

“The Mystery of God”

Intro: Whatever views we reach on the meaning of Revelation should be grounded upon Christ’s own statements of purpose and explanation in the book. Rev. 10 makes clear that the book concerns the accomplishment of the mystery of God revealed by His servants the OT prophets. John, a new testament prophet, in the spirit of Daniel or Zechariah announces to God’s true Israel the fulfillment of God’s plan for the nation in his own time. It would have special meaning and comfort to them in the midst of great persecution at the hands of both the Jews and the Romans.

The mystery of God has to do with Israel’s own unique role as the national agency of redemption. Through it would come the Messiah who would save all men. Consequently, Israel occupied a special relationship to the developing kingdom of God. In the OT period they constituted the kingdom of God as they submitted to His law, though God exercised lordship over all the nations to some degree. Because of their rejection of God as king over them and their fall into sin, they were judged by God. This judgment was one of many “days of the Lord” announced by the prophets. In it we see the principles of divine working by which God dealt with the nations.

Israel’s judgment was precipitated by sin. The apostasy of Israel evoked various manifestations of God’s wrath working in their world to lead them to repentance including natural disasters, societal corruption, and threats of external invasion. The righteous suffered much at the hands of the wicked among the nation during this period. But at last the day of the Lord arrived bringing deliverance for the righteous and judgment for the wicked. God used the heathen nations around them as His agents of destruction. He provided for the safety and deliverance of the righteous from these forces of destruction, for the judgment was not upon them but upon those who persecuted them. By these processes the true Israel was to be refined and purified by God’s discipline of persecution and those unworthy of the calling of God were excluded and destroyed. Upon national repentance, God judged the instruments of wrath he had used against Israel and restored them to their land and excited hopes of a deliverer who would restore the kingdom to Israel.

The prophets spoke of the future of Israel in similar terms. Prophets like Daniel and Zechariah spoke of the ongoing processes of judgment and deliverance for the nation. They announced that a Messianic king would arise among them. He would speak peace to the nation as He called upon them to repent. He would establish his kingdom that would defeat and overthrow all other world kingdom. But there would be those among the nation who rejected him and would not repent. Moreover they would persecute the righteous. As before, they would come under God’s judgment by the heathen in yet another “day of the Lord”. The Messiah himself would judge and purge from the nation those unworthy of the designation “Israel”. Pagan powers under His control of the Messiah would be used for this purpose. God’s true Israel would be spared in this judgment; but those who were wicked would be destroyed once again, cleansing the nation of those unworthy (in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70). However, once again those pagan powers used by God to trample Jerusalem under foot would be judged by Him. The kingdom would at last become of the possession of God’s true Israel and they would reign with their Messiah until the end. During this final period, God’s true Israel would experience one last time the destructive efforts of Satan through new powers prophetically called “God and Magog”, but to no avail. The final destruction of Satan would inaugurate the final ingathering of God’s people to the new Jerusalem, a relationship of blessing where God is once again king over the nation forever.