

A DEVOTIONAL STUDY

When God Speaks Beyond Our Reach

Faithful Response to Revelation We Cannot Fully Comprehend

Drawn from Zechariah 5:5–11 • Deuteronomy 29:29 • Job 38–42

“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.”

— DEUTERONOMY 29:29

THE AWAKENING

There is a moment every serious student of Scripture eventually encounters—and it does not feel like triumph. It feels like vertigo.

You are in the text. The vision is unfolding. The imagery is vivid, even violent in its strangeness. A woman sits in a basket. Two figures with wings like a stork carry her into the sky toward Shinar. The angel speaks with calm authority. And then the passage ends, and you are left standing at the edge of something vast you cannot fully measure.

This is not a failure of interpretation. It is an invitation to a different kind of faithfulness.

Three streams converge in this devotional: the exegetical challenge of Zechariah’s fifth vision, Garry Friesen’s framework of wisdom-guided decision-making (“Decision Making and the Will of God” (ISBN: 1590522052), and the ancient counsel of Job who stood before the whirlwind and was asked simply to trust what he could not fully comprehend. Each stream carries its own depth. Together they form a question that every believer must answer—not once, but continuously:

How do you respond when God has clearly spoken, but you cannot fully understand what He has said?

The answer shapes everything: your relationship to Scripture, your posture in prayer, your capacity to obey before comprehension arrives, and your ability to lead others through the same holy discomfort.

THE FOUNDATIONAL TEXT

DEUTERONOMY 29:29

“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.”

Moses speaks these words at the edge of Canaan—forty years of wilderness behind him, the promised land ahead, and a generation that has never known Egypt standing before him. He has just recited covenant blessings and curses. He has described futures he himself will not see. And in the middle of it all, he pauses to draw the only line that matters.

There is what God has kept to Himself. And there is what God has given to us. The first is His province alone. The second is our responsibility entirely. Moses does not explain the boundary—he simply declares it, and calls the people to live inside it.

This is not intellectual resignation. It is covenantal wisdom. The revealed things are not a consolation prize for failing to unlock the secrets. They are sufficient. They are trustworthy. They are enough for faith and for godliness and for the obedience that shapes a life. The secrets are not withheld to frustrate us—they are held by the God whose character we can know, even when His plans remain veiled.

WHAT THE TEXT REVEALS

1. Mystery Is Not Malfunction

The modern mind approaches incomprehension as a problem to be fixed. If the passage remains unclear after sufficient study, the conclusion is often either: I am not skilled enough, or the text is not reliable enough. Both conclusions are wrong.

Zechariah did not understand every detail of his visions—their eschatological fulfillment, their full symbolic register, their precise historical referents. But he grasped the irreducible core: God is actively working to remove wickedness from among His people. He is holy. His judgment is real. His purposes are sovereign. That was enough to motivate obedience, rebuild the temple, and call the community back to covenant faithfulness.

The symbols he could not fully decode—the stork-winged women, the basket, the destination of Shinar—did not cancel what was clear. Mystery at the periphery does not undermine clarity at the center. Revelation is not all-or-nothing. It is graduated, purposeful, sufficient for the obedience it requires.

Friesen's Insight

The “Way of Wisdom” framework makes a parallel observation: God has revealed commands and principles sufficient to govern moral decisions. Where the text is clear, we obey. Where it is not—in the vast territory of non-moral, non-commanded decisions—we are not abandoned to paralysis. We are given wisdom, freedom, and responsibility to choose. The appropriate response to incomplete revelation is not inaction. It is calibrated, humble, Spirit-guided movement.

2. God's Character Is the Anchor When His Plans Are Opaque

When the mechanics remain mysterious, we anchor ourselves in what we know about the One who chose the mystery. Job's story is the paradigm case. God allows devastation Job cannot explain. The speeches of the friends attempt rational theodicy and fail. And then God speaks—not with answers, but with questions:

“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who has put wisdom in the inward parts? Or who has given understanding to the mind?”

— Job 38:4, 36

This is not cruelty. It is reorientation. God does not explain His reasons to Job because the explanation is not what Job needs. What Job needs—and receives—is an encounter with the One who holds all the reasons. Job's response is definitive: “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know... My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you” (Job 42:3, 5).

He did not receive answers. He received God. And that was more than sufficient.

This is the pastoral word for every believer standing in front of a passage that will not yield its final meaning: What you know about God's goodness, faithfulness, wisdom, and love is not suspended by what you do not know about His specific plans. Trust the character you know with the purposes you cannot see.

3. The Revealed Belongs to Us—and Requires Something of Us

Moses' formulation is demanding in both directions. The secret things belong to God. But the revealed things belong to us—and they belong “forever, that we may follow.” The revelation is not merely informational. It is directional. It calls for response.

This means that dwelling in the mystery of what we cannot understand is not license for inactivity regarding what we can. The person who says, “I cannot know God's will because this passage is unclear,” while ignoring the commands that are unmistakably clear, has misused the mystery as an excuse.

Friesen's framework makes this concrete: Where God commands, we must obey. There is no wisdom category that supersedes direct revelation. Where He has given freedom and wisdom for non-moral decisions, we must choose—not wait indefinitely for a sign that was never promised. The revealed things are our stewardship. We are not absolved of responsibility simply because the secrets remain secret.

THE BIBLICAL ARCHITECTURE

The pattern of revelation-that-exceeds-comprehension is not a bug in the biblical narrative. It is a structural feature woven into the very fabric of how God discloses Himself.

The Prophetic Deposit

The prophets routinely received and transmitted what they did not fully understand. Peter writes explicitly: “The prophets... searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you” (1 Peter 1:10–12).

Isaiah wrote chapters that the New Testament authors would spend centuries unpacking. Daniel sealed visions he was told explicitly he would not understand (Daniel 12:9). Zechariah recorded images whose full symbolic register has occupied commentators from the second century to the present. These men were not failures of comprehension—they were faithful stewards of what had been entrusted to them, trusting the God who knew the full picture even when they held only a fragment.

The Covenantal Logic

Deuteronomy 29:29 does not appear in isolation. It stands at the climax of the covenant renewal discourse and immediately precedes the promise of restoration in chapter 30. The structure is deliberate: the acknowledgment of mystery is the ground on which the promise of obedience is built. You do not need to know everything to obey. You need to trust the One who does.

This covenantal logic carries into the New Testament. Paul’s doxology in Romans 11 is the New Covenant echo of Deuteronomy 29: “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out... To him be the glory forever!” (11:33, 36). The appropriate response to the incomprehensibility of divine wisdom is not frustration. It is doxology.

The Wisdom Framework Applied

Friesen’s four principles create a practical architecture for living inside Deuteronomy 29:29. First: where God commands, we obey without requiring full comprehension of why. The command is sufficient. Second: where He has given freedom, we have genuine responsibility to choose wisely. Third: wisdom—the power to see and choose the best means toward the best ends—is Spirit-given and grows through practice. Fourth: when we have chosen what is moral and wise, we trust the sovereign God to work all details together for good, including the details we cannot see.

This framework resolves the paralysis that incomprehensible revelation can produce. It refuses both the error of demanding full understanding before obeying, and the error of treating the uncovered secrets as an excuse for choosing nothing. It positions the believer squarely inside what God has revealed, moving with what is clear, and trusting God with what is not.

CORE THESIS

THE WAY OF WISDOM IN THE MYSTERY

Faithful response to revelation we cannot fully comprehend begins with an unshakeable distinction: the secret things belong to God; the revealed things belong to us. God has disclosed enough for faith, obedience, and godliness. What remains veiled is not withheld to frustrate, but held by the One whose character we can know. The appropriate posture is humble acceptance of what has been given, courageous obedience to what is clear, patient study toward what is not yet understood, and—ultimately—worship in the mystery itself.

CONNECTIONS TO PRACTICAL FAITHFULNESS

Six Movements of Faithful Response

1. Humble Acceptance

Acknowledge that God's thoughts are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8–9). What we do not fully understand does not invalidate what we do. Zechariah grasped the core—God is cleansing His people—even when the stork-winged imagery remained opaque. That was sufficient for obedience.

2. Anchoring in God's Character

When the mechanics are unclear, the character of God is not. His goodness, faithfulness, wisdom, and love are not suspended by His inscrutability. Trust what you know about the One who holds what you do not know.

3. Focus on Clear Applications

Apply what is unmistakably clear rather than fixating on puzzling details. Friesen's first principle: where God commands, we obey. The revealed things belong to us forever, that we may follow.

4. Continued Study and Communal Interpretation

Not understanding immediately does not mean never understanding. The Holy Spirit progressively illuminates. We study patiently, letting clear passages illuminate darker ones, consulting the community of faith across time and geography.

5. Wisdom-Guided Movement

Incomprehensible revelation does not license paralysis. In areas of freedom, we are given wisdom and responsibility to move. We do not wait indefinitely for clarity that was never promised. We choose what is moral, wise, and God-honoring, then trust His sovereignty with the outcome.

6. Worship in the Mystery

Sometimes the encounter with incomprehensible revelation calls not for intellectual resolution but for doxology. Job's encounter with the whirlwind produced not answers but transformation: "Now my eyes have seen you." When the mystery is too wonderful for understanding, it may be exactly sized for worship.

THE QUESTION THAT MATTERS MOST

Is there a portion of Scripture or a providential circumstance in your life right now where God has clearly spoken but you cannot fully understand what He has said—and where that incomprehension has quietly become a reason to delay obedience to what is clear?

Where in your life have the secret things begun to crowd out your stewardship of the revealed things? What would it look like to hold the mystery loosely while gripping the clear command firmly?

And if the mystery is simply too large for your hands right now—is there a response available to you that is smaller than comprehension but larger than silence? Could it be worship?

A PRAYER FROM THIS DEVOTION

Father,

You are the God of both the revealed and the hidden. You have not promised us comprehension of all You have disclosed—You have promised us Yourself. And in the gift of Yourself, we receive what is infinitely greater than answers.

Forgive us for treating the secret things as a verdict on Your clarity, or as permission for our passivity. You have spoken enough for obedience. You have revealed enough for faith. You have given enough for godliness. Let us not squander the revealed things in our frustration over the hidden ones.

Teach us the posture of Zechariah—to hold strange visions with faithful hands, trusting the message even when the symbols remain partially opaque. Teach us the posture of Job—to fall silent before Your majesty not in defeat but in revelation: when our eyes see You, all the questions change shape.

And in the non-commanded decisions that fill our ordinary days—give us wisdom. Not the wisdom of anxious sign-seeking, but the wisdom of men and women who know Your commands, trust Your character, consult Your community, and move with humble, Spirit-led confidence into what is not yet clear, trusting Your sovereignty to govern every outcome.

The secret things are Yours. The revealed things are ours. Let us steward them faithfully—and worship You for both.

In the name of Christ, the Word made flesh—who made the invisible God visible,

Amen.

SCRIPTURE TREASURY

Foundational texts for meditation and further study:

Deuteronomy 29:29	<i>The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.</i>
Isaiah 55:8–9	<i>For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.</i>
Job 42:3, 5	<i>Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know... My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.</i>
1 Peter 1:10–12	<i>The prophets... searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing...</i>
Romans 11:33	<i>Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!</i>
2 Peter 1:3	<i>His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.</i>
Daniel 12:9	<i>He replied, 'Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end.'</i>
Proverbs 3:5–6	<i>Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.</i>
1 Corinthians 13:12	<i>For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.</i>

A PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE MYSTERY

Friesen's four principles, applied to the experience of incomprehensible revelation:

Where God Commands — Obey

When revelation is clear—command, principle, promise—our response is not comprehension but obedience. The strangeness of a vision's imagery does not permit us to defer the response to what is plain.

Where There Is No Command — God Gives Freedom

In areas where Scripture does not directly command, we are given freedom—not abandonment. Mystery in one part of revelation does not eliminate freedom in another. God's silence on a specific question is not paralysis—it is the space where wisdom operates.

Where There Is Freedom — God Gives Wisdom

Wisdom is Spirit-given, community-formed, and Scripture-saturated. It grows through practice and humility. The believer who cannot yet understand a difficult passage can still grow in wisdom for the decisions that passage's context illuminates.

Having Chosen Wisely — Trust God's Sovereign Governance

God's sovereignty is not diminished by our incomplete comprehension. He governs the details we cannot see with the same faithfulness He governs the ones we can. Trust is not ignorance—it is the reasoned confidence of those who know the One who holds all the reasons.