

It's a Mystery

Commentary for April 1, 2014 — God's Operations in Fulfilling His Will

This month's article is "The Book of Haggai, Time Prophecies." First read the "[April 2014 Newsletter](#)" which gives important background material. The article itself uses the Book of Haggai to explain the mystery of God's prophecies and how they may seem ambiguous to us and misapplied, when in fact they are precise in their fulfillment.

One aspect about our salvation is frequently misunderstood. It also is a mystery. In the movie *Shakespeare in Love* a fictional story is told about how Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* came to be written. There is a scene early in the movie which establishes a theme about chaos which is repeated throughout the movie. It also describes our life as human beings. In the quote below, Philip Henslowe is the owner of the Rose Theatre soon to begin production of a new play. Hugh Fennyman is a financial backer of the production and theatre.

"Philip Henslowe: Mr. Fennyman, allow me to explain about the theatre business. The natural condition is one of insurmountable obstacles on the road to imminent disaster.

Hugh Fennyman: So what do we do?

Philip Henslowe: Nothing. Strangely enough, it all turns out well.

Hugh Fennyman: How?

Philip Henslowe: I don't know. It's a mystery."

• Shakespeare in Love

Not only was the coming together of the production of every new play "a mystery," but so was the story behind William Shakespeare's inspiration for one of his masterpieces, the play *Romeo and Juliet*. The movie fictionally reveals the mystery of Shakespeare's lost love who supposedly inspired the play's composition and heroine.

Truer Than Fiction

So too, you do not know how the "production" of your life will turn out, but no doubt your life is one whereby your **"natural condition is one of insurmountable obstacles on the road to imminent disaster."** Except for God, you would be without hope (Ephesians 2:12).

Fortunately, God has chosen us (and eventually everyone else) so that the words of Philip Henslowe will apply to us, but in a manner unintended by the writer of the movie: **"strangely enough, it all turns out well. ... It's a mystery."** Just like the characters of the movie do not know how it will turn out well, but it shall, so far as most people today know, **"It's a mystery."** In fact, life as you know it now (with all its problems, pains, suffering, and death for everyone) turns out better than well.

God intends for us to become like God to the same extent that Christ is like God. Yes, truly you will be like Christ: **"We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we**

shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). At this moment, we believers are legally seated with Him at the right hand of God the Father:

"Which he wrought in Christ, when he [God the Father] raised him from the dead, and set him [Christ] at his own right hand in the heavenly places ...

And you [and me and all mankind] has he [God the Father] quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ...

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by grace you are saved;) And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: [For what purpose?]

That in the ages [eons] to come he might show [display] the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

• *Ephesians 1:20, 2:1, 2:4-7*

When will God do this? Paul says it will be **"... in the ages [eons] to come."** It will be done over a long time, during the 1,000-year reign of Christ (the Millennium), and during the great white throne judgment period beginning in Revelation 20:11 through chapter 23.

The Audience to God's Grace

To whom will God show the **"riches of His grace"**? Well, first He will show it to the angels who desire to look into what you are learning, enduring, maturing, all while building character:

"Concerning which salvation the prophets seek out and search out, who prophesy concerning the grace which is for you, searching into what or what manner of era the spirit of Christ in them made evident, when testifying beforehand to the sufferings pertaining to Christ and the glories after these.

To whom it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to you they dispensed them, of which you were now informed through those who are bringing the evangel to you by holy spirit dispatched from heaven, into which messengers [angellos, angels] are yearning to peer."

• *1 Peter 1:10-12, Concordant Literal Version*

At present, as a believer you have the tremendous benefit of receiving the "evangel," the Gospel, the "Good News" of God's grace, which is given to you from heaven through God's Holy Spirit. This was something the prophets wondered about, but did not fully understand. We should all echo the apostle Paul's sentiment about the gift of God's grace to us: **"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift"** (2 Corinthians 9:15).

How then should we live? Right now, your future glory is not apparent, but when Christ appears, you will appear with him to display and share in Christ's glory.

"If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory."

• *Colossians 3:1-4*

Sharing Christ's glory puts us on display. God the Father will be glorified by our future glory in Christ. We are put onstage for all creation to see and wonder at, as Shakespeare wrote:

**"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits, and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts."**

• *Shakespeare, As You Like It, Act 2, Scene 7, lines 139–142*

Did Shakespeare know the significance and the biblical truth of what he wrote? We cannot know, perhaps he did. In any case, God is using His *ecclesia* to show spiritual powers the wisdom of God

"... that now may be made known to the sovereignties and the authorities among the celestials, through the ecclesia, the multifarious wisdom of God, in accord with the purpose of the eons, which He makes in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

• *Ephesians 3:10–11, Concordant Literal Version*

The Human Audience

Human beings will be the primary audience for the display of God's grace through us. After all, the Old Testament acts of God through His people Israel and Judah (and their failures) are a witness to us, done for our admonition (gentle reproof, counsel, advice, or caution).

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

• *1 Corinthians 10:11*

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

• *Romans 15:4*

The same will be the case of the examples of our lives for those who follow us. The examples of our lives will be shown to the great masses of people resurrected during the great white throne judgment. Their situation will be much like that of Lazarus (John 12:1–17) and others when they were resurrected to physical life. The resurrection of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel chapter 37 is an description of one group being restored to physical life at some future time. We will be like Paul and the other apostles:

"For I think that God has set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle [1] unto the world, [2] and to angels, [3] and to men."

• *1 Corinthians 4:9*

Those who come after us will witness and be educated by our examples, we who will be resurrected to spiritual life (like Christ) when He returns to earth. That event will have been in the past for those resurrected to physical life. God's plan of salvation will be explained to them for the first time. Here are two psalms of many that could be cited:

"Make a joyful noise unto God, all you lands: Sing forth the honor of his name: make his praise glorious.

Say unto God, How terrible [terrifying yet awesome] are you in your works! through the greatness of your power shall your enemies submit themselves unto you.

All the earth shall worship you, and shall sing unto you; they shall sing to your name.

• *Psalm 66:1-4*

“God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us;

Selah.

That your way may be known upon earth, your saving health among all nations.

Let the people praise you, O God; let all the people praise you.

O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for you shall judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah.

Let the people praise you, O God; let all the people praise you.

• *Psalm 67:1-5*

Worship and praise for God — why? It will be for the salvation to be exhibited through you — with all your foibles, failures, moral lapses, all your faults, warts and all — yet you will be displayed as an example of God’s glory through Christ, exhibited through you as the product of God’s grace. As you will be then, they also will strive to become through Christ. It is because of our exhibition (as in a play) that the apostle Paul commends and encourages us to be circumspect in our conduct in life (Ephesians chapter 2 and Colossians chapter 3).

“For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”

• *Ecclesiastes 12:14*

“Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.”

• *Matthew 10:26*

“For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.”

• *Luke 8:17*

“For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever you have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which you have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.”

• *Luke 12:2-3*

“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts [after this happens?] : and then shall every man have praise of God.”

• *1 Corinthians 4:5*

This revelation to us through the Scriptures of how God will work out His plan of salvation is for us individually and for all mankind. Yet it is a mystery to all but the relatively few believers in Christ’s resurrection. It has certainly been a mystery to the great mass of mankind throughout history. The mystery of our salvation is similar to the mystery of how God will work out His prophetic words so all will be fulfilled to the letter. **“Strangely enough, it all turns out well.”** Enjoy Dr. Martin’s teaching on the time prophecies of Haggai.

David Sielaff
david@askelm.com