

**The Mystery – Shadow and Substance** bible-sermons.org March 6, 2011  
Colossians 2:16-17; Acts 9:19-22 (Inspired from *The Messianic Hope* by M. Rydelnik)

When the rabbi Saul became a Christian, he went through a dramatic shift in his understanding of the Scriptures. He had spent his life devoted to the Judaism that he was taught in the traditions of his elders. He was a most anticipated young Jewish leader, (Acts 22:3) and was one of the most zealous Jews you could expect to meet. He was so zealous, that he saw the Christian movement as a perversion of Judaism. (1Timothy 1:13) He thought it was his God given duty to stamp out the movement. It was on his way to Damascus that he had a supernatural experience and was converted to the very faith he was on his way to persecute. (Acts 9:15)

Following his dramatic conversion, he escaped the persecution of his fellow Jews by going over the wall of the city in a basket tied to ropes. (Acts 9:25) He then spent three years in Arabia. (Galatians 1:17-18) We don't know exactly what he was doing there, but I would imagine it was revisiting the Scriptures to understand how he could have been so wrong. (Acts 9:22) He thought his whole life was being faithful to the Scriptures, but after the encounter with Christ he knew he must have missed their whole intent. I've been there, but for me it was three months in a deserted village in the mountains of Japan. I had the advantage of having Paul's writings to help me.

The Book of Acts and the letters of Paul give us the details of a busy ministry evangelizing new areas and establishing and caring for churches, but of the time in Arabia we have no record. After that time, he visited the Apostles in Jerusalem. There, he could hear firsthand what they had seen and heard during their time with Jesus. But Paul was only with them a very short time. I think it was those three years of going back over the Scriptures with born-again eyes that cemented his understanding of Christ. Paul now had the key to interpreting the Scriptures. (Acts 9:20) Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ.

In our Colossian passage today, he refers to this change in his perception of the Scriptures as the mystery and as shadow and substance. The Jews of Jesus' day were longing for a Messiah that they saw as the fulfillment of numerous prophecies. They believed he would usher in the kingdom of God by defeating the enemies of Israel and helping his own people, Israel, to understand the Law as it was meant to be understood. Some of the sages of Israel even saw messiah as breaking down "the hedge of the Law" so that they could be led by the heart of God. (Ezekiel 11:19-20)

They saw the Scriptures as clearly culminating in this messiah figure. It was their hope. Jewish women prayed that they might give birth to the one. Numerous men claimed to be the messiah and rallied the zealots and discontents to them only to be mercilessly

**Commented [Paul1]: Acts 22:3 (ESV)**  
<sup>3</sup> "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.

**Commented [Paul2]: 1 Timothy 1:13 (ESV)**  
<sup>13</sup> though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,

**Commented [Paul3]: Acts 9:15 (ESV)**  
<sup>15</sup> But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.

**Commented [Paul4]: Acts 9:25 (ESV)**  
<sup>25</sup> but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.

**Commented [Paul5]: Galatians 1:17-18 (ESV)**  
<sup>17</sup> nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.  
<sup>18</sup> Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.

**Commented [Paul6]: Acts 9:22 (ESV)**  
<sup>22</sup> But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

**Commented [Paul7]: Acts 9:20 (ESV)**  
<sup>20</sup> And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."

**Commented [Paul8]: Ezekiel 11:19-20 (ESV)**  
<sup>19</sup> And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,  
<sup>20</sup> that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

crushed by Rome. You could say there was a messianic fever in Israel in the first century. Even if their hope for a military leader was misguided, was the hope of a messiah really something the Scriptures predicted?

Many scholars today say that they were reading into the Scriptures something that never was meant by the authors. Others, including myself, have held the position that the author was writing about the immediate future and did not realize his wording was inspired by God to also apply to the Messiah (*sensus plenior*). The most conservative view is that the authors knew it was about the Messiah, but that sometimes there were also events that followed the prophecy that foreshadowed the Messiah.

Jesus seemed to hold the last view. He spoke to the two on the road to Emmaus explaining from the Law, the Psalms, and the prophets that the Christ must suffer before entering into His glory. (Luke 24:25-27) Whenever we read the word Christ, we can substitute the word Messiah. The meaning is the same, the anointed one. He explained to the disciples in the locked upper room all that was written about Him in the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets. (Luke 24:44) That should be good enough for us. He spoke as the One who came down from heaven. (John 6:33) If we say we are Christians, then shouldn't we accept the teachings of Christ? In spite of this, many evangelical seminaries today teach the second view, and some even teach the first.

However, I think if we understand what transformed Paul's thinking, what this mystery was that he declares was revealed to the saints, then we must take the side of the last view point. That is that the authors of Scripture wrote about a coming Messiah that was their future hope.

One of the great evidences of this is in the way the Jews assembled the Scriptures. To the Jews, the Scriptures are in three books or sections. The first and most sacred is the **Torah**, the books of Moses. Genesis, Numbers, and Deuteronomy all have a narrative, a poem, and an epilogue. The narrative is the bulk of each book. The poems all mention "the last days". (Genesis 49:1; Numbers 24:14; Deuteronomy 31:29) They point to a culmination to which history is headed. This Torah covers creation to the death of Moses.

The second section is the **Nevi'im**. We would say the prophets. It covers Joshua to exile. The third is the **Ketuvim**, also called the Writings. It covers the exile to the restoration. The acronym for these three sections is the TaNaK. That is how the Jews refer to their Bible, that we call the Old Testament. Christians accept this as sacred Scripture just as the Jews accept it today and in the days of Jesus.

**Commented [Paul9]: Luke 24:25-27 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup> And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!

<sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"

<sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

**Commented [Paul10]: Luke 24:44 (ESV)**

<sup>44</sup> Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

**Commented [Paul11]:**

**Commented [Paul12]: John 6:33 (ESV)**

<sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

**Commented [Paul13]: Genesis 49:1 (KJV)**

<sup>1</sup> And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you *that* which shall befall you in the last days.

**Commented [Paul14]: Numbers 24:14 (KJV)**

<sup>14</sup> And now, behold, I go unto my people: come *therefore*, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.

**Commented [Paul15]: Deuteronomy 31:29 (KJV)**

<sup>29</sup> For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt *yourselves*, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.

The fascinating thing is how the books were assembled. Each section ends with a messianic forecast, and the following section begins with encouragement to meditate on the Scriptures. The end of the Torah is Deuteronomy 34. Verses 9 through 10 are clearly looking forward to a Messiah. Joshua is introduced, but it is made clear that he is not the one that is like Moses, the One predicted in 18:15.

**Commented [Paul16]: Deuteronomy 34:9-10 (KJV)**

<sup>9</sup> And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.

<sup>10</sup> And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,

The next section begins by encouraging Joshua to be a person of faith in the Word, and to meditate in it day and night. (Joshua 1:7-8) He is not the One, but he is to be faithful to look to the Scriptures and model them until Messiah comes.

**Commented [Paul17]: Deuteronomy 18:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—

The connection between the Prophets and the Writings is the same. The last verses of the Prophets (Malachi 4:4-5) speak of Elijah who will prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. Then the Writings begin with Psalm one in which the wise man meditates in the Scriptures. (Psalm 1:2-3) This was not a mere coincidence, but the intention of those (of whom we do not have any historical account) that put the books in order to point to how we should live until Messiah comes.

**Commented [Paul18]: Joshua 1:7-8 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.

<sup>8</sup> This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

In addition to this structure, we should also see that each book that was chosen as inspired (canon) has some portion which clearly has a messianic hope. In fact, one famous rabbi, Rabbi Johanan, declared "Every prophet prophesied only of the days of the Messiah." That is basically the same as Jesus' declaration.

**Commented [Paul19]: Malachi 4:4-5 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.

<sup>5</sup> "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

But are we just reading into passages that for which we long? Students of Scripture call it isogesis instead of exegesis, in other words read into it instead of understanding it. Or were the writers really seeing the same thing as those who assembled the sections of the Bible? Let's look at a key passage in each of the three sections and see. We could spend a morning on each one, but you can do the research on your own if you want to go deeper.

**Commented [Paul20]: Psalm 1:2-3 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

<sup>3</sup> He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

The first is the beginning of Messianic expectation in Genesis 3:15. *<sup>15</sup> I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.* (ESV) Seminaries today are teaching everything from "this is intended to describe man's hatred of snakes" to "this teaches of man's constant battle with evil", but rarely is it taught today as clearly pointing to Jesus. The theme of "the seed" clearly runs throughout the entire Old Testament. This one verse establishes the plot of the whole Tanak. Consider that God is giving Adam and Eve hope in the midst of their sentencing, just as He will later do in the sentencing of Cain (Genesis 4:15) and the judgment of the flood (Genesis 6:18).

**Commented [Paul21]: Genesis 4:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.

How can we be sure this is about a coming messiah? First, this is not just any snake; He talks! And this is not Narnia! It is not an allegory but intended to be read as history.

**Commented [Paul22]: Genesis 6:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

All creation was declared good, even snakes, but this creature is animated by evil. Note too, that it is not the serpent's seed but the serpent himself that will have his head crushed, and that would require more than a normal lifetime. The first readers would have read it as a divinely empowered deliverer defeating this evil power, but being killed in the process.

Ancient Jewish interpreters read it as a messianic passage. It wasn't until they began to defend Judaism against Christian claims that the interpretation was altered. (Especially Rashi 1040-1105)

A careful look at the Hebrew also shows that it is a singular verb form and pronoun that describe the seed. There is one particular offspring in view in Genesis 3:15. A particular descendent (seed) of Eve will crush the tempter's head. (Galatians 3:16) If you were with us in the study through Genesis, you saw the trail of the two seeds that started in the very next chapter.

The verb "strike" is used for both beings, the offspring and the tempter. The bite of the snake is deadly. Both die in the conflict. There is a part of the mystery. It was a victory achieved THROUGH death. (Hebrews 2:14-15)

Next we'll look at a passage from the Prophets, Isaiah 7:14. *<sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.* It has come under intense debate during our lifetime, mostly because of the use of the word *almah* for virgin.

I remember as a High School student a man told me about how Christianity distorted the history of the Bible. He pointed to this passage and then showed me how it was fulfilled a few chapters later, and then how the New Testament lied about what it meant.

A closer examination shows that there are two prophecies. At the time of the passage, King Ahaz was threatened from the northern tribes that had joined with Syria and threatened to replace Ahaz with the son of Tabeel. Would the lineage of David end? That would mean an end of the Messianic lineage. (2 Samuel 7:16) Isaiah predicted in 7:13-15 that the Davidic reign would continue. In 7:16-25 he addressed the short term situation.

Once again we must ask if we are reading into the text something we'd like to see? In verse 13, Isaiah addresses the house of David. When addressing Ahaz alone, the verbs are singular. In verses 4,5 and 11 they have switched to plural commands. In verse 13,

**Commented [Paul23]: Galatians 3:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.

**Commented [Paul24]: Hebrews 2:14-15 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

**Commented [Paul25]: Isaiah 7:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

**Commented [Paul26]: 2 Samuel 7:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.' "

**Commented [Paul27]: Isaiah 7:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?"

"listen" is plural. The English word "you" comes from the plural Hebrew pronoun. God is addressing the whole house of David and the sign is for them, not just the king. They have tried God's patience by being ungodly kings, but would God not bring to pass the promise of the seed coming from the house of David? What was the miraculous sign? A woman becoming pregnant is a miracle of sorts, but nothing which would assure the house of David that God would keep a promise.

There are arguments as to the meaning of the word translated into virgin. Without getting into all the arguments, let me just say there are strong arguments on both sides. But how would it be a miraculous sign if it was simply a young woman? In every other usage of the word in the Bible, it is either used of a virgin or in a neutral sense. Literally it reads, "Look! The virgin is pregnant!" It's as if he saw a vision of wonder. And the name of the child is to be "God with us". Isaiah 9 goes on to speak of the one that will reign on David's throne, even the area of messiah's ministry. 9:6 gives us other divine titles, such as Mighty God and Everlasting Father, for this One that will be born to the virgin. In addition, Micah 5:2-5a alludes to this passage (especially verse 5 in the variant readings) as referring to the coming Messiah born in the town of David, Bethlehem.

In 7:16 the text returns to the singular "you" (the king) and God addresses the boy that the king was instructed to bring with him (7:3). The fulfillment of the short term prediction would help the people have faith in the long term prediction. We are not twisting Isaiah's words; rather we are correctly interpreting them.

The final text is from the third section, the Writings, and is the one Jesus cited, Psalm 110. <sup>1</sup> *The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."* There are few that will deny this as being messianic. Those who make a vain attempt to say it was written from David to Solomon on his coronation must also call it a false prediction or flowery exaggeration. Instead it speaks the same words as the second Psalm and Daniel 7:13. Even the Jews that Jesus addressed could not understand the mystery how the Messiah could both be YHWH and the Son of David. (Mark 12:37)

Before Rabbi Saul left Damascus he was declaring that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God! Then he went into the desert of Arabia, like Moses before him to look again at Messiah in the Tanak. Wonder with him how it is that this "seed" of Eve can crush the power of evil but dies? Why must this One to come to be born of a virgin? How can He be called God? How could this One be a king and a priest and reign in the midst of His enemies? Mysteries! And yet as Saul studied in solitude and put the life of Jesus alongside these prophecies He began to understand that all of Scripture was pointing to

**Commented [Paul28]: Micah 5:2-5a (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

<sup>3</sup> Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel.

<sup>4</sup> And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.

<sup>5</sup> And he shall be their peace.

**Commented [Paul29]: Isaiah 7:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> And the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field.

**Commented [Paul30]: Daniel 7:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.

**Commented [Paul31]: Mark 12:37 (ESV)**

<sup>37</sup> David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?" And the great throng heard him gladly.

Jesus. The Law was our guardian to bring us to Messiah. (Galatians 3:24) The Law condemns us. How can we have life? The answer is the mystery kept hidden for ages but now revealed to the saints, Jesus is Messiah. (Acts 26:22-23)

All these pictures throughout the Old Testament: light, the gate to Eden, the tree of life, the ark, the tabernacle, the rock that followed them, living water, manna, the Captain of the Hosts, the angel of the Lord, Joseph the savior, King David, kinsman redeemer, and on and on, are just shadows to lead us to the substance. They are shadows from which we can learn, because in them we see Jesus. The Law was guidance to help us live until the One that would fulfill the Law should come and be the living Spirit of the law in our hearts. (Matthew 5:17; Jeremiah 31:33)

The greatest mystery of all was how man could be made right with God. How can the Lord be our righteousness? (Jeremiah 23:6) **The greatest answer ever given was Jesus, God's answer to our separation.** He would sanctify us through His death and come and live in us. (John 14:23) Christ in us, the hope of glory! The mystery was revealed to Paul and the saints (Colossians 1:26) and they were so overwhelmed by the profoundness of it that they invested the rest of their lives declaring it. Hope for every person had come in Jesus. God would make us His tabernacle and be our righteousness if we will come to Jesus and accept that He paid the debt we owed.

We don't have to look at shadows and wonder. We don't have to ponder how the pieces of the messianic promises would come together. The mystery has been revealed. The Scriptures are for the purpose of leading us to Jesus!

#### Questions

- 1 What did Paul do after his conversion?
- 2 What are the three main views regarding messianic passages?
- 3 Which view did Jesus have?
- 4 How do we know Jews saw the Scriptures as messianic?
- 5 What are the three sections of Scripture and how are they joined?
- 6 Why is Genesis 3:15 about more than fear of snakes?
- 7 What is the significance of the word "strike"?
- 8 How is Isaiah 7 prediction divided? How do we know that?
- 9 What is Jesus' question regarding Psalm 110?

**Commented [Paul32]: Galatians 3:24 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

**Commented [Paul33]: Acts 26:22-23 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass:

<sup>23</sup> that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."

**Commented [Paul34]: Matthew 5:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

**Commented [Paul35]: Jeremiah 31:33 (ESV)**

<sup>33</sup> But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

**Commented [Paul36]: Jeremiah 23:6 (NIV)**

<sup>6</sup> In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.

**Commented [Paul37]: John 14:23 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

**Commented [Paul38]: Colossians 1:26 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.