

Week of Sept 16-22

## MYSTERY

**Scripture Reading:** Read Colossians chapter 1

Recently, I was traveling in the car with one of my sons. He was reading from a book that contained a number of short mysteries. Each contained a clue that had to be discovered if the mystery were to be solved. He read one mystery after the other to me to see if I could find the clue and come up with a solution to the problem. Since I've always been fascinated with mysteries, I found it to be an enjoyable exercise.

Paul, too, seems to have enjoyed a good mystery based on the number of times he refers to the term in his letters. In Colossians, Paul mentions a mystery four times (1:26, 27; 2:2 and 4:3). In Ephesians, he does so six times (1:9; 3:3, 4, 6, 9; 5:32). He also references a mystery in three other of his epistles (Romans, I Corinthians and 1 Timothy).

Paul's mystery, however, differed from my son's "who done it" book of mysteries that we had to solve. Paul's mystery referred to something God had planned in eternity past (Romans 16:25) but had been kept secret until the Holy Spirit revealed it to Paul (Ephesians 3:3). In other words, until and unless the Lord chose to reveal the secret, no one would get it. It would have remained a mystery. After God's revelation to Paul, however, the secret was out of the bag.

So, what was the mystery? In a word, it was Christ ("*in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ*" - Colossians 2:2). According to Paul, God had revealed his plan to bring redemption to both Jews and Gentiles through Jesus Christ and that both would be received on equal footing by faith and become part of the grand organism known as the church ("*This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus*" - Ephesians 3:6). The Lord also revealed to Paul that he would go one step further and not only redeem both Jews and Gentiles by faith but that he would also dwell in them through his Holy Spirit ("*To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory*" - Colossians 1:27).

It was this mystery of Christ found in the gospel that Paul was commanded to preach (Ephesians 3:8-9), a task for which, in Colossians 4:2-3, he requested the Colossian believers to pray: "*And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.*" He requested similarly of the Ephesian believers in Ephesians 6:19. The mystery wasn't to be kept a mystery any longer. It was to be shared boldly with everyone through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Action Step:** Check out the ten references to God's mystery noted above in Colossians and Ephesians. Jot down what you find in order to gain a fuller understanding of what this mystery is all about.

**Prayer Focus:** For the Lord to give you greater insight into his mystery declared in his Word and that he would empower you to proclaim its truth by his Spirit.

**Take-a-way:** *The mystery has been solved. The answer is Christ!*