

## GOD'S INNER CIRCLE EPH. 1:8-10

Join me in Eph. 1:7-10 as I read from J. B. Phillips' translation and emphasize this portion of God's word.

“Praise be to God for giving us every possible spiritual benefit in Christ! For consider what He has done -- before the foundation of the world He chose us to become, in Christ, His holy and blameless children living within His constant care. He planned, in His purpose of love, that we should be adopted as His own children through Jesus Christ -- that we might learn to praise that glorious generosity of His which has made us welcome to the everlasting love He bears towards the Son. (1) It is through the Son, at the cost of His own blood, that we are redeemed, freely forgiven through that full and generous grace which has overflowed into our lives and opened our eyes to the truth. For God has allowed us to know the secret of His Plan, and it is this: He purposes in His sovereign will that all human history shall be consummated in Christ, that everything that exists in Heaven or earth shall find its perfection and fulfillment in Him. (2) And here is the staggering thing -- that in all which will one day belong to Him we have been promised a share (since we were long ago destined for this by the One Who achieves His purposes by His sovereign Will), so that we, as the first to put our confidence in Christ, may bring praise to His glory! And you too trusted Him, when you had heard the message of truth, the Gospel of your salvation. And after you gave your confidence to Him you were, so to speak, stamped with the promised Holy Spirit as a guarantee of purchase, until the day when God completes the redemption of what He has paid for as his own; and that will again be to the praise of his glory.”

You just heard the greatest mystery in the universe.

Note that little phrase: “For God has allowed us to know the secret of His plan” (that’s 1947 Philips).

“Having made known to us the mystery of His will”(that’s 1611 KJV).

“He made known to us the mystery of His will” (NAS 1960).

Have you ever thought about the fact that when you were saved, converted, or born again - you were opened to a grand mystery:

- We know what only the redeemed can know!
- We have “opened eyes, turned from darkness to light” Luke records in Acts 26:18.
- We are “delivered from the domain of darkness, and transferred to the kingdom of His beloved Son” Paul exhorts us in Col. 1:13.
- In short, “God has allowed us to know the secret of His plan”. Eph. 1:9 - we are in God’s inner circle.
- God lets the church in on nine amazing events the saints and prophets never knew, but He gave to us. the unsaved can’t understand - it’s foolishness to them!

Let me read you what Thomas A. Sancton wrote in Time magazine, 1/2/89.

By Thomas A. Sancton:

*One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever.*

*Ecclesiastes*

No, not forever. At the outside limit, the earth will probably last another 4 billion to 5 billion years. By that time, scientists predict, the

sun will have burned up so much of its own hydrogen fuel that it will expand and incinerate the surrounding planets, including the earth. A nuclear cataclysm, on the other hand, could destroy the earth tomorrow. Somewhere within those extremes lies the life expectancy of this wondrous, swirling globe. How long it endures and the quality of life it can support do not depend along on the immutable laws of physics. For man has reached a point in his evolution where he has the power to affect, for better or worse, the present and future state of the planet....

The reason is not so much the sheer numbers, though 40,000 babies die of starvation each day in Third World countries, but the reckless way in which humanity has treated its planetary host....

This year [1988] the earth spoke, like God warning Noah of the deluge. Its message was loud and clear, and suddenly people began to listen, to ponder what portents the message held. In the U.S., a three-month drought baked the soil from California to Georgia, reducing the country's grain harvest by 31% and killing thousands of head of livestock. A stubborn seven-week heat wave drove temperatures above 100 degrees Fahrenheit across much of the country, raising fears that the dreaded "greenhouse effect" - global warming as a result of the buildup of carbon dioxide and other gases in the atmosphere - might already be under way. Parched by the lack of rain, the Western forests of the U.S., including Yellowstone National Park, went up in flames, also igniting a bitter conservationist controversy. And on many of the country's beaches, garbage, raw sewage and medical wastes washed up to spoil the fun of bathers and confront them personally with the growing despoliation of the oceans.

Similar pollution closed beaches on the Mediterranean, the North Sea and the English Channel. Killer hurricanes ripped through the Caribbean and floods devastated Bangladesh, reminders of nature's raw power. In Soviet Armenia a monstrous earthquake killed some 55,000 people. That too was a natural disaster, but its high casualty

count, owing largely to the construction of cheap high-rise apartment blocks over a well-known fault area, illustrated the carelessness that has become humanity's habit in dealing with nature.

There were other forebodings of environmental disaster. In the U.S. it was revealed that federal weapons-making plants had recklessly and secretly littered large areas with radioactive waste. The further depletion of the atmosphere's ozone layer, which helps block cancer-causing ultraviolet rays, testified to the continued overuse of atmosphere-destroying chlorofluorocarbons emanating from such sources as spray cans and air-conditioners. Perhaps most ominous of all, the destruction of the tropical forests, home to at least half the earth's plant and animal species, continued at a rate equal to one football field a second.

Most of these evils had been going on for a long time, and some of the worst disasters apparently had nothing to do with human behavior. Yet this year's bout of freakish weather and environmental horror stories seemed to act as a powerful catalyst for worldwide public opinion. Everyone suddenly sensed that this gyrating globe, this precious repository of all the life that we know of, was in danger. No single individual, no event, no movement captured imaginations or dominated headlines more than the clump of rock and soil and water and air that is our common home....

What would happen if nother were done about the earth's imperiled state? According to computer projections, the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere could drive up the planet's average temperature 3 to 9 degrees Fahrenheit by the middle of the next century. That could cause the oceans to rise by several feet, flooding coastal areas and ruining huge tracts of farmland through salinization. Changing weather patterns could make huge areas infertile or uninhabitable, touching off refugee movements unprecedented in history.

Toxic waste and radioactive contamination could lead to shortages of safe drinking water, the sine qua non of human existence. And in a world that could house between 8 billion and 14 billion people by the mid-21st century, there is a strong likelihood of mass starvation. It is even possible to envision the world so wryly and chillingly prophesied by the typewriting cockroach in Doanld Marquis' *archy and mehitabel*: "man is making deserts of the earth/ it wont be long now/ before man will have it used up/ so that nothing but ants/ and centipedes and scorpions/ can find a living on it."

He goes on to say: this is all because Christianity introduced the idea of dominion as created beings of God rather than subservient to nature.

"Let there be no illusions. Taking effective action to halt the massive injury to the earth's environment will require a mobilization of political will, international cooperation and sacrifice unknown except in wartime. Yet humanity is in a war right now, and it is not too Draconian to call it a war for survival. It is a war in which all nations must be allies. Both the causes and effects of the problems that threaten the earth are global, and they must be attacked globally. 'All nations are tied together as to their common fate,' observes Peter Raven, director of the Missouri Botanical Garden. 'We are all facing a common problem, which is, How are we going to keep this single resource we have, namely the world, viable?'

"Mobilizing that sort of mass commitment will take extraordinary leadership, of the kind that has appeared before in times of crisis: Churchill's eloquence galvanizing his embattled countrymen to live 'their finest hour,' F.D.R.'s pragmatic idealism giving hope and jobs to Depression-ridden Americans. Now, more than ever, the world needs leaders who can inspire their fellow citizens with a fiery sense of mission, not a nationalistic or military campaign but a universal crusade to save the planet. Unless mankind embraces that cause totally, and without delay, it may have no alternative to the bang of nuclear holocaust or the whimper of slow extinction."

So the population of earth is awakening to global poisoning, the anger of war, death, disaster and disease....

Now, hold on - do we know what's going on? We sure do. It's a mystery to them, but not to us....

Look back at Eph. 1:7-10. The secret is God will someday pull this whole mess back into order in Christ.

Ever since Eden and sin came to the world things are falling apart!

Gen. 3	man separated from God	fall
Gen. 4	man separated from man	Abel murdered
Gen. 5	man separated from life	God sends death
Gen. 6-8	Man forgets God	God sends flood
Gen. 11	man tries to unite	God causes Babel
Gen. 12	Jew made different than Gentile, maintained until cross	Abraham

And on we could go - as in this article the world and its inhabitants are falling apart!

But why the word mystery. Mustetillon means something God formerly hid but now has brought to light.

It is something that the unaided human mind cannot comprehend.

D. Martyn Lloyd of Westminster Chapel in his book God's Ultimate Purpose says:

"So 'mystery' does not mean something inherently and essentially incomprehensible to the human mind, but rather something which is a

secret beyond the reach of the natural human mind but which God has revealed and unfolded to those who believe. The entire New Testament teaching turns upon this, that believers in Christ have entered into the secret, have had the mystery revealed to them. Saving truth is no longer a mystery to the Christian, it is only a mystery to the non-Christian. To the Christian it is an open secret, because God in His grace and kindness has been pleased to unfold it and to reveal it to him.”

Were there mysteries that Old Testament saints didn't comprehend?

Yes. 1 Pet. 1:10-11-12

Eph. 3:5

But now they have been given to us: No less than nine:

- The Mystery of the Indwelling Christ (Col. 1:26-27)
- The Mystery of the Incarnate God (Col. 2:2-3, 9; 1 Tim. 3:16)
- The Mystery (hardening) of Israel's Unbelief (Rom. 11:25)
- The Mystery (world headlong toward destruction) of Iniquity (1 Thess. 2:7)
- The Mystery (world system) of Babylon (Rev. 17:5, 7)
- The Mystery of the Unity of Believers (oneness) (Eph. 1:9-10)
- The Mystery of the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:51-52)
- The Mystery of the Bride (Eph. 5:23-32)

Mystery of the Church as a Body (Eph. 1:9-10; 3:3-6, 9a; 6:19)

So, as part of God's inner circle, let's see His special mysteries given us:

DISTILL OUR WAY TO LIVE [from Sauer]

Our foundation is the work of Christ -- the mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16)

Our building -- the church, the mystery of the Christ (Eph. 3:3, 4, 9; 2:11-22)

Our pleasure -- His fellowship, the *great* mystery of love (Eph. 5:31, 32)

Our strength -- His indwelling, the mystery of "Christ in you" (Col. 1:26, 27)

Our expectation -- the transformation, the mystery of the rapture (1 Cor. 15:51)

And even if in Israel the mystery of hardening goes on (Rom. 11:25), and if in the present age the nations of the world rage, and among them the mystery of lawlessness works (II Thess. 2:7; Rev. 17:5), yet the goal is certain: God will at last bring all together under one Head (1 Cor. 15:28). This is the "mystery of His will," His final goal and eternal triumph (Eph. 1:9, 10; Phil. 2:10, 11).

Until then we preach the crucified Christ and make known everywhere "the savour of the knowledge of Him" (II Cor. 2:14).

As to its:

Omen It is the mystery of God (Col. 2:2)

Impact It is the mystery of Christ (Col. 4:3)

Delivery It is the mystery of gospel (Eph. \_\_\_\_\_)

Expression It is the mystery of faith (1 Tim. 3:9)

Back to Eph. 1:10:

So how does Paul conclude this glimpse into God's inner circle?

Portrait from Greek world:

"The word Paul uses is *Oikonomia*, which occurs nine times in the NT (TDNT, 5:151-3). Its basic meaning relates to household management (Luke 16:2-4) and is extended to cover general provision or arrangement. Eventually it represents the divine government of the universe (*Epistle to Diognetus*, 4.5). Here Paul uses it to suggest the

administration or putting into effect of God's far-reaching redemptive plan (3:9).

This takes place when the messianic age is inaugurated. Salvation history is regarded as unfolding in a series of "times" (NIV) or seasons (*kairoi*) that reach their climax in the advent of Christ (Gal. 4:4). The Christian era has still to run its course, however, and not until its close will God's eternal purpose come to full fruition (Acts 1:6). Then universal reconciliation will be achieved. "All things" (*ta panta*) is literally "the all" (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3) and includes the whole creation. Everything in heaven and on earth will be subsumed under Christ (I Cor. 15:24-28; Phil. 2:10, 11). The verb *anakephalaioo* ("to bring together") means to sum up together again (Rom. 13:9). It is derived not from *kephale* ("a head") but from *kephalaion* ("a summary, or sum total"). When a column of figures was added up, the total was placed at the top. At the end of the age everything will be seen to add up to Christ. This recognition in his preeminence will ensure that the original harmony of the universe is restored (Rom. 8:18-21). The mission of Christ extends beyond the human race and assumes cosmic dimensions.

- Jesus Christ is God's will to sum up all the universe!
- He will stand at the top as King of kings and Lord of lords.
- He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.
- He is who will say - It is done, will make all things new.
- Before Him will stand all - Rev. 20:11-15.
- He will be the last word.
- Good news, God has an inner circle those who have Christ know God and His revealed plan. Does God fit in your life? And is He the sum for you?