

W422_Mystery.mp3

[00:00:02] This is a recording made in the Chapel of the Open Book, and it is number 27 of the series. The form of sound words and the term before us at this study is the word the mystery. I want to turn to Isaiah chapter six and read that chapter. We very often read this for that portion of scripture without including it on the tape, as this short reading is where we are going to start our study. We are including it. Isaiah Chapter six. And you notice the date that is given here, which is of importance in the year that King Uzziah died. Why should it be important? Well, it has a bearing. You go back into the history of the kings of Judah and Isaiah at the beginning is a commendable king. Many good qualities. But he was human. And he was wonderfully helped until he was strong. What? I like that, isn't it? And then. He began to strengthen his fortifications. And we meet the word inventions and all these things were giving him props to Lean Upon, which are very right in many ways, But they can sometimes transfer loyalty from the things that are unseen to the things that are visible. And then it seems as though something began to work in his mind. And we are told he went into the temple, the king, and stretched out his hand to minister as a priest. Now, unless you put yourself back into the times when that was written and the law about priesthood and kingship, you may say, well, it was a strange thing to do, but in the eyes of God, it was a desperate thing to do.

[00:01:58] And the priests warned the king that it was not possible in those days for a king to officiate as a priest. And you see, there's only one king priest in the scriptures. Only one. His name is Melchizedek, and he stands as a sample and a type of the true priesthood, not the priesthood of Aaron. Christ is not a priest after the order of Aaron, but after the Order of Melchizedek, who combines in his one person the office of King and Priest. I warned Isaiah, but he persisted. And he broke out in leprosy and he died a leper. Now, in the year that the king who dared to unite in his person. Priesthood and kingship. Isaiah said, I saw the true king priest in that temple. So that's the reason why it starts off like this. So we go on. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne. And he's high and lifted up and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the Seraphim. Each one had six wings. With Twain, he covered his face. And with Twain he covered his feet. And with Twain, he did fly. And we forced a remark that if you shut the book and said to somebody, What are wings for? Quite a fly with.

[00:03:28] Well, they've got six and they only used two to fly and four to recognize the holiness of the work they're doing. Worth remembering that with regard to Christian service, isn't it? And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried and the house was filled with smoke. Now, Isaiah was a prophet. And he said, Woe is me. Why? What's the matter is I I'm an I'm undone because I'm a man of unclean lips. And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. Why? Why? For mine eyes have seen the king. The Lord of hosts. So he was the king. High and lifted up in the temple. And as I, in the face of that, realized what a difference it was between himself and the one he served. Then flew one of the Seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from off the altar. So it meant to say it had been associated with this sacrifice which was offered. And he laid it upon my mouth and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips and thine iniquity is taken away and sin is purged.

[00:04:53] There was no blunting the edges. With regard to Isaiah, he didn't say, I am a miserable sinner. He said, I'm a man of unclean lips. And when they said Seraphim brought it, didn't give him a casual cleansing. I laid it upon my mouth and said this have touched thy lips. Particular confession and particular cleansing. Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for us? Now, that's one of those strange things that covered in the Scripture, the Almighty God didn't say to Isaiah, Go. He said, Whom shall I send and who will go? If you've been with us this morning, we spent most of our time looking at the bearing of the word if and conditions. That into this world has entered the word if because God made man in his image and instead of man obeying like an automaton or a machine, he either obeys willingly or he says no to God. So God said, Whom shall I send? And who will go for us. And as I didn't say, I'll go. Oh, no, he said, Here am I. Send me. So there is a relationship between the God who sins and the one who sins. And he said, go. You do notice those little words have been picked out so many times. Whoa. Low. Go admission and then remission and then commission, if you like. Go and tell this people.

[00:06:36] Now he's going to give them a wonderful message. But instead of a message of comfort and blessing, listen to it. Hear ye indeed. But understand not and see ye indeed that receive not might the heart of this people fat. Now you can't make anybody's heart fat by speaking to them. The figure of speech is that their reaction to the message

you give will come back upon themselves and make them blind and hard and deaf. Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy and shut their eyes lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and convert and be healed. And then there's one thing always appeals to me. Didn't say, Lord, that's the very message I'm out there giving away. He went. He said, Lord, how long? He was going to take a message of judgment, but he didn't rejoice in it and say, well, there are a lot of sinners. I'm glad to take that. He said, Oh, Lord, how long? And there he was, in harmony with the Lord who sent him. And he answered, Until now, the word until opens a door. It's going to last up to a certain period and then a change. He answered. Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant and the houses without man and the land be utterly desolate and the Lord hath removed men far away. And there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

[00:07:59] But yet all was this. There has always been a remnant according to the election of grace, but yet it shall be a tense. A tense? Yes. That's a tithe, isn't it? Yes. It's God's portion, isn't it? Yes, it always will be. Yet in it shall be a tithe and it shall return and shall be eaten as a tree and as an oak whose substance is in them. Now, because when they cast their leaves, you'll see the word their leaves are in italics. No, it's not. When they cast their leaves, it's when these trees fall. Nevertheless, they're not going to fall utterly and completely. They got the substance within them. So the holy seed shall be the substance thereof. And there never been a day when God has been out with without witness. There's always been a remnant, according to the election of grace, right through until at last all Israel shall be saved in God's good time. Well, that's not our theme today. This is a big one, anyhow, without adding to it. The words that are heard in this Isaiah six are of extreme importance when it says Hear ye indeed, but understand not. They occur at three different crises in the development of God's purpose. I think for the first in the first case, we will actually see them in the in their place. And then as far as we've got time, deal with them.

[00:09:27] Matthew the 13th chapter. Matthew the 13th chapter. And the same day went Jesus out of the house and sat by the sea side and started that series of parables, very much misunderstood, stood passages to They are. And so verse ten, they come to him and said, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? And if he been reading a book that's written for the teaching of the young, it was to give an earthly story with a heavenly meaning so that everybody could understand it. But this is what the Lord said.

He answered and said unto thee, because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. But to them it is not given. For whosoever hath to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance. But whosoever hath not from him shall be taken. Even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables, because they hear comes the quotation you see from Isaiah six, because they seeing see not and hearing they hear not. Neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith by hearing ye shall know make the people's heart rates and so on. There it is. So Isaiah six comes in Matthew 13 in a context of where this people are being dismissed for the time being, instead of it being the parables of the kingdom.

[00:10:52] People go to this and say, this is the outworking of the gospel and the whatnot. These are the parables of this mysteries of the kingdom. Instead of it being set up as a king and a kingdom, it's in its mystery phase, and that nearly always means something's gone wrong. Now, the other passage is is the 28th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Here we have Isaiah six quoted in the New Testament for the last time. Now, the 28th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. We are told that the Apostle, when he reached Rome, instead of visiting the church, as he wrote to them and said, What I come to you, I'm longing to come to you and see you. Instead of visiting the church, he sent for the elders of the Jews, the chief of the Jews. Verse 17 After three days, Paul called the chief of the Jews and they appointed to him a day. Verse 23. They came many to him unto his lodging, to whom he expounded and testified The Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets from morning till evening. Well, that was a wonderful exposition of the Word of God, wasn't it? At the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, the writer of the acts says that our savior occupied off and on appeared in a 40 days expounding the Scriptures.

[00:12:22] Well, Paul didn't occupy 40 days, but he gave them one full day doing exactly the same as the Lord went from Moses and the prophets concerning himself. What a day that must have been. Wouldn't you like to have been there to have heard the Apostle Paul go through chapter and verse from Genesis right the way through, And his subject was The Kingdom of God. Concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets from morning till evening. The consequence was a split. Some believed. Some believe not. And when they agreed not among themselves, not merely they departed, but I think the word takes a deeper meaning. They were dismissed. After that, Paul had spoken one word. Well, it doesn't mean you simply said good or bad one

word, but it was this one word that's coming out again from the scriptures. This one word which is so vital, quoted originally found in Isaiah when Israel were being rejected temporarily quoted by our savior, when he was being rejected and quoted by the apostle Paul, when the people of Israel were being rejected. So here it comes again. And some believe those things which are spoken and some believe not are. When they agreed, not among themselves, they departed. After that, Paul had spoken one word. Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the Prophet unto the fathers. Go unto this people. Now there's a quotation again, which I'm going to allow to speak for itself.

[00:13:56] Now, then, what's the consequence of this verse 28? Be it known, therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles and that they will hear it? You trace the word sent in the acts of the Apostles, and you've got an idea of the movement. Peter says You are the children of the prophets. To you it was necessary that it should be first sent. That's in X3. Then in X 13, Paul stands up in a synagogue where he speaks to both Jews and Gentiles together. He says men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham and whosoever among you feareth God to you is the word of this salvation sent. So it was sent to Israel only because they were the children of the prophets. It was sent to Jew and Gentile together. And now we get to the other end. The Jews out of it. And the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles and they will hear it. And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and a great reasoning among themselves. And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house. Now, in verse 23, he had many come to his lodging, and there has been one friend who made a tremendous idea about the difference between a lodging and a hired house. I can't see you can make anything out of that.

[00:15:20] It would be a lodging if you hired the house, wouldn't it? It would be a hired house if you had a lodging, wouldn't it? All right. I'm not going to waste time over that. And he received all that came unto him. Now, then, compare what it says in verse 23 with what it says in verse 31. Preaching the Kingdom of God. Up here, it says expounded and testified the Kingdom of God. He expounded. Well, you can't expound unless you got a book in front of you. But you can preach. Or you can teach from what you know yourself. That's one thing. Preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern Jesus, is that it? See, in the other one it says persuading them concerning Jesus. And Paul uses the name Jesus very rarely you remember, but speaking to the people of Israel, he said, Jesus. But now, in verse 31. Teaching those

things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, in verse 23, his subject was based upon the law of Moses and the prophets. In verse 31, The law and the prophets are not mentioned, not because Paul didn't believe them, but because he couldn't find in the law and the prophets what God hadn't put there. Because now He was giving an exposition of the mystery which had been hid from the ages and the generations, but is now made known and never was found in Old Testament Scripture and in the Last Word.

[00:16:48] No man forbidding him. That word was used by Peter. When Cornelius asked the might hear the words of the truth. And Peter was very difficult about speaking to him. He said, you know, it's unlawful for a man that is a Jew to be seen in company with one of another nation. But what can I do about it? And he went on saying what the Lord did when he went about the land of the Jews. And while he was carrying on like that, the Spirit of God baptized. Cornelius and his company. And Peter said, Well, what are you going to do now? We can't forbid them water, seeing that God's already baptized them with this, we can't forbid you notice the word. And then in writing to the Thessalonians, Paul says that Israel have summed up filled up their seed all the way forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles. But poor old. You couldn't forbid now. His voice was shut. He had no more voice in the matter. No man forbidding unforbidden. The word is Well, now, that gives you the value of these three places where the Isaiah six is quoted. Now we go back on our story. If you use now the Greek version of the Old Testament so that you can use either New Testament or old and use the same language, this is what you discover that nowhere in the Old Testament do you come to the word mystery.

[00:18:20] Can you come to the Book of Daniel? Now, Daniel is the Paul of the Old Testament. He's how to make them out. Well, he was the prisoner of the Lord. Yes, he was there. And he. Was there to give words concerning the coming in of a Gentile dispensation. He was going to say to Nebuchadnezzar, The king thou art his head of gold. He was a he was a Jew who had been brought up to expect that Israel should be dominant. Saying you temporarily are going to be dominant is a change of dispensation. So we have the word mystery and the change coming. Well, here's a little phrase I dare say many have invented it because I invented it. But I dare say somebody else had done it many times. Where history finishes, mystery begins. See, the Bible speaks about things which we call Old Testament history. Then the change comes. What's going to happen now? That's where God's secret comes in. The mystery. So in the Old

Testament, we have Israel, as it were, scattered and departed, lost their home and country. And the Gentile dominion started. Now we come to Matthew 13 and see what happened there. And if you look and notice what happened in the chapters preceding, you will realize that this also is a crisis. In Matthew the 11th chapter, you'll see.

[00:19:55] Something of the character of this people. Verse 16, Matthew 11. But whereunto shall I liken this generation that's the generation that was facing the savior at that time. It's like unto children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their fellows and saying, We are fast unto you and you haven't danced. We have mourned unto you and you haven't wept. Bring it up to date. We've said, Shall we play at weddings? Don't want to play at weddings. Will we play at funerals? Don't want to play at funerals. Sir John came neither eating or drinking. And you say he hath a devil and the son of man comes eating and drinking. And they say, Behold a man gluttonous. A winebibber and so on. Is he? That's the character of these people. You couldn't satisfy them whatever you did. Then verse 20 began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done because they repented not. And as a consequence, we come to Chapter 12. Verse six. I say unto you that in this place is one greater than the temple. And look at verse 41, the sun, the moon and individual rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah. Behold, a greater than Jonah is here. Verse 42, The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it. For she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

[00:21:30] Behold a greater than Solomon is here. A greater than the temple. A greater than Judah. A greater than Solomon. It doesn't take very much perspicuity to see. It means here is the Prophet Priest and King, and his threefold office is rejected. What follows while the kingdom now goes into its mystery form, and instead of everybody knowing about it, only those whose eyes are opened and he is attached like Isaiah six will understand. The rest will be blinded. So never use the parables of Matthew 13 merely as little simple stories. They are full of teaching and we may have to devote some of our time later on when we get to them, when we get this series over. In looking at these parables of Matthew 13 as a subject all to itself. But we can't do those things at the moment because of time. So we want now to look at this question of what do we mean by this mystery? Because we speak about the mystery, the dispensation of the mystery, the church which belongs to the present calling and so on. So we don't want to

make a mystery of it because that's not the meaning of the word. There's nothing mysterious about the word mystery. It simply means a secret. And it particularly refers to the plan of campaign that a leader of an army may have, that if he knows his business, he won't tell the enemy.

[00:22:57] And the enemy's always probing and seeking to discover what he'll do next. So God, knowing he had an enemy, didn't put all his his purpose in the Bible, we are distinctly told, and you might perhaps get chapter and verse for this. Colossians chapter one, where he says. He's a he's a minister for this church, which is the church of the body, verse 25. It fulfills the Word of God, which is a wrong interpretation. It doesn't fulfill because the money to fulfill it completes the Word of God. Look over in verse ten of chapter two. Ye are complete in Him. The mystery is the one feature that was waiting to complete the whole testimony of Scripture. And what is this? Even the mystery which hath been hid. That's the very character of a mystery to be hid. And even in our English language, the the the mystery is why in our spelling here. But it's m u in the original and we get murmur and mutter and mumble and all those words and even a slang expression, Keep mum. You don't have to be a scholar to know that means keep quiet mystery. See? So it says here, even the mystery which hath been hid. From the ages and from generations. It's been hid. Hid from ages and generations. And now is made manifest to his saints, to whom God would make known.

[00:24:32] What is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you or among you? The hope of glory. What if we let God mean what he says? If this mystery was hid and only revealed at the time when the Apostle received it as the prisoner, then you get another phase and an aspect of the teaching. So now we've got on this chart, you see we've got Daniel with his reference to the mystery. Over and over again, when he's interpreting the dream to Nebuchadnezzar and the Gentile, times begin. Then we get Matthew 13. And when we have the. The presentation of the kingdom and the movement, postponing it until later on, and then Acts 28, the dispensation of the Mystery to US Gentiles. Now, just to be sure about that expression, the dispensation and the mystery. You go to Ephesians chapter three and he says in verse eight unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace, given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. Not just those teachings in the Scripture which are all over the Scriptures like Christ, our Passover has been sacrificed for us. But it's obvious when you read Exodus and once you know the

simple terms of the gospel, this is foreshadowing, but this is the unsearchable riches. Let no footmark nothing know, no trace is something new.

[00:26:09] And to enlighten all, make all men see what is the fellowship. Now that's where the word dispensation should come in. If you're reading the texts, the revised version puts it. And to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery. It's not a mystery as to how the mistake was made, because if you get tired when you're writing and your eye catches a few words or few letters, you might go and make the mistake. Koinonia is fellowship and Oikonomia is dispensation. Say them quickly and you'll wonder which was you said, you see. So here we have the dispensation of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God. Now, if you believe, let God mean what he says. If from the beginning of the world it was hid in God, he can't be found in Genesis. Exodus. Leviticus. Numbers. Isaiah. Matthew. No. Until God is pleased to reveal it, it will be still hid, won't it? Right. So now a mystery is not something so terribly secret that nobody can understand it. But a mystery is such a terribly wonderful secret that nobody could know a word about it unless God reveals it. And when once he's revealed it, it's to make all men see what it is. So it shows you. You can see what it is if he tells you. But if he never tells you, you never find it by thinking it over.

[00:27:28] So there we have Paul, the prisoner for you Gentiles. And the mystery was given to him, according to Ephesians three by Revelation, verse three. How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery. What does that mean? What it says. Well, I suppose we must say so by revelation. Well, when it says by revelation, it doesn't mean he sat at the feet of Gamaliel and heard him talk about it. And he didn't argue the point with Luke about it. People. God revealed it to him, as the Lord said to Peter. Flesh and blood have not revealed this unto you. And if you'll go back to Galatians, he says, And neither did I receive my commission. Galatians Chapter one, he says, verse 11. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached in me is not after man, for I neither receive it of man. Neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. We are not dealing with the mystery in this chapter, but we are saying that's what Revelation means. He didn't receive it from man and he wasn't taught it by man. It was by revelation. So you see, it's no use some person saying, Oh, this highfalutin teaching about the mystery. Anybody with eyes to see can see it in the types and the shadows of the Old Testament. Well, that's denying what God says.

[00:28:49] He was heeding God. It was hidden away from the generations. And it was revealed and not merely taught by somebody else. So that is the character of this mystery. And this church and the teaching concerning this church completes the word of God. And also you will find this that in relation to making known a mystery, there is always the suggestion of an enemy in the context somewhere. And. You're not surprised to discover that when there is such a thing as a mystery of godliness or acceptable worship, as perhaps it might be better rendered, the evil one will come forward with a mystery of iniquity. And so we have someone in the Temple of God showing himself that He is God. And with signs and wonders and lying, miracles confirm it. Just parallel just to as a parody of someone else who was man and yet manifesting God and confirming with signs and wonders and not merely lying miracles, but true ones. So we have marching all the way through the scripture. The evil one Copying, parodying, never inventing. And unless we careful, we can soon be deceived by another gospel and another Jesus. He uses the very name it says, according to Second Corinthians. Well, now, I rather think it would be unwise if I said about the mystery of Christ, because, you see, there are several mysteries to be considered. What I will do is to deal with the passage in Ephesians three in this little study so that we may have it in mind when we pick up our study next time and see what is the difference intended between the mystery.

[00:30:46] And the Mystery of Christ, which comes in chapter three. Let's place it, shall we? Ephesians three. For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you, Gentiles. Now, that has made a statement. It's a challenging statement. And he looks, as it were, with his mental eye at the look on the face of some of these Ephesians. And he says, oh, wait a minute, now, I'd better tell you. You wonder what I'm making this claim for. You know, I'm a prisoner. And you may have had all sorts of rumors as to why I've been put in prison. Well, he says the one thing that that stands out more than anything else on the prisoner of Jesus Christ. And I'm a prisoner, for your sakes. All he said. If now we were looking at it this morning and this means all since. Oh, yes. Taking it for granted that you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you, Lord. How that by revelation he made known unto thee the mystery. Now that's the mystery. Without any qualifications about it, without any title, the mystery like that. I illustrate this by rather a strange thing. I've said it before, but it doesn't matter.

[00:32:00] That. The the Alpine Club. Is English. They actually have a Swiss Alpine club and an Italian Alpine club and the French one, because the English were the first ones to make an Alpine club. So they don't have to call it English or say, Alpine Club. You see. And because the English people first invented the postage stamp, they don't have to stick on it, just the country that it is. Every other country has to see it is. The mystery par excellence. The mystery. This one looks particularly associated with the church of the one body and Paul the prisoner. Well, now he says, whereby when you read. The time you read. All I have to say is, is about this mystery. You may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ. But he doesn't mean the same thing now. He says, when you read this, you'll understand my knowledge of the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now, you see. But that's not true of the mystery. You can't say the mystery is better known now than it was before because it wasn't made known before at all. It was hid in God. So here is a mystery which is gradually unveiled itself through the scriptures. So we want to follow that out next time to complete this story. Then he comes back. The words by the spirit instead of being referred to the apostles and prophets.

[00:33:28] It's just the words in spirit, in spirit. And when we're looking at it next time, I'll show you a parallel in the book of Daniel. But believe that for the time being that in spirit, the Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of the promise in Christ by the Gospel whereof I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God. So there are mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. There's the mystery associated with resurrection. There's Confessedly great is the mystery of godliness. There's the mystery of iniquity. There's the mystery of God, which is to be finished at the second coming of Christ when he takes the kingdoms and rules. And there's the mystery above all others that was hid in God and revealed when Paul became the prisoner. And associated with that, he had a knowledge of the mystery of Christ, which was different and went beyond that which was known to others. And so in a measure, he said to them this. Now, anybody could come along and tell you, Oh, I've got a superior knowledge of the mystery. He said. But I'll challenge that. I'll say now, where I share with Peter and James and John in the Mystery of Christ. See whether I haven't gone a stage further. Well, we'll do that, shall we, When we meet together.

[00:34:50] Next time, just compare what we know of the mystery of Christ from others in the Scriptures with what is written concerning that very self-same thing in the Ministry of

Paul. Now, here we then have this peculiar character of our calling that we belong to a secret because the enemy of truth and so bottled up the children of Israel that if God hadn't got a secret part of his purpose, the whole purpose of the ages, would have gone to pieces. And Satan apparently had a good shot at it. He said, If I can only stop Israel repenting, then I'll stop the purpose of God spreading over the earth and I shall still be God of this age and Prince of this world and Christ will not return. And then, to his amazement, he revealed to the man he'd put in prison. God did that. There was a secret part of his purpose that Isaiah never heard and Daniel never knew. And we are carrying on in this calling. The purpose of God, as he said, is always at a remnant according to the election of grace. And when this calling is finished, God will pick up that which has been laid down and the purpose of God will go on to the end. So I trust that we'll be able to disabuse the minds of some people who think we are dealing with mysteries in the sense of sort of spiritualistic approach to the Word of God is simply believing what God says and accepting all its consequences.