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GOD'S GOOD PLEASURE

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL- As we begin to understand Paul's gospel, and to behold the most gracious commission that God gave unto him for us, we stand in awe and our hearts leap for joy. The ministry of Paul is not a continuation of the ministry that Jesus had when He came to earth; it is a totally new branch of the ministry of Christ. *"Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers."* (Rom.15:8) Jesus came to minister to the Israel as a nation, but they rejected Him, and they still reject Him today. On the other hand, Paul was called to reveal Christ, *(the risen Lord)*, among the Gentiles. *"And again Esaias, (Isaiah), saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, (David's father), and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust."* (Rom.15:12) Isaiah prophesied that Christ would be trusted by the Gentiles, and that He would rule over them. The rule of Christ over the Gentiles establishes a new covenant.

The mysteries that were revealed to Paul were earthshaking then, and they are still now. The religious leaders of the Jews, were a very snobbish, clannish, self-righteous group of people. They rejected Jesus Christ as Messiah, and so it was impossible for them to believe that their God would have anything to do with the Gentiles they called dogs. Yet, Paul's gospel is clear; not only the Israelites, but the Gentiles and all men, would in time be gathered unto Christ. *"That in the dispensation of the fulness of time, he might gather together in one **all things**, (men), **in Christ**, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him."* (Eph.1:10) Paul suffered greatly, for preaching this mystery as the Lord had revealed it to him. Nevertheless, he declared, *"Whereof I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of the saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."* (Eph.3:7-9) Indeed the riches of Christ are unsearchable, and the gospel of Paul is rich in the knowledge of these mysteries. Paul was apprehended to gather a people called the church, and to reveal Christ unto them. Paul's gospel had been kept secret from the foundation of the world. None of the apostles knew about this until Paul began to preach it. It seems that most of Christianity today, receives only part of Paul's gospel. Many, categorically reject the part that Christ is gathering all things unto Himself.

GOD'S GOOD PLEASURE- In a letter to the saints, Paul opens a whole new view into God's plan and purpose for His beloved creation. He reminds us that the previous covenant, under the Law of Moses, is no longer in effect, *"In that he saith a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away."* (Heb.8:13) Some Christians lean toward rekindling the traditions of Judaism; the same attachment to traditions that worked in Peter as he sought to circumcise new believers in Christ. Jesus sealed the new covenant in His blood. *"...This cup is the new testament, (covenant), in my blood: this do ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."* (I Cor.11:25-26) Jesus said to do this till He comes, and He came back, to fill His disciples and believers with Himself, no longer in the flesh, but in His Holy Spirit. We are not waiting for Jesus to come; He is here. We are waiting for His appearing again in the world, as He arises from His secret place in His called-out people.

God's will is also a mystery which Paul's gospel reveals. *"Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself."* (Eph.1:9) The mystery of God's will and purpose, which is His good pleasure, is not about harsh judgment, or wrath; it is about setting up His Kingdom in the world as it is in heaven. Jesus told His close disciples, *"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* (Lk.12:32). The exclusive religious order of Pharisees and Sadducees could not conceive that the Gentiles are part of God's chosen nation, and today most denominational Christians are greatly offended when told that in the dispensation of the fulness of time, "all things," meaning all men, women and children of every race and creed will be gathered into Christ. They will all know Jesus, and find their place, their function, their calling in Him, and will work together in unison. The entire Kingdom of God is made up of "little children." Jesus said, *"Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God."* (Lk.18:16)

Jesus was not speaking only of young people; He was including all who were still immature and unaware of the things of God, those who had to be led as little children, those who were innocent, and ignorant of Jesus the Son of God. These are not forbidden to dwell in God's Kingdom, but the sons who are heirs of God, inherit the Kingdom; it is given to them to take care of. Jesus said that when the Son of Man comes, *"Then shall the King say unto them at his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* (Matt.25:34) The Kingdom has been prepared in the sons and for the sons. When all creation is gathered into Christ, then it is God's good pleasure to turn over the dominion to His Christ, Jesus the Head and His entire body seated together with Him at God's right hand. (See Eph.1:20 and 2:6) The first Adam was given dominion over all the earth, but Jesus put on the nature of that first Adam man, (humanity) and took that man to the death of the cross. He then arose as the Last Adam, (new man), the one who has dominion over the new heaven and new earth, which is God's Kingdom in earth as it is in heaven.

In Christ, there are many dimensions of life. *"In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am ye may be also."* (Jn.14:2-3) The Kingdom of God has many dimensions, but Jesus was telling the disciples that He was preparing them to abide where He is in Father's house, *"I go to prepare a place for you..."* He began to prepare us when His Holy Spirit came to dwell in us. He is preparing our spirits and souls to dwell in eternal bodies of glory, and to inherit the Kingdom. *"Now this I say brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither does corruption inherit incorruption."* (I Cor.15:50) He is preparing us to rule and reign with Him over Father's creation, with great love and godly righteousness so that all beings might live in everlasting peace and joy, doing what they were created to do best for the good of all.

By His Holy Spirit, Jesus is turning the desires of our souls away from the appetites of the flesh, and drawing us unto Himself. This is why the pleasures of this world are losing their appeal, and are becoming strange to us. More and more, our spirits and souls are being drawn to Him and desiring to know Him, and to do the things that please Him. He is changing our earthly desires and interests, including our religious activities, and moving us to a higher place in the Spirit. A song comes back to mind, *"I walk in the heavenlies with Jesus, all earthly things left behind..."* Paul writes about what *"...the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory... wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principalities and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come...And he hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."* (Eph.1:17,20,21 and Eph.2:6-7).

God dwells in eternity where there is no beginning nor end, but here on earth, events are measured by duration of time. Until the fulness of times has come, and all of God's creation is complete, there will still be ages to come. We have been in this current age since the times of Noah, and now we are entering into the next age. We see all the signs pointing to God closing this age by removing the systems of man's rule, and getting the world ready for the next age. *"Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will O God. He taketh away the first that he may establish the second."* (Heb.10:9) God destroyed the temple, and took away the law of burnt offerings and sacrifices, to establish the Lamb of God and the coming of His Kingdom. Today, God has raised up the destroyer to destroy the works of the Devil and bring down the kingdoms of men, and bring in the Kingdom of His Christ. *"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."* (Rev.11:15)

DESTROYING THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL- *"He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."* (1Jn3:8) So who is the devil whose works are being destroyed? Many theories and revelations have been written about who the Devil might be, but one thing is certain, he is powerful and his works are found everywhere in the world. Jesus told the Pharisees, *"Ye are of your father the Devil."* So the devil expresses his shrewd, deceptive, cunning, scheming, insidious, evil nature through man. Have we not seen this in politicians, sales representatives and all who wheel and deal to promote themselves in the world? Have we not seen it within our own selves? Jesus reveals a time when *"Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out of the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death."* (Rev.12:7-11)

It is clear, the old serpent, the dragon, the Devil, Satan are one and the same; he is a spirit in many disguises, and he takes over man's mind to project his evil nature and do his dirty work. God created him, *"I form light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things."* (Isa.45:7) It was God's purpose to create the Devil, and it is Christ's purpose to overcome him and to destroy his works. The Devil is the spirit who deceives the whole world, he cannot speak the truth and there is no truth in him. As the serpent of old, he deceived man's soul, (Eve,) then he grew stronger and larger and became the dragon, even the red dragon, (filled with rage), and planted himself in the "heavens," (mind), of the whole world. It was in heaven that Michael and his angels declared war on the Devil; so the devil was found in heaven. What "heaven" is this ?

HEAVEN OR HEAVENLY PLACES- Paul writes that God has blessed us, *"...with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."* (Eph.1:3). He says that God hath raised up Christ from the dead, *"...and made him sit at his own right hand in heavenly places."* (Eph.1:20). So God sits in heavenly places, and so does Christ. Then we read that He *"...hath raised us up together; and made us sit together in heavenly places with Christ Jesus."* (Eph.2:6). So God, Christ and the saints are all found in heavenly places, *"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."* The ESV translation may be easier to grasp, *"So that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places."* (Eph.3:10) So the heavenly places are

where Christ sits and rules at God's right hand. These same heavenly places are also where rulers and authorities of all kinds control men, women, children and even animals' minds everywhere. Some are helpful and some are deadly. Indeed, heavenly places are our own minds, as well as the minds that are set to rule and control all peoples. Beginning with the least of us, to the most powerful, we are all ruled by the mind on our shoulders. It is God's intent to display the splendor of His wisdom and glory to every mind in the universe, throughout the ages to come. For this purpose He has chosen, and called unto Himself, a people whom He raised up in Christ, and filled with His glory.

We conclude that the heavenly places are not found geographically, or in space somewhere; they are the spirits and souls, that is to say the minds and hearts of all beings. These heavenly places are where the Devil and his angels come as angels of light, to convince the people of their lies, that they might do their dirty works. The same heavenly places are also where Christ sits at God's right hand; and through faith, we sit with Him ruling over our own thoughts. Heavenly places are where Michael the Archangel fights this Devil, to cast him out of the minds of every individual in the world. Paul explains, *"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."* (Rom.8:6-8) *"...but we have the mind of Christ."* (I Cor.2:16)

John's vision of Michael and his angels casting the Devil out of heaven, is akin to Paul exhorting, *"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."* (II Cor.10:5). Christ and the saints are indeed overcoming Satan and his angels who continually torment them, and accuse them in the "heavenlies" of their minds. "We are never good enough, God is angry with us, we must do more to serve God..." Guilt and condemnation are two of the primary tools that the Devil uses against us. We overcome by the blood of the Lamb, daily embracing the death of the cross in our souls, and by the word of our testimony, as we declare our faith in Christ Jesus to ourselves first, and as we close the gate to the intruders and tormentors.

I once had a dream that demonstrates the power of Satan in our own flesh, *"I was running as fast as I could because a huge serpent was after me. I kept looking back to make sure I was gaining ground and getting away, but then I saw that a clear glass panel had been raised to stop him. I could see his huge fat body pushing hard against the glass. This snake was not only huge, but his skin was not scaly; it was bare flesh with all the blood vessels visible. It was so repulsive, ugly and fearful too."* Satan uses the desires and needs of man's flesh, to control our minds and take over our lives. His spirit is embedded in our flesh through our carnal minds. But our Lord has raised a barrier against him, to enable us to flee from him. We do this when we take authority over the thoughts of our minds, and stand in the nature and name of Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote, *"Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, THINK ON THESE THINGS. Those things, which ye have both learned and received, and heard, and seen me do; and the God of peace shall be with you."* (Phil.4:8-9) We can be led by the "carnal mind," which is the "mind of the flesh," or by the mind of Christ; we still straddle-the-fence between the two. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but **be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God."* (Rom.12:1-2)

Because He is love, *Angèle Caporaso* better known as *Jackie*