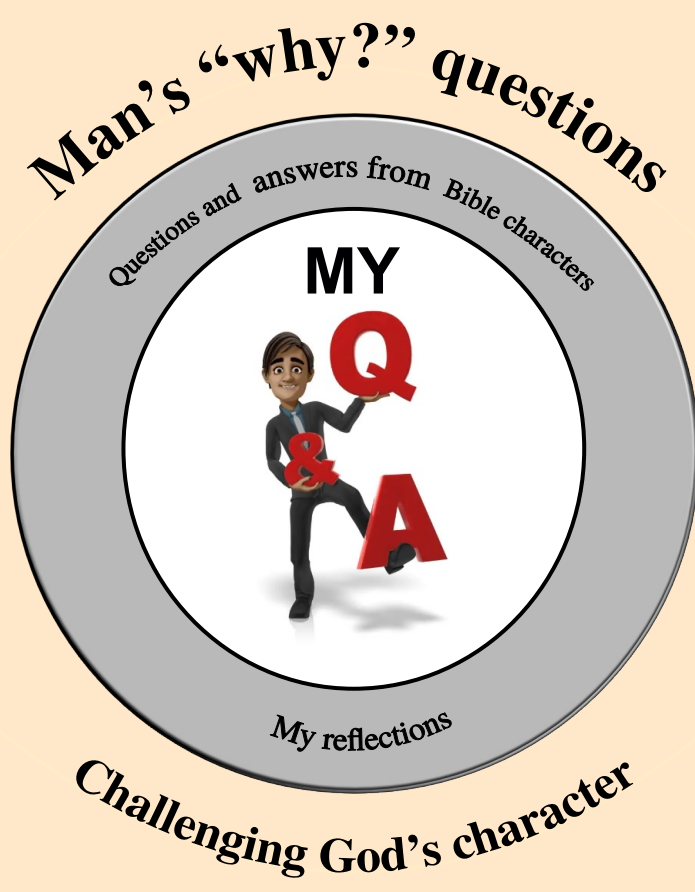


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Following the previous paper on God's "why" questions, this MyQ&A 12 paper investigates some of Man's "why" questions addressed to God. Why would God, or man, ask "why" questions? In the first MyQ&A paper, The art of asking questions, I said that the purpose was to get the right answers. Accordingly, I suggested, questions may be investigative, interpretive, or evaluative. Specifically, investigative or exploratory questions determine what are the facts. Then interpretive questions seek to understand the facts, explain what the facts mean that can be supported with evidence from the facts. Evaluative questions seek to determine the importance of the facts.

On the basis of the above paradigm, then "why" questions are in the interpretive category seeking to understand the facts, explain what the facts mean that can be supported with evidence from the facts. I've selected a few of the Man's "why" questions directed to God, and Jesus Christ.

1. Why is this happening to me?

21 Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife because she was childless. The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. 22 But the children struggled inside her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she asked the Lord, 23 and the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples will be separated from within you. One people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger" (Genesis 25:21-23).

The childless couple, Isaac, and his wife Rebekah, prayed for a child, and got two. The pregnancy was obviously a rough one as the two children struggled within her. The Hebrew word used here means 'to crack in pieces', and suggests a violent struggle that was out of the ordinary. Rebekah wanted to know what was happening to her, but the question itself reflects a growing despair (Net Bible Notes).

Be careful what you ask for! My wife had identical twin boys, and she has always said that she wouldn't wish twins on anybody. The physical, and psychological toll is enormous, which must have been the case with Rebekah hence her, "*Why is this happening to me?*" Could it be that she sensed that the struggle inside her was a portent of a struggle outside of her in days to come?

Two nations (*gowy*) and two peoples (*l'om*), are represented by these twins. *Gowy* most commonly denotes a corporate, sociopolitical entity with boundaries, customs, and a shared destiny. *L'om* refers to a self-contained community or group.

One people will be stronger than the other. 'Stronger' in the Hebrew Bible is 'courage', and is almost always connected to God being with us. Here is an example from Moses: "*Be strong and have courage, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the One who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you*" (Deuteronomy 31:6).

Then the Lord said *the older will serve the younger*. 'Serving' (*'abad*) means to work, to serve or to be a serf ([Abarim Publications](#)). It is also the word for slavery, which is involuntary, submissive, subservient service.

In sum, Esau served Jacob by giving up his birthright for a bowl of lentil stew, which initiated the reversal of the norm of primogeniture where the younger serves the older as God had prearranged before they were born. It was an act of God's foreordination (Romans 9:10-13).

2. Why have you made me like this?

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10 Not only that, but when Rebekah had conceived children...11 even before they were born or had done anything good or bad (so that God's purpose in election would stand, not by works but by his calling) 12 it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger," 13 just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

14 What shall we say then? Is there injustice with God? Absolutely not! 15 For he says to Moses: "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." 16 So then, it does not depend on human desire or exertion, but on God who shows mercy. 17 For the scripture says to Pharaoh: "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may demonstrate my power in you, and that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth." 18 So then, God has mercy on whom he chooses to have mercy, and he hardens whom he chooses to harden.

*19 You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who has ever resisted his will?" 20 But who indeed are you—a mere human being—to talk back to God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, "**Why have you made me like this?**"*

21 Has the potter no right to make from the same lump of clay one vessel for special use and another for ordinary use? 22 But what if God, willing to demonstrate his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the objects of wrath prepared for destruction? 23 And what if he is willing to make known the wealth of his glory on the objects of mercy that he has prepared beforehand for glory— 24 even us, whom he has called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? (Romans 9:10-24).

This segment naturally follows on from the twins of Isaac and Rebekah. The answer to the imaginary question, "**Why have you made me like this?**" from the inanimate pottery, is easy enough if we transfer it from the world of analogy to the world of the living Creator and creature. Then the objections that might be made about God's sovereignty, such as injustice, His authority to make some humans one way, and another lot another way must disappear.

Nevertheless, the implications of the surrounding explanation are difficult to swallow for lots of folks who can't get round the obstacle of what seems inherently unfair of God to choose some for good, and others for ill. It's a mystery to humans, and we have to leave it in that realm and accept the reality of it.

3. God, why do you hide your face?

***Why have you made me your target? Why do you not pardon my transgression? Why do you hide your face, and count me as your enemy?** (Job 7:20-21, 13:24).*

Why, why, why a despairing Job questions God? It looks to me that Job is blaming God for his suffering, but His questions arise from His own imagination, or assumptions. The truth, which Job did not know, was that the architect of his tragedy was the Adversary, but God proscribed Satan. That is, He put limits on what harm Satan planned for Job (Job 1-2). However, Job knew nothing of what was going on in the heavenly court as the Adversary was dragged before God to give an account of his previous whereabouts and what he was doing.

If only Job knew what God said about him, he would not have asked these questions. God described Job as His servant, and that *there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and turns away from evil* (Job 1:6, 22, 2:3) So, God was not his enemy, was not hiding from him, found no transgression in him that needed pardoning, and had not made him a target.

On the contrary, it was Satan who targeted Job to prove his thesis that Job was only good because God blessed him with good things. Take away the good things, and Job will turn bad. Well, Satan put the blowtorch to his feet - took away his animals, his children, his house, and virtually his wife. We all know the result. Job didn't bend away from being upright, and the Adversary's proposition was proved wrong. Job stands tall, but his wife and Satan are humiliated into disappearance from the tale.

3. God, why do you hide your face? continued

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Job's friends tried to give an explanation of Job's suffering, which Job rejected. Then the Lord took over and spoke to Job directly from the eye of a violent storm. This storm was something like a tempest, or hurricane associated with the advancing divine glory, either to judge the guilty or protect His innocent people (Ezekiel 1:4; Nahum 1:3; Zechariah 9:14).

The Lord says to Job: “Why do you confuse the issue? Why do you talk without knowing what you’re talking about? Pull yourself together, Job! Up on your feet! Stand tall! I have some questions for you, and I want some straight answers” (Job 38:1-3).

Up to this point it has been Job who has been demanding answers of the Almighty, and seeking to know why His purpose is to destroy an innocent man. He received no answers. God remained silent for nobody can make demands of Him. However, the tables are now turned, and it’s the Almighty asking the questions and demanding answers. The word ‘answered’ (‘anah) means to “testify against” as in 15:6 where ‘Job’s mouth condemned him, and his own lips testified against him’. The Almighty is star witness against Job who is in the dock.

After the Lord chides Job for talking without **knowing** what he is talking about (38:1-3), He proceeded to show how little he knows with seven ‘**know**’ questions about creation before Job existed. God then followed that up with a threefold test to discover what Job can do, to see if he is as strong as God:

Test 1. Catch the wicked and capture them in the grave (40:9-14). God says that if Job can do that, he would acknowledge that he is strong enough to save himself. God’s monologue with Job implies that he can’t catch the wicked and capture them in the grave.

Test 2. Catch and capture Behemoth (40:15-24).

Test 3. Catch and capture Leviathan (41:1-34).

Job learns from the Lord’s reference to the fearsome animals living in his day, which he cannot control but God can, that he must look to God rather than to his own assessment of his circumstances. Job needs to trust the Sovereign Lord of the Universe’s omniscience, and omnipotence, who will do as He pleases without question.

That is, don't question sovereignty, rather accept and trust Him. Job's mistake was wallowing in his misery instead of wondering in God's majesty. Job repented of his mistake and in his word, *I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes* (Job 42:1-6).

I note throughout an important behaviour of God to follow. God never criticised Job to others, rather, He only commended Him. Any criticism He had for Job, He said it to His face. A great rule to follow.

For me, the striking thing about God's blessing that's never mentioned is this: At the end, He called Him: **my servant Job** four times, double the number before his suffering began (Job 1:8, 2:3). Job has doubled his spiritual growth and dedication to the Lord through his suffering. And, this doubling of God’s honour means much more than the doubling of his material prosperity.

4. Why lay the burden of this entire people on me?

10 Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, everyone at the door of his tent; and when the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly, Moses was also displeased. 11 And Moses said to the Lord, “Why have you afflicted your servant? Why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of this entire people on me?

12 Did I conceive this entire people? Did I give birth to them, that you should say to me, ‘Carry them in your arms, as a foster father bears a nursing child,’ to the land that you swore to their fathers? 13 From where shall I get meat to give to this entire people, for they cry to me, ‘Give us meat, that we may eat!’ 14 I am not able to bear this entire people alone, because it is too heavy for me! 15 But if you are going to deal with me like this, then kill me immediately. If I have found favor in your sight then do not let me see my trouble” (Numbers 11:10-15).

4. Leadership continued

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Israel was a nation of complainers, whinging against the food and water God so graciously and miraculously provided. 'Why did we ever come out of Egypt', and 'Who will give us meat to eat, for life was good for us in Egypt' they lamented? The Lord was greatly angered by their complaints, and Moses was broken to pieces over it. See full story in Numbers 11.

The nation's complaining is not the only sad element to this story. What is also sad is Moses blaming God for it, says that God has caused him harm, has not treated him graciously, and has put the burden of leading the nation and caring for their needs on him, and it's too heavy. Further, if God is going to treat Him like this going forward, Moses would prefer to be dead.

For Moses, leadership is too hard at this point. But, God is gracious to Moses, has heard his anguish and gave 70 others to bear the leadership with him. Nevertheless, the Lord was not so forgiving to the complaining nation that He rejected Him, and His anger burned against the people, and He struck the people with a very great plague (v33).

5. Why bring us to this land to die?

Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become booty; would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" (Numbers 14:3).

Oh yes! The good old days are better. This outburst followed the report of the 12 spies who went to spy out the land. Of these, 10 persuaded the nation that they could not conquer the land because its inhabitants were too great. Only Joshua and Caleb made the case that the land is an exceedingly good land, that the Lord will bring the nation into it, only do not rebel against Him, and do not fear the people of the land, for the Lord is with us.

But the whole congregation threatened to stone them (v5-10). Really! For Israel at this point the bad old days of Egypt's slavery and cruelty were 'the good old days'. How did their perceptions become all twisted and wrong? Nevertheless, while the Lord forgave the sin of the nation, His judgment came upon the the people who had seen His glory and the signs that He did in Egypt and in the wilderness, who had tested Him ten times and had not obeyed His voice. They would die in the wilderness and the nation would wander around 40 years in it.

6. Why have you given us stubborn hearts?

Lord, why have you allowed us to turn from your path? Why have you given us stubborn hearts so we no longer fear you? return and help us, for we are your servants, the tribes that are your special possession (Isaiah 63:17).

Here we go again blaming God! Rather, Israel's at fault having rejected His grace, so He withdrew it judicially, and made their heart incapable of faith (see Deuteronomy 2:30). The history of Israel from Isaiah 6:1-13 onwards has been one of a gradual judgment of hardening. The great mass are lost, but there will be deliverance for the better part of the nation, which now appeals to the mercy of God, and sighs for deliverance, That is, the divine election of grace cannot perish ([Keil & Delitzsch](#)).

7. Why do the wicked go on living?

7 Why do the wicked go on living. 13 They live out their years in prosperity and go down to the grave in peace. 14 So they say to God, Turn away from us! We do not want to know your ways. 17 How often is the lamp of the wicked extinguished? How often does their misfortune come upon them? How often does God apportion pain to them in his anger? 20 Let his own eyes see his destruction; let him drink of the anger of the Almighty (Job 21:7, 13, 14, 17, 20).

7. Why do the wicked go on living? continued

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Job's perspective on the prosperity of the wicked is the same as other biblical characters too. See also Psalms 37, 73, Deuteronomy 7:10, Ecclesiastes 2:26, Proverbs 11:31, Jeremiah 12:1, Habakkuk 1:3. The prosperity of sinners seems a contradiction to what we expect of God. However, in some ways God treats saints and sinners alike as Jesus said: *He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous* (Matthew 5:45). God treats saints and sinners according to His unquestionable sovereignty.

Job's tragedies were heart rending despite God evaluating him as a blameless man, upright, and one who feared God and turned away from evil. However, the reckoning comes, as verse 20 above asserts: *Let his own eyes see his destruction; let him drink of the anger of the Almighty*. The distinct difference between the righteous and the unrighteous is that, in this life both may experience prosperity and pain, but in the next life it's pain for the unrighteous, and eternal joy for the righteous.

8. Why then did Moses command us?

Unjustifiable divorce 1

3 Then some Pharisees came to him in order to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful to divorce a wife for any reason?" 4 He answered, "Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator made them male and female, 5 and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will be united with his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matthew 19:3-6).

The Pharisees asked was it legitimate to divorce a wife for any reason, a practice that had become increasingly popular among some Pharisees. They had two main views on divorce. Shammai said that Deuteronomy 24:1 limited divorce to sexual immorality. On the other hand, Hillel believed that the verse could mean anything displeasing to the husband. Both lived some time before Jesus.

According to [Lizorkin-Eyzenberg](#) the text is very difficult to make sense of. It may mean something like "nakedness of a thing" such as "sexual immorality" or "sexual uncleanness." The Matthew text above from the Net Bible takes this view. Others see Deuteronomy 24:1 more broadly, translating it as "something indecent" or "something unseemly," suggesting it could refer to any behaviour or circumstance that the husband finds unacceptable, not necessarily sexual. For example, the Jewish Septuagint translates the text as an unseemly or indecent matter. This translation becomes the basis for the "any reason" divorce that Jesus opposes.

Unjustifiable divorce 2

7 They said to him, "Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?" 8 Jesus said to them, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because of your hard hearts, but from the beginning it was not this way" (Matthew 19:7-8).

So, the Lord puts Himself in the Shammai camp leading them to ask the question above. That is, Jesus did not condemn all divorce and remarriage but specifically the divorce and remarriage view propagated by Hillel Pharisees during His time.

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Unjustifiable divorce 3

"The man who hates and divorces his wife," says the Lord, the God of Israel, "does violence to the one he should protect," says the Lord Almighty. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful (NIV, Malachi 2:16).

In the Hebrew text, it is the husband, not God, who does the hating. "Hate" here implies lesser love rather than absolute loathing, and refers to a husband who prefers a younger foreign woman to his probably older Israelite wife by callously divorcing her. Malachi condemns treacherous divorce by Israelite men who abandoned covenant wives for foreign women (Malachi 2:14–15), violating the marriage covenant that God Himself witnesses. This is unjustified divorce—violent abandonment that harms an undeserving, vulnerable woman ([Lizorkin-Eyzenberg](#)).

Justifiable divorce 1

9 Now I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another commits adultery" (Matthew 19:9).

Justifiable divorce 2

If a man takes to himself another woman, he may not reduce her food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights. But if he will not do these three things for her, then she shall go free for nothing...(Exodus 21:10-11).

Here, three provisions of food, clothing, and conjugal rights are foundational obligations a husband owes to his wife. The law lets a wife leave without punishment if her husband doesn't do his duties, and, presumably, the same goes for the husband. So, this text affirms that neglect, specifically the failure to meet these basic marital obligations, constitutes a legitimate reason for divorce, even beyond the explicit grounds in Deuteronomy 24 ([Lizorkin-Eyzenberg](#)).

Eve - one side of Adam

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place (Genesis 2:21).

The 'deep sleep' also appears in Genesis 2:21, 15:12; 1Samuel 26:12; Isaiah 29:10; Job 4:1; Job 33:15; Proverbs. 19:15. The Septuagint translates this as (*ekstasis*) related to our word 'ecstasy', and used in Acts 10:10; 11:5; 22:17 as trance connected to a vision. 'Rib' in Hebrew is (*tsela*), translated as 'side' in all cases in the Hebrew Bible except this one.

[Walton](#) suggests that when God made Adam "male and female" (Genesis 1:27), it implies that Adam was created both male and female in one (Androgyne). Further, God split him in half to form his Eve. So, Adam's sleep was a visionary experience rather than for a surgical procedure. It would give Adam an understanding of Eve's reality and relationship to him, and how they are to work together, which he expresses in Genesis 2:23-4 - *For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife.*

In sum, marriage just doesn't provide the woman as a reproductive mating partner for the man. Rather, marriage rejoins and recovers humanity's original state. Eve's identity is that she is Adam's ally, his other half.

9. My God, why have you forsaken me?

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*And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani?” that is, “my God, my God, **why have you forsaken me?**” (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34).*

This question is originally found in David's Psalm 22:1, as he groans in unanswered prayer seeking deliverance from the gang of evil men who crowd around him. David has faith that the Lord will intervene and save him, and looks forward to the time when he praises the Lord at the temple for His help and when all the nations will recognise the Lord's greatness and worship Him.

And this from Psalm 80:1, 17:

1 O Shepherd of Israel, pay attention, you who lead Joseph like a flock of sheep. You who sit enthroned above the cherubim, reveal your splendour. 17 Let Your hand be upon the Man of Your right hand, upon the Son of Man to whom You gave courage.

It's hard not see this as a foreshadowing of Jesus, the Son of Man. He was more courageous than all of those saints who preceded Him. He lived every day facing the pain that was coming and it did not break Him. That is courage! What was the pain that was coming? This: “*My God, My God, why have you deserted Me?*”

As [Fisher](#) remarks, the Lord knew God would have to turn His face away from Him on the cross, and for a moment He would be alone to take on the sins of the world. Jesus had to feel the full weight of our sins, from guilt, and shame, and loathing, and envy, and rage, and hate, and condemnation. For this brief Jesus was completely alone. That must have been... utterly... terrifying.

It is because of that moment of aloneness that believers will never be alone. God did it once to the Son whom He loved, so that He would never have to do it again to you! With this knowledge you should have the full assurance that you can live courageously, in God's presence, free from the burdens of sin. That's what the Lord meant when He said to Rebekah that 'one people will be stronger, that is, have more courage than the other'.

Conclusion: Is it ok to ask God why?

My takeaways from this MyQ&A paper are:

1. Rebekah asked “*Why is this happening to me?*” However, since God had decreed that all women were to suffer pain in childbirth (Genesis 3:16), then this was the wrong question. It should have been *why not me?* This is the right question to ask when things seem to go wrong with us.
2. For those who don't like their bodies, or personalities, or lot in life, who ask “*Why have you made me like this?*” is the wrong question. If you ask *Why do the wicked go on living*, again it is the wrong question. We can't question sovereignty. Why not ask God how best you can serve Him with the skills and the resources that you have been blessed with? Leave what seems unfair to God's sovereignty.
3. What about the questions that blamed God? For this is what Job did when he asked of God, *Why do you hide your face?*, and Moses did when he asked, *Why have you afflicted your servant?*, and Israel did when asking *Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to fall by the sword?* and *Why have you given us stubborn hearts?* These are the wrong questions. How can you blame God when you don't know what's happening in the unseen world above you (Job)? How can you blame God for the burden of ministry that you agreed to take? (Moses). How can you deny the promises of God when the going gets tough, and how can you blame God for your own sin? (Israel).

Instead of blaming God why not look introspectively and see these difficulties as a teaching moment and ask yourself *what lessons can I take out of this event?* Further, if you feel incapacitated by your journey, seek God for the best way forward, and find reasons for giving thanks to God instead of blame. It's the wrong question to ask God that seeks to blame Him for your apparent misfortunes.

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4. If your question takes the form of that asked by the Pharisees, *Why then did Moses command us?*, it's the right question coming from a genuine enquiry seeking enlightenment, but it's the wrong question seeking to expose apparent, but non-existent contradictions by way of entrapment. In the case of the latter, the Pharisees were caught in a trap of their own making.

5. The Lord's question, *why have you forsaken me?* was asked while He hung on the cross at the end of three hours of dark abandonment. He received no reply. To put it in human terms, the Father's abandonment of the Son must have hurt the Father as much as it did the Son.

The argument is often made that if God is all-powerful and all-good, then suffering should not exist. The existence of suffering in the world implies that either God is not all-powerful, or God is not all-good. However, the forsaking of His Son to save the world from sin and suffering destroys this argument. In those three dark hours, none suffered as much as the Father and the Son for the sake of His creature. Thus, He is all-good and loving. Moreover, those three hours achieved His purpose of ridding the world of sin and suffering. Thus, He is all-powerful.

While His death ended His suffering His resurrection demonstrated the power of His indissoluble, and indestructible life (Hebrews 7:16). And, there is where the believer's hope lies, because God *has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead* (1Peter 1:3). As Christ is living beyond the grave, so too we whose *faith and hope are in God* (1Peter 1:21). Moreover, our hope is fixed on the joy to be brought to us as we discover all things as yet unknown of Jesus Christ (1Peter 1:13).

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