

The Mystery of Christ

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On the Day of Pentecost, which was the original outpouring of the gift of holy spirit, the relationship between God and humanity underwent a profound transformation. Starting on that monumental day and continuing from then on, this dramatic change became evident in the lives and actions of those who were born again. As we look into the depths of the Mystery within the church in the first century, we will study the Scriptural accounts that detail the revelation of the Mystery during that time, and we will also examine the connection between various Church Epistles and some of the historical events of that era, providing a framework for exploring the Mystery itself, as well as its development within the first-century Church as recorded in Scripture. This subject is very in-depth, so it cannot all be taught in one sitting today. But today we will begin with understanding the great Mystery is all about. We will go even further with this in the weeks to come, if the Lord tarries!

The great mystery of the Body of Christ was explicitly declared by the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 3, starting in verse 1...

Ephesians 3:1: For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, 2 If ye have heard of the dispensation [administration] of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: 3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery [Gr: *mustērion*]; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.

This section of scripture is specific information about the change in relationship between God and mankind. As mentioned before, it underwent a profound transformation. Ephesians explains what the Mystery of Christ truly is.

Ephesians 3:9: And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world [*aiōnōn = ages*] hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.

The word, "fellowship" in this verse is *koinōnia* in the Stephens Greek text. Almost all other Greek texts have this word as "*oikonomia*," which should be translated "administration."

The ending part of this verse, "...by Jesus Christ" which appears in the Stephens GreekText, but is not in any other critical Greek text. Therefore these words were added by man, and not part of the original God-breathed Word. So this verse should read: **"And to make all *men* see what *is* the administration of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things."**

The administrations in the Word of God are periods of time in the Bible that are God's ways of administering. There are seven of these administrations in the Word of God beginning with the 1st Original Paradise Administration. Next would come the 2nd Patriarchal Administration, then the 3rd Law Administration, then 4th Christ Administration, then 5th Grace / Mystery Administration. By God's grace we have Christ in us, the hope of future glory which is the hope of the reality that begins at the time of the gathering together, and culminates with the seventh administration of Glory / Paradise **FOREVER!** The 6th Administration is the Appearing, or Revelation Administration, and lastly is the 7th is the Glory Administration, which complements the Original Paradise Administration. Seven is the number for spiritual perfection in God's Word. Eternity is spiritual perfection!

Living in glory with God, Jesus Christ and our fellow brothers and sisters is going to be such a wonderful thing for us. God has made us aware of what will happen in order for us to be there. He has detailed several aspects of eternity. However, the basis of all of these fantastic events, it is God's focus to: **"...to make all *men* see what *is* the administration of the Mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God..."** God definitely wants to show us some details about the future glory, but this verse in Ephesians 3:9 puts the main focus on the Mystery.

This verse is very important because it discusses this current period of time in which we now live. It's not future. It's now! This 5th administration of the Grace of God was hid in God from before the foundation of the world. Since it was hidden in God, it would have been completely unknown until it was revealed to the Apostle Paul. It was the secret of all secrets. Up until that time, God told NO ONE! A section in I Corinthians illustrates how important it was for God to keep this secret until it was time to make it known.

I Corinthians 2:1: And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony [*mustērion*] of God.

God states plainly that He did not come up with some fancy words or methods when it came to presenting the revelation of the Mystery of God. Let's look at verses 7 and 8.

Verse 7: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery [*mustērion*], even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: 8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

The Mystery is mentioned here but not explained as it is in Ephesians 3:1-9 as we read earlier. However, these verses declare that if the Devil and his evil spirits had known the great Mystery, then they would not have crucified our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! That is quite a Mystery of all mysteries! God kept it hidden in Himself until He revealed it to the Apostle Paul in the first century. The book of Romans closes by saying:

Romans 16:25-27: Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery[*mustērion*]; which was kept secret since the world began, 26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: 27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. The WT of verse ²⁶ “but is now manifested by the prophetic Scriptures according to the command of the eternal God, made known to all the Gentile nations for obedience of believing.”

Here it is again, emphasized that the Mystery was hidden. However, it also mentions that NOW as the Mystery is revealed or made known, it has a profound effect. The word "stablish" comes from the Greek word "*stērizō*," meaning to establish, make steadfast, strengthen, and confirm. How does this happen? It occurs "according to my gospel and the proclamation concerning Jesus Christ, based on the revelation of the Mystery." The more the gospel is preached and the more the Mystery is taught, the greater the believing grows, thereby strengthening the one Body of Christ. As the song goes, "Don't stop, never stop speaking God's Word!" Specifically, it is preaching the following: **1)** The good news of Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9), and **2)** The revealing, unveiling, and opening up of the Mystery (Ephesians). This effect is driven by the continuous heralding of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Mystery. Colossians 4 also refers to the Mystery:

Colossians 4:2-4: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery [*mustērion*] of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak."

Paul is asking for the prayers of the believers to make "manifest the mystery of Christ." He's asking for doors of utterance to be opened so that he can speak of the Mystery of Christ. If Paul would like to speak God's Word on this subject, perhaps, *just maybe* God would like us to speak it too!

Colossians 2:1-2: "For I would that ye knew what great conflict [*struggle*] I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance [complete certainty] of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery [*mustērion*] of God, and of the Father, and of Christ."

The Working Translation of verse 2 reads: **"so that their hearts may be encouraged, united in love, even unto all riches of the complete certainty of understanding, unto the knowledge [acknowledgment] of the mystery of God concerning Christ."**

God's desire is for our hearts to be comforted, aiming toward "all riches of the complete certainty of understanding and acknowledgment of the mystery of God concerning Christ." This is a powerful statement! Indeed, the great Mystery was hidden for centuries within God. No one had any idea what it was, but it is now a secret no more! God desires for us to understand this Mystery as fully as possible. Seek it out! Dig deep! Bring it all to the light! The Mystery is also mentioned in Chapter 1:

Colossians 1:25-26: "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation [administration] of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery [mustērion] which hath been hid from ages [aiōn] and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints."

Both Ephesians 3:9 and Colossians 1:26, use the Greek word "**aiōn**" to describe how long God kept this great Mystery hidden from prying eyes and the adversary's criminal minds. No one knew this great Mystery! Thayer's Bible Dictionary describes "**aiōn**" as "an unbroken age." In this context, it was hidden through countless ages of time, spanning thousands of years or even millennia. These verses reveal that God kept the Great Mystery hidden through all the preceding ages, but **now** it is being "made manifest to His saints."

Colossians 1:27: "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery [mustērion] among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

The riches of the glory of the Mystery are "Christ in you, the hope of glory." The "glory" aspect of this verse points to the future, representing the Christian's rights and privileges to hope for the glory that is to come—not based on our own achievements, holiness, sacrifices, or works. The Christian's hope for the glory to come is found in "Christ in you." We have been **reconciled, redeemed, sanctified, and justified**, among other rights, privileges, and abilities, all because of Jesus Christ's accomplishments. He is righteous, sanctified, justified and seated in the heavenlies at God's right hand. Christ is in us, therefore we have the same privileges and authority as Christ.

These are present realities for every believer because of "Christ in you," which also brings the hope of future glory, with even greater and better realities to come—new bodies, eternal rewards, and more. We proclaim God's vital message now, specifically referring to the great Mystery of Christ, which holds rewards both now and in the future.

If we go back to Ephesians 3 again, we see some really wonderful realities of the Mystery of Christ. In verse 6 **That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.** What is the significance of this? It states that the GENTILES are fellowheirs. It states that the GENTILES are of the same body. It states that the GENTILES are partakers of God's promise in Christ. God made a promise to Israel during the Babylonian captivity.

Jeremiah 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband [or married] unto them, saith the LORD: 33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

This is the promise of the New Covenant for Israel. This was “out of the blue.” Israel and Judah did not do anything to earn or attain these promises. Yet, God was going to do this for them. Furthermore, Jesus Christ mentioned several promises that the Father would do for the disciples after he had gone to his Father in heaven.

John 14:12: Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

John 14:26 But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost [*spirit*], whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

All of these promises came to pass on the Day of Pentecost. However, the realization of what they had received would take some time to understand. It wasn't until Acts 10 that it was revealed that the Gentiles would also manifest the same gift from God. Peter was the first person to speak unto the Gentiles in the household of Cornelius the centurion.

Acts 10:44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit].

Up until this moment in time, the outpouring of the gift of holy spirit was only upon Jews. As **Romans 3:1-2** states: **“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there of* circumcision? 2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles [declarations] of God.”**

Israel had the greatness of God's Word declared by holy men of God to them. The Gentiles were out of the picture. Yet, God arranged some Gentiles to partake in Israel's promises by becoming proselytes. Yet, Gentiles were still considered “second class citizens.” This is the place where most of us were held. But God changed it all.

On the Day of Pentecost, when the original outpouring of the gift of holy spirit came, the relationship between God and humanity underwent a profound transformation, first to the Jews, then in Acts 10 to the Gentiles. For everyone who has confessed Jesus as lord and believed in their heart that God raised him from the dead comes salvation. And not only salvation, but all the promises that had been made to Israel were now also made to the Gentiles. We are all fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the declaration of the good news of Christ. God has completely blew the doors off! We are all partakers of this event!

Ephesians (WT) ⁹ and to enlighten all *people regarding what is* the administration of the mystery (which has been hidden from the ages in God, Who created all *things*) ¹⁰ so that through the Church the multifarious wisdom of God could now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly *realm* ¹¹ in accordance with the purpose of the ages, which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We don't have to feign piety. We don't have to feign good works. We don't have to feign holiness. We don't have to pretend anything, for God has made us righteous and holy. We are sanctified, set apart from the common lot. We can do the good works mentioned in the New Testament because of what God, by way of Jesus Christ has already done for us, for it is Christ in us, the hope of glory!