.

Covenant Amillennialism	Progressive Dispensationalismⁱⁱ	Classic Dispensationalism
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Covenant Postmillennialism	Covenant Premillennialism	Ultra-Dispensationalism
“revealed in kernel form”	“revealed but unrecognized”	“unknown but now revealed”
Westminster Theological Seminary	Dallas Theological Seminary (New Dallas)	Tyndale Theological Seminary
Bahnsen Theological Seminary	Talbot Theological Seminary	Chafer Theological Seminary
		Dallas Theological Seminary (Old Dallas)
Hodge, Berkhof, Reymond	Blaising, Bock, Saucy	Chafer, Walvoord, Ryrie

These are radically different understandings of the “mystery” that enable and support one’s theology. For example, the schools represented in the left and center columns both claim that the Church is “revealed” in the OT in some sense. What this ultimately means is that the Church is not a new entity distinct from Israel, there is only one people of God. Most people don’t know this has happened to Dallas. Most people think that if a student graduated from Dallas, they must have good theology. If you still think this is true just ask any one of the elders here who looked through over 70 resumes from Dallas graduates. I think you’ll find it was quite depressing. Old Dallas graduates are fine but the new Dallas graduates are a wholly different breed. There’s no use playing cover up and trying to be all nice about theological departures. Saying that these schools are theologically departing is a nice way of saying they are going apostate. Once you leave literal interpretation you have just divorced yourself from Scripture and that is what these schools are doing or have done already. They are misleading students who don’t know or understand the differences. Both Progressive Dispensationalism and Covenant Premillennialism are unstable hybrids of the other two views. Eventually, if these people are logical, they will fall into one of the two outer columns. Typically, they fall into some form of Covenant Theology because they have already abandoned literal interpretation (hermeneutics). Many Progressive Dispensationalists at Dallas realize that the pre-Trib Rapture doesn’t fit with their scheme or claim that it is an unimportant doctrine. This is simply because if you have only one people of God then the reason for the pre-Trib rapture vanishes. If the Tribulation is for Israel but Israel and the Church are not distinct, then there can be no pre-Trib Rapture. I’m telling you this for your benefit and for the benefit of those who are listening by tape. You need to know what is happening so you can warn the next generation of theology students who will be our pastors. So, what is a “mystery”? I’ve told you these other interpretations

are wrong, but how do we support the definition that a mystery is something unknown, but now revealed? There are four important passages which help us define the word.

Romans 16:25-26 ...according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, ²⁶ but now is manifested,

1 Corinthians 2:7 we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory;

Ephesians 3:3-5 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. ⁴ By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;

Colossians 1:26 *that is*, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints,

According to these four passages the **mystery** has been *hidden, kept secret, not made known to men, hidden from past ages and generations* but is now *revealed, manifested, and made known* to His holy NT apostles and NT prophets who have revealed them to us in Scripture. We will discuss this more in Ephesians 2-3 but for today let's review the 11 mysteries revealed in the NT; 9 of which are Divine and 2 which are Satanic.

NEW TESTAMENT "MYSTERIES" (THINGS PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN BUT NOW REVEALED)

9 Divine Mysteries

Matthew 13:11	
Mark 4:11	"Messianic Kingdom"
Luke 8:10	
Romans 11:25	"Israel's Hardening"
1 Corinthians 15:51	"Rapture"
Ephesians 1:9	"Unity of All Things Under Christ"
Ephesians 3:3-9	"Body"
Ephesians 5:32	"Bride"
Colossians 1:27	"Christ in you"
Revelation 1:20	"Seven Stars and Seven Lamps"
Revelation 10:7	"Seven Judgments on Lawless One"

2 Satanic Mysteries

2 Thessalonians 2:7

“Lawlessness”

Revelation 17:5, 7

“Babylon”

The apostles were given the content of the mystery doctrines and were authorized to reveal the content to us (1 Cor. 4:1). According to Paul, the *mystery* doctrines are wisdom for the mature believer (1 Cor. 2:6-8). What this means is they are not milk doctrines but meat doctrines. Therefore, to understand the mystery doctrines requires spiritual insight and maturity. However, knowing and understanding the mysteries does not necessarily mean you’ve arrived as a believer. For example, without love the mystery doctrines are useless (1 Cor. 13:2).

του/ qelh,matoj auvtou/ “of His will”. We looked at God’s will in verse 1 (Lesson 2 in Ephesians series). Paul was *an apostle by the will of God*, not from men or by the agency of men, but through the will of God (Gal. 1:1). God’s will is also mentioned in verse 5. There Paul said of God the Father that He *predestined us to adoption... according to the good pleasure of His will*. In other words, the Father’s pre-planning an individual’s destiny to be that of Christ was according to His will and not the will of man. Here in Eph. 1:9 *He made known to us the mystery of God’s will*. In this case the mystery has to do with God’s plan which was previously unknown but now revealed (also cf. Eph.1:11; Col. 1:9).

kata. th.n euvdoki,an autou “according to His good pleasure”. Once again we find *kata* with the accusative. It always denotes the standard. It refers to *gnorisas*, the basis of God’s making known His will. Thus, God’s having made known the mystery of His will finds its standard in God’s good pleasure. It gave God great pleasure to make known the mystery of His will to believers. God loves to reveal His plan to His children. Paul used *eudokia* in Ephesians 1:5 to describe God’s predestinating us to adoption according to His *good pleasure*. Preparing our destiny brought God great pleasure and revealing the mystery of His will to believers also brings God great pleasure.

h]n proe,qeto evn auvtw/, “which He purposed in Him”. *protheto* is a verb used three times in the NT, always in the aorist middle indicative. Paul uses it of His “plan” to visit the Romans (Rom. 1:13) and it is used of God “displaying publicly” His Son (Rom. 3:25). The word therefore has the sense of “to lay before”, “to display”, or as in this case “to purpose”. Since it is in the middle voice it means that God is both the one who purposed and receives the benefit of making known His plan to believers. It was for His own benefit, probably because it brings God glory (Eph. 1:12). God’s purposes are for Himself; He takes great personal interest in making known His plan to believers. It brings Him great pleasure. The

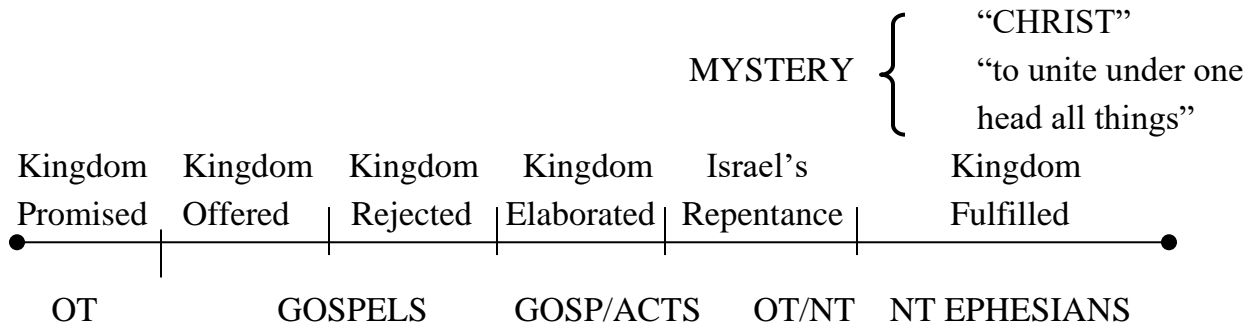
en auto, “in Him”, probably refers to Christ and not to God the Father. Since *protheto* is already in the middle voice it would be unnecessary to repeat that concept by saying “in Himself”. So, what this means is that God the Father purposed in Himself but the purpose of God was in connection with Christ because it is God’s plan that comes to pass in Christ’s work of redemption.

Greek Text: Eph 1:10 εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρωμάτων τῶν καιρῶν (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πᾶντα ἐν τῷ/ἰς Χριστῷ/ἰς τὰ ἐπιτοίγια οὐρανῶν καὶ τὰ ἐπιθῆ/ῃ ἐν αὐτῷ/ἰς)

Translation: Eph. 1:10 in the arrangement of the fullness of the times, to unite under one head all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things in the earth in Him.

εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρωμάτων τῶν καιρῶν, “in the arrangement of the fullness of the times”. The word *oikonomia* means “dispensation” or “arrangement”. The main idea in this word is that of managing or administering the affairs of a household. The world is a household run by God. In His household-world, God is dispensing or administering its affairs according to His own will and in various stages of revelation in the passage of time. To what dispensation or successive arrangement does this phrase refer? It certainly refers to a goal or an end, but what end is in view? A similar phrase is used in Galatians 4:4 of the time of Christ’s birth: ***But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.*** However, the phrase here is in the singular (*to pleroma tou chronou*) and therefore speaks of a particular point in time when God brought forth His Son. In Ephesians the phrase is plural (*to pleromatos ton kairon*) and “points to the fullness or totality of the times or epochs of history.”ⁱⁱⁱ The only other place the plural form is used with *kairos* is in Luke 21:24 where it refers to the Gentiles rule over Jerusalem until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (*ou plerothosin kairoi.*). Both references point to the same exact time in history; the climax of all times and epochs which the Father has fixed, namely, the time of the Messiah’s Second Advent.^{iv} **So, what Paul is saying is that God revealed to us the mystery of His will concerning the arrangement of the future messianic kingdom.** The earthly messianic kingdom had been promised in the OT (2 Sam. 7:14-17; Isa. 11:1-5), it was offered to Israel in the Gospels (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 11:20), it was the main topic of Jesus’ teaching during His 40 days on earth after His resurrection (Acts 1:3), it was clearly not fulfilled at the ascension or on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:6-8^v), and its presence is conditioned upon Israel’s national repentance (Acts 3:19-21) which has not happened yet. However, one thing was not revealed and that is what Paul now reveals to us.

THE MYSTERY OF THE WILL OF GOD FOR THE KINGDOM



What is going to happen in that future messianic kingdom? What is the essence of this mystery?

avnakefalaiw,sasqai ta. pa,nta evn tw/| Cristw, “to unite under one head all things in Christ”. This phrase is in apposition to *mystery*, therefore, signifying that this is the content of the mystery. What is the content? The verb *anakephalaiosasthai* is used only twice in the NT. The only other place it is used is Romans 13:9 where Paul says that all of the commandments can be *summed up* in the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself. Hence, there it has the idea of to gather all the parts into a whole. Like many later Greek words, it is a compound word composed of *ana* having the sense of “again” and *kephalaion* meaning “the main point” (cf. Heb. 8:1). Hence the prefix “again” denotes that the creation was originally “united under one head”, and now it will return to that state. The root *kephalaion* indicates that all the parts of the universe will gather together under one. Thus, paradise lost now restored is the sense of the word. What it probably means therefore is that “God will bring together all things and restore the whole creation under one head”.^{vi}

anakephalaiosasthai

CHRIST REIGNS



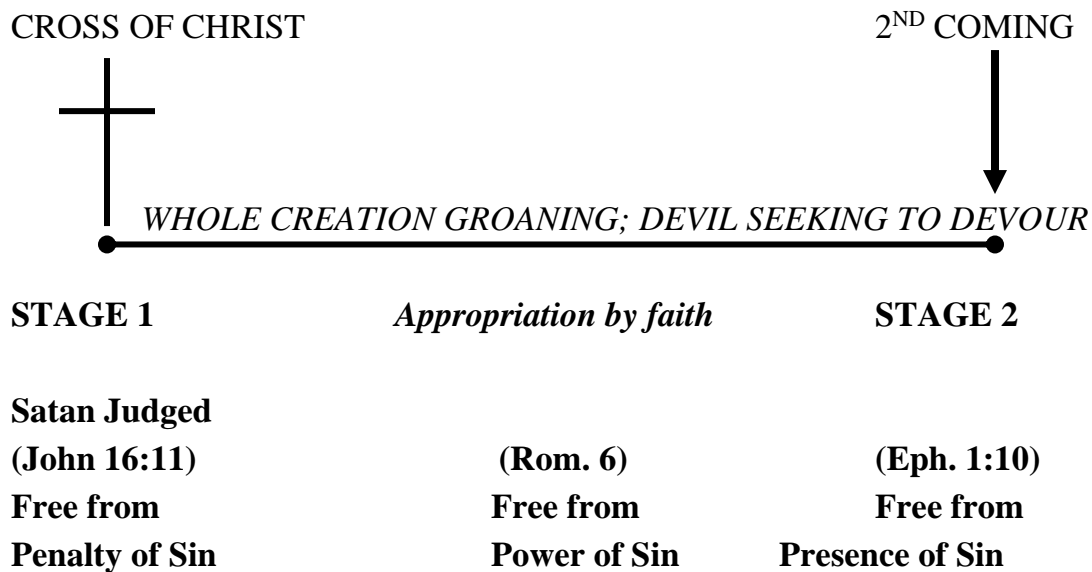
The whole concept gives us the idea that there was something wrong with creation, sin, and that Christ is the one who is going to fix it at the messianic kingdom. So, the idea is that of paradise lost to paradise restored. Thus, in eternity past God planned for all things to be headed up by Christ in the future on earth. This aspect of God’s will was a mystery;

it was hidden in God until He chooses to reveal it. No amount of human study or ingenuity could enable a human to see into God's will. The only way we can know God's will is for God to reveal it. So, here we have a Divine unfolding of God's will for human history, namely, that all of creation will be re-united under the authority and dominion of Christ.

The *ta panta en to Xristo* "all things in the Christ" shows what and in whom all things will be summed up. The **all things** will be defined in the final phrase of v. 10 as everything in the heavens and on earth. The *en* indicates the close connection between God's purposes and Christ. Therefore, God's purpose of uniting all things under Christ took place in connection with Christ. How is Christ in connection with the Father's purpose? The way this works is that the Father is the *planner* (in eternity past) and the Son is the *executer* (in history) of the Father's *plan*. The Holy Spirit's role is *sealing/securing* (in history and into eternity future) the *executed plan*. God the Father *planned* our destiny (predestination) and our election. The Son *executed* this plan through redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. It is this redemption that connects the Son to the Father's purpose and brings it to pass in history. Paul places the definite article before **Christ**, it's not simply "in Christ" but **in the Christ**. This is typical of Paul. It usually indicates that Paul has His *title* in mind rather than His *name*. **Christ** came to be thought of as His name but originally it was a *title*, corresponding to the Hebrew *mashiach* "Messiah", meaning "anointed one". Here Paul's point may be that all of creation will be united under Israel's promised Messiah. This would be significant because later Paul brings up the fact that even though the Gentiles were alienated from Israel, we are united with believing Jews by the death of Christ and brought into a new entity, the Church (2:11-22).

ta. evpi^{viii}. toi/j ouvranoi/j kai. ta. evpi. th/j gh/j evn auvtw, "the things in the heavens and the things in the earth in Him." This defines the **all things** of the preceding phrase. The word for heavens here is *ouranois*, which is not the same word used in verse 3; *heavenlies* or *heavenly places* (*epouranois*). However, it is in the plural designating at least 2 heavens. This is not to deny that there are 3 heavens. Paul is not here trying to define the number of heavens. He's portraying that there is a two-tiered universe just as Moses did in Genesis 1:1: "**In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth**". There are the heavens and there is the earth (2 Tiers). There are many views as to what **things in the heavens and earth** are being referred to, but it seems best to say they refer to all of God's creation, animate and inanimate beings united under Christ in the messianic kingdom on earth. This means that all of creation, whether good or evil, will be gathered under Christ's authority (for example, Satan will be bound for 1,000 years; Rev. 20:1-6).

When will Christ be head over all things? This seems to have taken place in two stages. *Stage One* was the death of Christ on the cross and His ascension. It was at the cross where the demonic realm and all sin were judged (John 16:11). The believer is freed from the power of sin and the penalty of sin when he appropriates by faith the cross of Christ (Rom. 6). Nevertheless, the demonic realm is still actively opposing God and believers (1 Pet. 5:8). *Stage One* is not being discussed here in Eph. 1:10, stage one was only preparatory for the eschatological *Stage Two*, the Second Coming of Christ, which is the topic of Eph. 1:10. It is at *Stage Two* that all believers will experience the ultimate effect of Christ's cross and their redemption. Then we will be free from the presence of sin, not merely its penalty and power. The whole creation is awaiting this glorious victorious day (Rom. 8:19-23).



Of this verse Dr. Constable says, “The Greek word translated "administration" in the NASB (*oikonomia*), and not translated in the NIV, means dispensation, arrangement, or administration. The main idea in this word is that of managing or administering the affairs of a household. The dispensation in view is the millennial reign of Christ on earth during which everything will be under His rule (1 Cor. 15:27; Col. 1:20). Even though in one sense everything is under Christ's authority now, Jesus Christ will be the head of all things in a more direct way in the messianic kingdom. Everyone and everything will acknowledge and respond to His authority then (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; 11:1-10).”^{viii}

ⁱ In the OT the “fear of the Lord” was a code word for a believer. It was a believer who “feared the Lord”, who had reverential awe for YHWH.

ⁱⁱ Progressive Dispensationalists basically believe the following tenets: First, complementary hermeneutics in addition to grammatical-historical aspects which allows the NT to make changes to the OT promises without jettisoning the original promises. Second, a mystery is something hidden but not recognized in the OT. Third, the Church is the subject of OT prophecy but was not recognized

until NT times. Fourth, there is one plan or program of God which is carried out in successive stages of redemption. The dispensations are not chronologically successive but chronologically simultaneous because the claim the Davidic Kingdom is now in heaven but not yet on earth. This directly contradicts the DTS doctrinal statement. Fifth, Christ is *already* reigning on the Davidic Throne in heaven, but He is *not-yet* reigning on the Davidic Throne on earth. Sixth, the baptism of the Spirit is not unique to the Church age. Seventh, the kingdom of God is the unifying theme of Scripture. For an advanced treatment of the “mystery” doctrine as taught by Progressive Dispensationalists see my essay at <http://www.geocities.com/jeremyandrobin/progressivedispensationalism.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Hoehner, Harold. *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 219.

^{iv} Some scholars say this refers to the Eternal State which begins after the millennial kingdom on earth. This is possible but the evidence seems to weigh in favor of the millennial kingdom (e.g., Luke 21:28). One should not be dogmatic on this point.

^v An important passage for premillennialism. Here the coming of the Holy Spirit and the coming of the Messianic Kingdom are clearly distinguished. They are presented by Jesus as two distinct times, the time of the Messianic Kingdom is fixed by the Father but this time was not to be known by the apostles (Acts 1:7); the time of the Holy Spirit’s coming was revealed as ***not many days from now*** (Acts 1:5). This is a very important passage for establishing premillennialism and warding off Covenant Amillennialism and Covenant Postmillennialism, both which teach that the kingdom is coterminous with the Church.

^{vi} Hoehner, Harold. *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 219

^{vii} Scrivener’s and Stephanus Greek Texts have *en* rather than *epi*. The majority of the manuscripts have *epi*, therefore the preferred reading. There is no significant difference either reading.

^{viii} Constable, Tom, *Dr. Constable’s Notes on Ephesians*

(<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ephesians.pdf>), 13. Constable cites Charles Ryrie, *dispensationalism Today* pp. 22-47.

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