

Chapter 3

A Revealer of Secrets

There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets.

Daniel 2:28a

The secret things belong to Jehovah our God,
but things that are revealed belong to us
and to our children forever.

Deuteronomy 29:29a

God's Glory

Solomon said, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing" (Prov. 25:2), but it is also the glory of God to reveal a thing. God has covered Himself with the glory of hidden truth and the glory of revelation. Hardly a chapter can be found in the Bible that does not in some way demonstrate that from the beginning, God's way has been to conceal and to reveal all things in His time. God hides things from every creature, even from His Son (e.g., Mk. 13:32). At this very moment, He is hiding many things from each of us, and He is doing it for our good as well as for His glory.

Here are just a few of the many scriptures that declare God to be a God who conceals and reveals:

Psalms 25

14. The secret of Jehovah belongs to those who fear Him,
and He will reveal His covenant to them.

Isaiah 45

15. O God of Israel, Savior, you truly are a God who hides
Himself.

Jeremiah 33

3. Call upon me, and I will answer you, and I will show you great, inaccessible things that you do not know.

Daniel 2

27. Daniel answered before the king and said, “The wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot reveal to the king the secret which the king has demanded.

...

- 29b. He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will come to pass.”

...

47. The king answered Daniel and said, “Truly, your³³ God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing that you are able to reveal this secret.”

Sometimes, when Jesus thought on the suffering that lay in store for those whose hearts were blinded by the Father, he wept over them (Lk. 19:41–44). At other times, however, when he thought about how his Father had blinded the proud, Jesus could hardly contain his joy: “Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the learned and intelligent, and revealed them to babes. Yes, Father, for such was pleasing in your sight!’” (Lk. 10:21; cf. Mt. 11:25–26).

God is good to condescend to reveal Himself to whomever He chooses, but He is just as good when He hides Himself. Jesus rejoiced in all of it because he trusted his Father’s choices.

God’s Choice

When men hide things, they put them out of sight, but when God hides things, He lays them out in full view and then does not allow those looking on to understand what they see. We all have experienced this, whether we realize it or not. We all have been

³³ Since the “your” here is plural, we know that Nebuchadnezzar was speaking of the God of all the Jews, not just of Daniel.

among those who “seeing, do not see, and hearing, do not hear” (Mt. 13:13). Even Jesus’ disciples, forgetting that he had just fed a multitude with seven loaves and a few small fish, worried about not having enough food:

Mark 8

17a. When Jesus knew this, he told them, “Why are you talking about not having bread? Don’t you yet know, or understand?”

18. Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And don’t you remember?”

The heavens are seen around the world (Ps. 19:3–4); they cannot be hidden. Or can they? One man looks at the stars and says, “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Ps. 19:1), while another looks at them and “says in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Ps. 14:1). What makes the difference? The Bible is consistent with its answer: God has opened the eyes of the first, but He has blinded the eyes of the second. It cannot be a matter of intelligence, for as a rule, the ungodly in this world are more intelligent than God’s children, as both Jesus and Paul admitted (Lk. 16:8; 1Cor. 1:26–27). Saints and sinners alike see the heavens, but only those whose hearts are touched by God have the kind of wisdom that enables them to really see what they are looking at.

Jesus often spoke to the multitudes in parables that contained hidden lessons concerning God’s kind of life, thus fulfilling what the Son promised through the prophet that he would do: “I will open my mouth in a parable; I will pour out dark sayings from of old” (Ps. 78:2). But Jesus’ disciples, seeing that no one was understanding his parables, asked him why he spoke in parables to the people. His answer was both terrifying and glorious:

Matthew 13

11. He answered and said to them, “To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to those, it is not given.

...

14. In them is Isaiah's prophecy fulfilled which says, 'You shall hear, but you will not understand, and you will see, but you shall not perceive.'"

That is a terrifying answer for those to whom it is not given, but it is a glorious answer for those to whom it is given. It is God's choice alone whether to shine His light into our hearts or to leave us in our darkness. Human willpower, ability, and effort does not and cannot make it happen. This truth gives us reason to both love and fear God, as Jesus did (Heb. 5:7; Jn. 14:31), for God alone decides who will see and who will not see. Then, who can demand an account from Him for His choices? God is advised by no one, and He answers to no one. In creation, He did only what it pleased Him to do (Ps. 135:6), and in each of our lives, He has done the same. It is the nature of man to question the justice of that, but Paul responded to that fleshly wisdom:

Romans 9

14. What shall we say, then? Is there injustice with God?
Absolutely not!
15. For He said to Moses, "I will show mercy to whomever I show mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I have compassion."
16. So then, it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God, who shows mercy.
17. For the scripture says [that God said] to Pharaoh, "This is the very reason I raised you up, that in you, I might demonstrate my power, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."
18. So then, to whom He will, He shows mercy, and whom He will, He hardens.
19. You will say to me, then, "Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will?"
20. Hold on there, O man! Who are you who talks back at God? Will the thing shaped say to Him who shaped it, "Why did you make me like this?"
21. Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

Paul said his mission was to proclaim to the Gentiles the once-hidden mystery of the Son and to lead them to him (Eph. 3:8–9). Many Gentiles rejected his message, but Paul remained encouraged because he knew that everyone who hungers and thirsts for God’s righteousness will be filled with it (cf. Mt. 5:6) because the hungering and thirsting itself comes from God, not just the righteousness. This is the critical point: the desire to come to Christ is itself a gift from God. Jesus plainly said, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him” (Jn. 6:44a).

The earliest believers understood this. For example, when the Gentiles first received the life of God, the elders among the believing Jews said, “Well, then, God has granted repentance unto life to the Gentiles, too!” (Acts 11:18). They understood that if God had given His Spirit to the Gentiles, then He must have also granted them the repentance required to receive it.

Paul concluded that “if our gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are being lost” (2Cor. 4:3). If people reject the gospel, it is only that God, for whatever reason, has rejected them and hidden the gospel of His Son from them. And in such cases, faithful believers can do nothing but pray that the Father will have mercy on those who are lost in sin, and then live so as to show them the right way.

Concealing and Revealing Himself

Isaiah was right to say that God hides Himself, but in doing so, He does not crouch behind a rock or crawl under a bed, the way we humans hide ourselves. When God hides Himself, it is only that He refuses to allow men to find Him, “although He is not far from any one of us” (Acts 17:27). Job was one who understood that God does not go anywhere when He is hidden. Job desperately searched for God but could not find Him; still, he knew that God was close by, watching everything that was happening:

Job 23

8. I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him;

9. on the left hand where He is working, but I cannot behold Him; He is hiding Himself on the right hand so that I cannot see Him.

10a. Still, He knows how it is with me.

In the Old Testament, whenever God did not bless or protect someone, it was said that God had “hidden His face” from him (e.g., Mic. 3:4), and Job felt the helplessness of having God hide His face: “When He orders peace, who can make trouble? And when He hides His face, who can see Him, whether it be a nation or a single man?” (Job 34:29).

On the other hand, when God blessed and protected a person, it was said that God’s face was shining on him. This is why the high priest’s blessing of Israel concerned itself mostly with God’s face being turned toward the nation:

Numbers 6

24. Jehovah bless you and keep you.

25. Jehovah make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you.

26. Jehovah lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

The greatest expression of God’s countenance shining on mankind was when He sent His Son to rescue man from sin and death. This is why Paul spoke of the revelation of the Son as he did, saying, “The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness has shone in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Cor. 4:6). Regardless of how brightly God’s face shined on anyone before the Son purchased God’s life for men, God’s true character remained unknown to them. If those who now have God’s kind of life know God only in part (1Cor. 13:12), then those who lived before the Spirit came did not know God at all, and neither does anyone know Him now who has not received the Spirit.

But not only they, for until the Son of God’s existence was revealed, angels also had no knowledge of God. Indeed, even now, after the Son has been revealed, angels still do not possess the knowledge of God that believers possess because they still do not

have God's kind of life. "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God" has not shone in their hearts, and it never will because God chose to bless humans, not angels, with His kind of life.

Concealing and Revealing What God Says

Even when God speaks, the meaning of His words will remain hidden unless He reveals it, as happened regularly to the ancient prophets when they spoke of the coming Christ:

1Peter 1

10. Prophets who prophesied of the grace that has come to you searched for and diligently inquired about this salvation,
11. trying to determine who or what time the Spirit of Christ which was in them was indicating when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and of the glory that followed.

Many times throughout history, God has spoken and not been understood. To this day, the gospel of Christ is proclaimed openly, and yet, it remains a hidden thing to millions. That is because God gives understanding to some, and not to others. When He called Isaiah to be a prophet, God said this to him:

Isaiah 6

9. And he said, "Go! And say to this people, 'You will certainly hear, but you will by no means understand. And you will certainly see, but you will by no means perceive.'
10. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears dull, and make their eyes blind, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and repent, and He heal them!"

If we understand anything God has ever said, it is because He has given it to us, and we owe Him praise for it. God must help us to understand what He says. Without that, hearing God's word or seeing a vision will bear no fruit in us. As previously noted, people all over the earth see the heavens every day without under-

standing that the heavens declare the glory of God (Ps. 19:1). Only some see that glorious truth because only to some has it been given to see it.

Concealing and Revealing the Son

It is astonishing enough to learn that from the foundation of the world, God had kept all men, even the wisest and holiest of them, from knowing about His Son, but that heavenly beings were also kept in the dark about the Son challenges some common conceptions about life in heaven. Nevertheless, it is true that no creature anywhere knew about the Son until God's appointed time came:

Ephesians 3

3. By revelation, the mystery was made known to me, even as I briefly wrote before,
4. concerning which you are able, as you read, to perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ,
5. which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men as it is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.
- ...
8. To me, the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach among the Gentiles the incomprehensible richness of Christ
9. and to enlighten all men as to what is the plan of the mystery that has been hidden from the Aeons by the God who created all things through Jesus Christ.

The Greek word *aeon* can refer to a long period of time, but in this passage from Ephesians, it refers to supernatural beings.³⁴ Paul's teaching concerning these Aeons is continued in the next verses, and it reveals the astonishing truth that heavenly beings, the Aeons, learn wisdom by watching those who live in God's kind of life:

³⁴ Extra-biblical examples abound. For one, an early Christian funerary inscription called the "Flavia Sophe Inscription" declares that the departed woman desired to look upon the faces of the Aeons. And for another, "The Gospel of Truth", part of the Nag Hammadi library, uses *Aeon* repeatedly in reference to divine beings, including God Himself (19.1; 23.1; 24.15).

Ephesians 3

10. So that through the Assembly *of God*, the multifaceted wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities among heavenly beings,
11. according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Notice that in verse 10, Paul made the stunning statement that the Aeons actually learn of the wisdom of God *through God's chosen people*. This is in harmony with what Peter said concerning angels, to wit, that the angels, being ignorant of our life in Christ, are curious about it: “[The prophets prophesied of] things which are now reported to you by those who preach the gospel to you by the holy Spirit sent from heaven, into which things angels long to look” (1Pet. 1:12b).

It is a remarkable concept, that those who walk in the life of God are living revelations of the Son to heavenly beings as well as to people on earth! Nevertheless, it is a doctrine that Paul was sure of, and he repeated it in his letter to the saints at Colossae:

Colossians 1

25. I was made a minister by the commission of God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God,
26. the mystery that was hidden from the Aeons and from generations *of men*, but now is revealed to His saints,
27. by whom God has willed to make known among the Gentiles what is the richness of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

So, even the creatures of heaven were kept in the dark about the existence of a Son until “the fullness of time”, when the Father shared His life with men and revealed him. This must be why Paul made the arresting statement that the Son (here called “God”) was seen by angels only when humans saw him, that is, when the Son took on a visible, earthly body: “The mystery of godliness is great: God was made manifest in the flesh, was justified by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the Gentiles, was believed on in the world, and was taken up into glory” (1Tim. 3:16).

If the angels had seen and known the Son before he came to earth, Paul would not have told Timothy that the Son “was seen by angels” after he was “manifest in the flesh”. But if the Son was revealed when he took on a fleshly body, then what Paul said makes sense. And beyond that, when men and angels were allowed to see the Son, they were also being allowed, for the first time ever, to see the Father as He really is (Jn. 14:9).

Where the Son Was First Revealed

When “the fullness of time” came, the Father did not summon the multitudes of heavenly beings and somberly announce, “It is now time for me to tell you all something important that I have kept hidden from you from the beginning.” Instead, He chose to reveal the existence of His Son first to men on earth.

John the Baptizer was chosen and anointed to introduce the Son, and that alone made John so great that no other person in history was greater than he (Mt. 11:11; Lk. 7:28). But being ignorant of the Son, John did not know whom to introduce. God had to give him a sign to look for: a dove that would descend from heaven and light upon the one chosen to be the Messiah. Later, when Jesus came to John to be baptized, John saw the sign that God had given him. He heard God’s voice speak from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mt. 3:17), and John cried out,

John 1

32. I saw the Spirit descending from heaven in the form of a dove, and it remained on him.
33. And I did not know him, but the One who sent me to baptize with water told me, “Upon whomever you see the Spirit descend and remain on him, he is the one who baptizes with holy Spirit.”

34. And I have seen, and I testify that this is the Son of God!³⁵

John's baptism was not an introduction to baptism; it was an introduction to Christ, the Baptizer who would follow John (Jn. 1:30–31). Likewise, the Father's voice that came out of heaven at Jesus' baptism was not an introduction to Jesus. Mary's son had already been introduced to men by angels singing and praising God in the night sky above Bethlehem as they announced his birth. The Father's voice at the Jordan River was an introduction to *His* Son, not Mary's, and He was speaking to man, not angels.

The Hidden Son in Heaven

The controlling factor in all of life, in heaven and on earth, is that God hides everything until He decides to reveal it. Only with that knowledge can we perceive how it could be that from the beginning, the Son dwelt with the Father in heaven without angels knowing who the Son was. But then, being in the presence of God's Son and not knowing him is exactly what a couple of Jesus' disciples experienced after Jesus rose from the dead:

Luke 24

15. And it came to pass that while they talked and reasoned together, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them.

16. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

It has already been shown that the Son's existence was hidden from heavenly beings as well as from humans. He was a mystery, Paul said, "hidden from the Aeons [heavenly beings] and from generations of men" (Col. 1:26). Likewise, to the Ephesians, Paul wrote that throughout all previous generations, the Son was "hidden from the Aeons by the God who created all things through

³⁵ John was a prophet speaking by the Spirit. He knew nothing about the pre-existent Son of God. As has been noted, the term "Son of God" was used by Jews as a term of respect for an especially anointed man, the Messiah, not as an acknowledgement of the Son's pre-existence with the Father. Even the sect that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls, although saying that God would father the Messiah (1Q28a), spoke of the Messiah only as a man. See "Son of God" in the Appendix.

Jesus Christ” (Eph. 3:9). It is difficult for us on this side of Pentecost to imagine the Son of God being anywhere without being known, for we picture him as the glorified Lord of heaven whom John saw:

Revelation 1

13. In the midst of the seven lampstands was one like a son of man, wearing a robe extending to his feet, and girded about the chest with a golden sash.
14. His head and his hair were white as wool, like snow, and his eyes were like a flame of fire,
15. and his feet were like fine brass glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters.

But that is not how Jesus looked while he walked among us; he looked just like one of us. Whether or not the Son, before he came to earth, shone in heaven the way John saw him shine in Revelation is completely irrelevant. God’s will is all that matters, and until He sent His Son to earth, it was not His will that anyone should know him. The Son may have dwelt among heaven’s inhabitants as a gloriously beautiful creature, but then, he may have dwelt among them as a rather ordinary-looking being. That is certainly how it was for the Son when he was on earth, for the human body that the Father prepared for His Son was unattractive and awkward (Isa. 53:2–3). Regardless of whether he dwelt among the angels in majesty or was not seen by them at all, the reason the Son was unknown to them is that the Father did not allow them to know him. The Son was hidden whether he was seen or not, for God had determined to keep His Son a secret, and the Son’s visibility in heaven was not relevant to the issue. The Father’s Son was the Father’s secret, and until He revealed His secret, that is all there was to the matter.

Concealing Angels

God hides His angels. God is hiding angels (and other spiritual beings, good and evil) from our eyes this very moment. His angels are always near, watching over us, but we see them only when He allows us to see them. Jesus taught that those who are newly born of God have angels that are especially attentive to the Father for

their sakes: “Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I tell you that in heaven, their angels are always watching the face of my Father who is in heaven” (Mt. 18:10).

David said that unseen angels from God are stationed around all who fear Him, to protect and deliver them (Ps. 34:7). If our heavenly Father were a “publicity hound”, He would let us know about all the trouble from which His protecting angels save us. But our Father, as Jesus demonstrated, is “meek and lowly”. He hides from us not only His protecting angels but also most of what those angels protect us from. I suspect that what we are saved from daily would overwhelm us if we knew about it. Besides, we know of plenty for which to praise God without knowing everything He is doing for us.

It may be that God keeps certain angels, or information about them, hidden from other angels as well as from men. After all, Jesus told John in Revelation that in the end, each of his saints will be given a stone with a name on it which no one will know except the one to whom the stone is given (Rev. 2:17). Both Michael and Gabriel were allowed to reveal their names (Dan. 10:13, 21; Lk. 1:19, 26), and the angel named Abaddon is mentioned in Revelation 9:11. But of the myriads of angels that exist, they are the only ones whose names are revealed in Scripture.³⁶ The rest are like the angel who visited Manoah, who refused to divulge his name:

Judges 13

17. And Manoah said to the angel of Jehovah, “What is your name, so that when your sayings come to pass, we may do you honor?”
18. And the angel of Jehovah said to him, “Why do you ask for my name, seeing it is secret?”

Even if God opens our eyes to see an angel, He must still reveal to us that it is an angel that we are seeing. Angels do not have wings. They look human and are generally the size of humans (Rev. 21:17). Because God does not always reveal to us that an-

³⁶ Apocrypha excepted. Satan’s name is also revealed, but as I said before, he is not an angel. He is a cherub, the only cherub whose name is in the Bible.

gels are in our presence, “some have unwittingly entertained angels” (Heb. 13:2), and I suspect this has happened more than any of us know.

Concealing the Saints

God hides His people. He can hide them physically, as when He physically carried the young priest Ezekiel from Babylon to Jerusalem to let him observe the wickedness of his fellow Jews. God did not allow anyone in Jerusalem to see Ezekiel standing in their midst, watching their idolatrous activities (Ezek. 8–11). God also hid Jeremiah and his scribe, Baruch, when the wicked King Jehoiakim wanted to arrest them (Jer. 36:26). And several times, God hid Jesus from outraged mobs who were determined to kill him before the appointed time. The first instance took place after Jesus’ first and only sermon in his hometown of Nazareth:

Luke 4

28. When they heard these things, everybody in the synagogue was filled with rage,
29. and they rose up and threw him out of the city, and they led him to the brow of the mountain on which their city was built, to throw him off the cliff.
30. But he passed through their midst, and went away.

Beyond this, God hides His children spiritually. They are now kings and priests in the kingdom of God (Rev. 1:6), but the world does not and cannot acknowledge them as such. Paul longed for the day when the identity of God’s children will finally be revealed to the world (Rom. 8:19), which will happen when they take their place in God’s order and reign with the Son over the earth. The apostle John also spoke of God’s children being hidden from the world and of the coming revelation of who they really are: “We are now children of God, but what we shall be is not yet made manifest. But we know that when it is made manifest, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1Jn. 3:2).

The world does not know the children of God because the world does not know God (1Jn. 3:1). The lives of God’s children are “hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3), and no one outside the “secret place of the Most High” (Ps. 91:1) can see them as they

really are, for under God's wing, they are kept safe from the base designs of the world: "You will hide them in the covert of your presence from the schemes of man; you will hide them secretly in your pavilion from the strife of tongues" (Ps. 31:20).

David called God "my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower" (Ps. 18:2), "a rock of refuge for me, to which I may continually resort" (Ps. 71:3), "my high tower and my way of escape in the day of my distress" (Ps. 59:16), and "my hiding place and my shield" (Ps. 119:114). The world, and most of Israel, did not understand David's relationship with God, especially as it existed after God forgave David of his adultery and murder. Nevertheless, to know where to go to be hidden from sin and death is great wisdom, and David had it.

Concealing Our Fellowship in the Spirit

The things of God are a mystery to men who do not possess God's kind of life, for their hearts are covered with the blinding veil of the flesh and its nature, which can be removed only if they turn to Christ (2Cor. 3:14–16). Our heavenly Father has so completely hidden the fellowship which He enjoys with His children that its very existence is denied by the world; nevertheless, it is real and it is sweet. Everything about the life which God shares with those who love His Son is a mystery to creatures who do not have His kind of life, whether they be plants, animals, angels, or men.

The term "mystery" is repeatedly used in the New Testament in reference to the life that God and His children share. Jesus spoke of "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 13:11), John wrote of "the mystery of God" (Rev. 10:7), and Paul mentioned the mystery of God's will (Eph. 1:9), "the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19), "the mystery of Christ" (Col. 4:3), "the mystery of the faith" (1Tim. 3:9), and "the mystery of godliness" (1Tim. 3:16).

The very thought of God excluding us from the fellowship of His life is terrifying, but it is a daily reality for millions on earth as they plod along, knowing nothing of the kind of life they are missing. Men without God are "like the beasts that perish" (Ps. 49:12, 20), completely ignorant of God's kind of life and devoid of desire

for it. But fellowship with the Father and the Son holds so much promise and provides so many benefits that the dearest hope of the apostles was that the saints would enjoy that holy, spiritual harmony to the fullest extent:

Philippians 2

1. If, then, *there be* any comfort in Christ, if any solace of love, if any fellowship in spirit, if any tender affections and mercies,
2. make my joy complete, that you think the same thing, having the same love, as united souls, thinking one thing.

1Corinthians 1

10. I urge you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there not be divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in the same mind and in the same judgment.

1John 1

3. That which we have seen and heard we are showing you, so that you may also have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Fellowship with the Father and the Son means to feel their feelings and to think their thoughts. It means to understand God because your spirit has been made like His. This unbelieving world is scornful of the notion that such unity is possible, but it is the will of God that His children show the world that such fellowship with Him is real. This perfect harmony in God's family is the very thing for which Jesus prayed after his last meal with his disciples (Jn. 17:20–23), and it is a fundamental purpose for God giving us His Spirit (cf. Zeph. 3:9).

Our fellowship with God and with one another makes for an irresistible testimony to His Son. For his disciples, Jesus earnestly prayed to the Father “that they might be one, just as we are one . . . so that the world might know that you sent me” (Jn. 17:22b–23). The fact that believers are divided and are not serving God togeth-

er as one is a testimony to the world against Jesus, not for him. It is a great reproach on his name.

The disunity of God's New Testament family on earth may be the greatest tragedy in history, even surpassing the tragedy of the original fall in the garden of Eden. In that first case of sin, Adam and Eve did not have God's kind of life within them to teach and guide them. But what excuse can we who have God's life offer for our divisions? Moreover, we are all less than we could be in Christ because of division, and only God knows how much less. If we are wise, we will do as the Spirit advised and mingle our worship with fear (Ps. 2:11), lest on the Day of Judgment, God find any of us responsible for the divisions that exist among His children.

We should note that even though Jesus said that unity among believers would help others to believe in him, that does not deny the Father's determining role in souls coming to believe in the Son (Jn. 6:44). The Father will use the unity of His people to convict sinners of their need of Him, but He still must create the desire within those sinners for fellowship with Him, no matter what they see. Even if all God's children walk perfectly together in the Spirit, sinners cannot desire the saints' sweet, mysterious fellowship with the Father and the Son unless the Father touches their hearts.

