

**DRAFT**

# The Mystery of God

**A Bible Study exploring Paul's Mystery of God epiphany**

*BY*  
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VERSION 1.2

"This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and **stewards of the mysteries of God**. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful." (1Cor 4:1-2)

"... I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, **to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages** and generations but now revealed to his saints." (Col 1:25-26)

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Our purpose and desire are to foster Biblical, historical and related studies that strengthen the Church of God’s message & mission and provides further support to its traditional doctrinal positions.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Please note that this is a Bible study and not a technical or scholarly article as such. It includes the pertinent Scriptures, exploring their meaning cross-referencing with various commentaries.

The word *mystery* is used a number of times in Scripture in various contexts. It is a concept not often raised within Christendom, by the average church or in sermons. However, there are some serious attempts at understanding and explaining it in various books as well as Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias.

The purpose of this study is to delve into this important doctrine which forms a basic Bible study on the topic while simultaneously demonstrating a Church of God understanding when drawing conclusions to the meaning of these particular *mysteries* found within the Scriptures.

First of all, we need to understand the Greek word for *mystery* which is *mustérion*. It is defined by *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* as follows:

**“mustérion: a mystery or secret doctrine**

**Original Word:** μυστήριον, ου, τό

**Part of Speech:** Noun, Neuter

**Transliteration:** mustérion

**Phonetic Spelling:** (moos-tay'-ree-on)

**Definition:** a mystery or secret doctrine

**Usage:** a mystery, secret, of which initiation is necessary; in the NT: the counsels of God, once hidden but now revealed in the Gospel or some fact thereof; the Christian revelation generally; particular truths or details of the Christian revelation.”

Another explanation is provided by *Helps Word Studies*:

**“3466 *mystérion* (the root of the English term, "mystery") – *mystery*. In the Bible, a "mystery" (3466 /*mystérion*) is not something unknowable. Rather, it is what *can only be known through revelation*, i.e. because God reveals it.”**

Definitions from other sources add to our understanding **which you can find in the appendices** and also the *NAS Exhaustive Concordance*:

**“Word Origin**

from *mustés* (one initiated); from *mueó*

**Definition**

a mystery or secret doctrine

**NASB Translation**

mysteries (5), mystery (22).”

While *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* has a lengthy explanation for one to dwell upon:

**“STRONGS NT 3466: μυστήριον**

**μυστήριον**, μυστηρίου, τό (μύστης (one initiated; from μύω, which see)), in classical Greek **a hidden thing, secret,**

**mystery:** μυστήριον σου μή κατειπης τῷ φιλῷ, Menander; plural generally **mysteries, religious secrets**, confided only to the initiated and not to be communicated by them to ordinary mortals; (cf. K. F. Hermann, *Gottesdienstl. Alterthümer der Griechen*, § 32). In the Scriptures:

**1. a hidden or secret thing, not obvious to the understanding: 1**

Corinthians 13:2; 1 Corinthians 14:2; (of the secret rites of the Gentiles, Wis. 14:15, 23).

**2. a hidden purpose or counsel; secret will:** of men, τοῦ βασιλέως, Tobit 12:7, 11; τῆς βουλής αὐτοῦ, Judith 2:2; of God: μυστήρια Θεοῦ, the secret counsels which govern God in dealing with the righteous, which are hidden from ungodly and wicked men but plain to the godly, Wis. 2:22. In the N. T., God's plan of providing salvation for men through Christ, which was once hidden but now is revealed ...”

A *Greek-English Lexicon* by Bauer, Arnold and Gingrich provides further insights and explanation:

“knowledge too profound for human ingenuity ... the secret thoughts, plans, and dispensations of God which are hidden from the human reason, as well as from all other comprehension below the divine level, and hence must be revealed to those for whom they are intended.”

From the above we can determine that the word *musterion* is connected to a secret or something one has to be initiated or taught in or about. It needs Divine revelation.

It follows that our modern sense of *mystery* is not necessarily encompassed by the ancient Greek word. It is not a bizarre matter or something magical. Rather, it is hidden truth revealed by God through His Word and via His agents (patriarchs, prophets, apostles) and revealed in His Word.

And when Paul uses the term, he is not holding to a concept that we may think of today. The sense that the word *mystery* was used in his day is not like the use of the word today. For it is not mysticism or hidden knowledge.

The title for the study is *The Mystery of God*. It could easily have been titled *The Mysteries of God*. However, though various mysteries are discussed herein, there is one major one that I emphasise as you shall discover.

## II. VARIOUS BIBLICAL MYSTERIES

A number of various mysteries are located with the inspired Word. Here are a few examples and verses (*English Standard Version* used throughout this study):

“The **secret things belong to the LORD** our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” (Deut 29:29)

“Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but **he revealeth his secret** unto his servants the prophets.

The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?” (Amos 3:7-8)

“But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, **for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.**”” (Acts 4:19-20)

“**that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you**, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” (1John 1:3)

“For the **mystery of lawlessness** is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.” (1Thess 2:7-8)

“Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of **this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.**

And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”” (Rom 11:25-26)

“This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables; **I will utter what has been hidden** since the foundation of the world.”” (Matt 13:35)

From the above we can see that there are a variety of mysteries or hidden secrets that God may reveal to whomever He so chooses. Such mysteries include prophecies, the Law of God, knowledge about lawlessness, Gentile inclusion in salvation and Christ’s parables. But there is one massive mystery to yet consider.

### III. A COUNTERFEIT MYSTERY OF GOD

“The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: **“Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations.”** (Rev 17:4-5)

Satan has a counterfeit of God’s mystery. In fact, there are so many false mysteries in various religions, the list would be too long for this study. In the ancient Babylonian Mysteries, only the priests understood the mystery of their religion – that the gods were once men – something the masses were not revealed. Contrawise to this, true Christians understand the opposite – that men are destined to be divine God-beings.

These pagan mysteries were well advanced even in Paul’s day, making inroads into the early Church:

“For the **mystery of lawlessness** is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.” (II Thess 2:7-8)

Notice that this mystery has to do with lawlessness which we would call anti-nomian today. Another way of stating this is *apostasy* – the Greek word is *apostasia* = to renounce, rebel, departure or defection – from the Law of God and His truth or the Way of God.

This spirit has continued over the centuries to this day, finding its strength as the Synagogue of Satan – the instruments of the opposing force to God Almighty!

Satan’s false ministers are sometimes nice but water-down the Truth; others are cruel and cultic, tearing apart the flock; while others are a blend of both.

Well might some say that they observe God’s Law – yet they break it by lying about the brethren, slandering, lying in wait to devour innocent members of the body of Christ.

These are tools of the Devil within, wearing out the saints. These are nothing but Satan’s agents – the Synagogue of Satan.

So, many of them proclaim the Law and observe much of it in the letter (eg Sabbath, Holy Days, clean & unclean meats and such like.

But there is much more than the letter of the Law or the physical appearance one puts on. How about envying the abilities of a member and then blocking them from using those talents and gifts in the Church?

Or lying? Gossiping about or slandering members behind their backs, turning other members and ministers against them, thereby setting them up.

Abandoning the Sabbath is not all there is to apostasy. Abuse is also apostasy and the worst possible kind which demonstrates the actions of one is not that of an authentic Christian who abides by God's Law in its spiritual intent. It is hypocrisy which Christ so soundly condemned (cf Matt 6:5; 23:1-39).

However, the more overt or noticeable apostasy behaviour is that associated with the Babylonian Mysteries – a religion that mixes truth with error, portions of the Bible with paganism. And specifically the Babylonian days of worship and false doctrines contrary to those of God's Word.

#### IV. AN AMAZING MYSTERY OF GOD

The Apostle Paul reveals the following about his mission to the gentiles:

“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

**For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ ...**

But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, **in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles**, I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.”  
(Gal 1:11-12, 15-17)

In Ephesians 3, Paul reveals the Mystery, or a part of it:

“For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—

assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, **how the mystery was made known to me by revelation**, as I have written briefly.

When you read this, you can perceive my insight into **the mystery of Christ**,

**which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.**

**This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.**

Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power.

To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is **the plan of the mystery hidden for ages** in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.” (Eph 3:1-13)

From the above we can see that one *mystery* includes the following:

1. this particular *mystery* was revealed to Paul. Seemingly the first time ever this *mystery* was revealed to any human
2. it was also made known to the other Apostles and prophets – presumably via the teachings of Paul and/or later personal revelations
3. this *mystery* is that gentiles are now also called to salvation and thus membership within spiritual Israel – the Body of Christ, the Israelite (NB: salvation = becoming divine). Notice Galatians:

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.” (Gal 3:27-29. Cf Rom 11:11-24)

This Divine revelation which Paul experienced was predicted by his epiphany which is described in Acts:

“And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.

But rise and stand upon your feet, for **I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you,**

**delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you**

**to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God,** that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.” (Acts 26:15-18)

So, many gentiles are now brought into the calling to salvation with Christ inspiring the calling and leading the charge.

“... that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge **of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**” (Col 2:2-3)

The mystery must thus of necessity include Christ.

“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,  
of **which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known,**  
**the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.**  
To them God chose **to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you,** the hope of glory.” (Col 1:24-27)

Christ in us is via His spirit - the very substance of God Himself – the holy spirit. The putting on the new man; the mind of Christ within – which is the holy, righteous character of God Himself.

In other words becoming divine and to be like Christ and God Himself.

*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* notes on Col 1:26 explains:

“*Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:*  
**26. the mystery]** i.e. as always in N.T., a truth undiscoverable except by revelation, a holy secret; whether or no, when revealed, it is what we can or cannot understand. See our note on Ephesians 1:9. We have this “secret” unveiled and described just below. Lightfoot points out that the Greek word *mustêrion*, “mystery,” is “not the only term borrowed from the ancient mysteries [rites of special and secret initiation, lying, in a sense, apart from and behind the popular heathen worship] which St Paul employs to describe the teaching of the Gospel.” He gives instances from Colossians 1:28 below, Php 4:12, and perhaps Ephesians 1:14. “There is this difference however, that whereas the heathen mysteries were strictly confined to a narrow circle, the Christian mysteries are freely communicated to all. There is therefore an intentional paradox in the employment of the image by St Paul.”—  
And this may have had regard here to the suggestion by the alien

teachers at Colossæ that they had esoteric truths to tell to their disciples.

*hid*] Cp. esp. 1 Corinthians 2:7-10; Ephesians 3:9. And see for cognate truth Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21.

*from ages and from generations*] Cp. “*from the beginning of the world,*” Ephesians 3:9; where lit., “*from the ages.*” Here lit., **from the ages, &c.**, or, as well paraphrased in R.V., **from all ages, &c.**

“*From*” is here a preposition of time; “*ever since ages and generations were;*” through all developments of the history of intelligent creation, whether longer (“*ages,*” *æons*), or more limited (“*generations*”). See our note on Ephesians 3:9.

*now*] “*When the fulness of the time was come,*” Galatians 4:4.

Cp. Ephesians 3:5; Ephesians 3:9-10.

*revealed*] Historically, in the Incarnation, Sacrifice, and Triumph of Christ; personally and spiritually (1 Corinthians 2:10), by the Holy Ghost dealing with the man.”

## V. THE ULTIMATE MYSTERY OF GOD

Here is an associated, but even greater mystery:

“Great indeed, we confess, is **the mystery of godliness**: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.” (1Tim 3:16)

The Greek for *godliness* is *eusebeia* meaning piety or holiness. In other words God was manifested in human flesh but completely holy without any sin at any time. So Christ, being perfect and sinless (Heb 4:15; 7:27-28; 11Cor 5:21) demonstrated God’s glory to us. And how we can live godly lives, but not perfect sinless lives like Christ.

He is revealed to all those whose eyes have been opened. A part of that revelation is His work to call gentiles and not Israelites only.

“But we speak the wisdom of **God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world** unto our glory:

Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

**But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.**” (1Cor 2:7-10)

This particular *mystery* is also for the gentiles as we have seen:

“To whom God would make known what is the riches **of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles**; which is Christ in you, the

hope of glory.” (Col 1:27)

“To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, **this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God** who created all things.” (Eph 3:8-9)

And if this salvation can be revealed to Israelites, it can also be offered to gentiles. All people regardless of ethnic background can be called and be offered the free gift of salvation.

Christ, Whom now dwells in the heavenlies, can assist us to overcome sinfulness and enable us to live, acceptable to God (Phil 4:13), building Godly, righteous character.

So, evidently the true Gospel is bound up with this Mystery

“For this reason I bow my knees before **the Father**, from whom every **family** in heaven and on earth is named.” (Eph 3:8-9, 14-15)

“For the husband is the head of the wife, **even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body ...**

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

**This mystery is profound**, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.” (Eph 5:23, 31-32)

This particular Mystery – the greatest of all mysteries – concerns Christ and the Church of God. And it is self-evident that the family unit concept is also bound up with this Mystery.

For what is being revealed is that God is family and that the human family is similar to or approximates God’s family. Or better still – the God Family.

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of **the body of Christ?**

For we *being* many are one bread, *and* **one body**: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” (1Cor 10:16-17)

“For **as the body is one**, and hath many members, and all the members of that **one body**, being many, are **one body**: so also *is* Christ ...

**Now ye are the body of Christ**, and members in particular.” (1Cor 12:12, 27)

“So we, *being* many, are one **body in Christ**, and every one

members one of another.” (Rom 12:5)

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of **the body of Christ**” (Eph 4:12)

So great is this ultimate Mystery that we are told:

“But as it is written, **Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.**

For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” (1Cor 2:9, 16)

“For **I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received:** that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption ...

**Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,**

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.” (1Cor 15:3-4, 50-53)

“though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me.

So to keep me from becoming conceited because **of the surpassing greatness of the revelations**, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.” (11Cor 12:6-7)

If I am understanding this correctly, the mystery was not previously made known to anyone else prior to Paul. And that, probably, includes patriarchs, priests, prophets and other apostles.

“... for the devious person is an abomination to the LORD, but **the upright are in his confidence.**” (Prov 3:32)

“The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and **he makes known to them his covenant.**” (Ps 25:14)

“He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; **he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;**

**he reveals deep and hidden things;** he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.” (Dan 2:21-22. Cp Luke 9:36; Prov 2:1-8)

“The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after **him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.**”

So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD.” (Gen 18:17-19, 22)

“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

**Being therefore a prophet,** and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,

**he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ,** that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.”

(Acts 2:29-31)

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and **I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**” (Ps 23:6)

“When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall.

Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.

One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: **that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.**” (Ps 27:2-4)

“**No one who practices deceit shall dwell in my house;** no one who utters lies shall continue before my eyes.

Morning by morning I will destroy all the wicked in the land, **cutting off all the evildoers from the city of the LORD.**” (Ps 101:7-8)

“Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, **to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple!**” (Ps 65:4)

“But now he is dead. Why should I fast? **Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.**” (II Sam 12:23)

“I said in my heart, **God will judge the righteous and the wicked**, for there is a time for every matter and for every work.” (Eccl 3:17)

“**It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones,** to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”” (Jude 14-15)

“John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, **but he who is mightier than I is coming**, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” (Luke 3:16-17)

“As waters fail from a lake and a river wastes away and dries up, so a man lies down and rises not again; till the heavens are no more he will not awake or be roused out of his sleep.

Oh that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would conceal me until your wrath be past, **that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me!**

**If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my service I would wait, till my renewal should come.**

**You would call, and I would answer you; you would long for the work of your hands.**

For then you would number my steps; you would not keep watch over my sin; my transgression would be sealed up in a bag, and you would cover over my iniquity.” (Job 14:11-17)

“For I know that **my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.**

And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God,

whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!” (Job 19:25-27)

From the above it would appear that the holy men of old knew the plan of God or at least major aspects of it – but, apparently, not the complete mystery or perhaps not the complete extent of salvation. That was first given to Paul to understand!

“Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel

and the preaching of Jesus Christ, **according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages** but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.” (Rom 16:25-27)

“**Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!** How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”” (Rom 11:33-34)

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight **making known to us the mystery of his will**, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ **as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him**, things in heaven and things on earth.” (Eph 1:7-9)

“and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly **to proclaim the mystery of the gospel**, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.” (Eph 6:19-20)

“Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They **must hold the mystery of the faith** with a clear conscience.” (1Tim 3:8-9)

“... and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, **the mystery of God would be fulfilled**, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.” (Rev 10:6-7. Cp Rev 11:15)

As an aside, the prophets here may include Paul. Although he is not called a prophet and did not claim to be one, his calling and function seems similar to that of a prophet. Such as his visions, warnings and revelations. We can only but speculate at this time.

## VI. CONCLUSION

We have seen that a *mystery* means that there is something that God Himself has hidden from mankind and even true believers. Did not Christ refer to the mystery of

the Kingdom of God (Mark 4:11). Was it not Him Whom discussed this with the disciples?

The Bible contains a number of mysteries and the term is used 21 times by Paul (3 x 7). The most awesome mystery, no doubt, is the mystery of marriage, godliness and the resurrection - which Paul appears to have been revealed more fuller than to anyone prior. From a reading of Paul's declarations of these mysteries, it is always about His truths declared and revealed under Divine inspiration.

In its complete sense we could say that the various Biblical mysteries concern the entirety of God's Plan in various aspects which culminates, for Christians, in the resurrection. With Christ Himself, as directed by the Father, guiding His plan and each Christian along the Way to eternal life. It is Christ Whom will resurrect us to life in fulfillment of the mystery of God. The consummation of a part of His great plan for mankind.

But the ultimate mystery is that at Christ's return, the true followers of God will be born into the God Family.

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## VIII. APPENDIX: What Commentaries Reveal

Below are a number of relevant extracts from a number of commentaries which throws further light on the subject. Emphasis mine throughout.

### *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*

#### “STRONGS NT 3466: μυστήριον

μυστήριον, μυστηρίου, τό (μύστης (one initiated; from μύω, which see)), in classical Greek **a hidden thing, secret,**

**mystery:** μυστήριον σου μή κατειπησ τῷ φιλω, Menander; plural generally **mysteries, religious secrets**, confided only to the initiated and not to be communicated by them to ordinary mortals; (cf. K. F. Hermann, *Gottesdienstl. Alterthümer der Griechen*, § 32). In the Scriptures:

**1. a hidden or secret thing, not obvious to the understanding:** 1

Corinthians 13:2; 1 Corinthians 14:2; (of the secret rites of the Gentiles, Wis. 14:15, 23).

**2. a hidden purpose or counsel; secret will:** of men, τοῦ βασιλέως, Tobit 12:7, 11; τῆς βουλῆς αὐτοῦ, Judith 2:2; of God: μυστήρια Θεοῦ, the secret counsels which govern God in dealing with the righteous, which are hidden from ungodly and wicked men but plain to the godly, Wis. 2:22. In the N. T., God's plan of providing salvation for men through Christ, which was once hidden but now is revealed: Romans 16:25; 1 Corinthians 2:7 (on this see ἐν, I. 5 f.); Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:26f;

with τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ added, Ephesians 1:9; τοῦ Θεοῦ, which God formed, Colossians 2:2; (1 Corinthians 2:1 WH text); τοῦ Χριστοῦ, respecting Christ, Colossians 4:3; τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, which is contained and announced in the gospel, Ephesians

6:19; ἐτελέσθη τό μυστήριον τοῦ Θεοῦ, said of the consummation of this purpose, to be looked for when Christ returns, Revelation

10:7; τά μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν or τοῦ Θεοῦ, the secret purposes relative to the kingdom of God, Matthew 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10; used of certain single events decreed by God having reference to his kingdom or the salvation of men, Romans 11:25; 1 Corinthians 15:51; of God's purpose to bless the Gentiles also with salvation through Christ (cf. Lightfoot on Colossians 1:26), Ephesians 3:3, cf. Ephesians 3:5;

with τοῦ Χριστοῦ added, Ephesians 3:4; οἰκονόμοι μυστηρίων Θεοῦ, the stewards of God's mysteries, i. e. those intrusted with the announcement of God's secret purposes to men, 1 Corinthians 4:1; used generally, of Christian truth as hidden from ungodly men: with the addition of τῆς πίστεως, τῆς εὐσεβείας, which faith and godliness embrace and keep, 1 Timothy 3:9, 16; τό μυστήριον τῆς ἀνομίας **the mystery of lawlessness**, the secret purpose formed by lawlessness, seems to be a tacit antithesis to God's saving purpose, 2 Thessalonians 2:7.

**3.** Like κτῆ and τιό in rabbinic writers, it denotes **the mystic or hidden sense:** of an O. T. saying, Ephesians 5:32; of a name, Revelation 17:5; of an image or form seen in a vision, Revelation 1:20; Revelation 17:5; of a dream, (Theod.) Daniel 2:18f, 27-30, where the Sept. so renders τῆ. (The Vulg. translates the words sacramentum in Daniel 2:18; Daniel 4:6; Tobit 12:7; Wis. 2:22; Ephesians 1:9; Ephesians 3:3, 9; Ephesians 5:32; 1 Timothy 3:16; Revelation 1:20.) (On the distinctive N. T. use of the word cf. Campbell, *Dissertations on the Gospels*. diss. ix. part i.; Kendrick in B. D. American edition under the word ; Lightfoot on Colossians 1:26.)”

#### **Expositor's Greek Testament**

Colossians 1:26. Partially parallel to Ephesians 3:9. **How great the honour conferred on Paul is, appears from the fact that he is entrusted with the duty of declaring the long concealed secret which is the distinguishing**

**mark of his Gospel.**—τὸ μυστήριον. Lightfoot thinks that the term is borrowed by Paul from the Greek mysteries, and that it is intentionally chosen to point the contrast between those secret mysteries and the Gospel which is offered to all. But for the mysteries the plural was employed. And there would be more justification for this Interpretation in Matthew 13:11 = Luke 8:10, where the disciples are told by Jesus that to them it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, but not to others. But it will not be seriously supposed that Christ borrowed the term from the Greek mysteries. **A mystery is a truth which man cannot know by his natural powers, so that if it is known it must be revealed.**—τὸ ἀποκεκρυμμένον ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν γενεῶν. Usually ἀπὸ is taken as temporal, and this agrees with the fact that similar references in Paul are temporal (1 Corinthians 2:7, Romans 16:25), and with the use of ἀπὸ as in ἀπ' αἰῶνος and ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου (Matthew 25:34). ἀπὸ καταβολῆς occurs with κρύπτω (Matthew 13:35). But elsewhere ἀπὸ after κρύπτω or ἀποκρύπτω) indicates those from whom a thing is concealed. In favour of this meaning here is the order, for if ἀπὸ τ. αἰ. were temporal ἀπὸ τ γεν. would be included as a matter of course. It has been so taken here, not by Klöpper, who suggests it as possible, but does not accept it, but by Franke. He thinks both are terms for angels, and in itself such a reference is not improbable, for it is through the Church that the principalities and powers come to learn the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:9, where just before the mystery is said to have been concealed ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων). But we have no evidence that γενεαί was ever used in this way, and no parallel for this use of αἰῶνες in N.T. Without identifying the terms with personal existences, we may with Haupt (cf. also Soden) take αἰῶνες of the ages before the world, and γενεαί of the generations of human history.

#### **Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges**

**26.** the mystery] i.e. as always in N.T., a truth undiscoverable except by revelation, a holy secret; whether or no, when revealed, it is what we can or cannot understand. See our note on Ephesians 1:9. We have this “secret” unveiled and described just below. Lightfoot points out that the Greek word *mustêrion*, “mystery,” is “not the only term borrowed from the ancient mysteries [rites of special and secret initiation, lying, in a sense, apart from and behind the popular heathen worship] which St Paul employs to describe the teaching of the Gospel.” He gives instances from Colossians 1:28 below, Php 4:12, and perhaps Ephesians 1:14. **“There is this difference however, that whereas the heathen mysteries were strictly confined to a narrow circle, the Christian mysteries are freely communicated to all. There is therefore an intentional paradox in the employment of the image by St Paul.”**—And this may have had regard here to the suggestion by the alien teachers at Colossæ that they had esoteric truths to tell to their disciples.

*hid*] Cp. esp. 1 Corinthians 2:7-10; Ephesians 3:9. And see for cognate truth Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21.

from ages and from generations] Cp. “from the beginning of the world,” Ephesians 3:9; where lit., “from the ages.” Here lit., from the ages, &c., or, as well paraphrased in R.V., from all ages, &c. “From” is here a preposition of time; “ever since ages and generations were;” through all developments of the history of intelligent creation, whether longer (“ages,” *æons*), or more limited (“generations”). See our note on Ephesians 3:9.

now] “When the fulness of the time was come,” Galatians 4:4.  
Cp. Ephesians 3:5; Ephesians 3:9-10.

revealed] Historically, in the Incarnation, Sacrifice, and Triumph of Christ; personally and spiritually (1 Corinthians 2:10), by the Holy Ghost dealing with the man.

#### **Gnomon of the New Testament**

Colossians 1:26. Τὸ μυστήριον, *the mystery*) A Hendiadys: τὸν λόγον, τὸ μυστήριον, *i.e. the word concerning the mystery*. The mystery is declared in the following verse, Ephesians 1:9; Ephesians 3:9. **Glory is the object of the mystery.**—ἀποκεκρυμμένον, *concealed*) So are *concealed* (ἀπόκρυφοι), ch. Colossians 2:3.—ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων, *from the ages*) during which the silence had been greater.—ἀπὸ τῶν γενεῶν, *from the generations*) during which the revelation of other things was gradually made. The ‘Ages’ are to be referred to angels, the ‘generations’ to men.—ἐφανερώθη, *has been manifested*) the verb again after the participle.—τοῖς ἁγίοις, *to His saints*) Ephesians 3:8, note.

#### **Pulpit Commentary**

Verse 26. - The mystery which hath been hidden away from the ages and from the generations (Ephesians 2:2, 3; Ephesians 3:5, 9; Romans 16:25, 26; Romans 11:25, 26, 33). The word "mystery" plays a large part in Colossians and Ephesians. It occurs in 1 Corinthians, and twice in the Roman Epistle, written from Corinth. Its use in Romans 16:25 is identical with that of the passage before us. **The Greek mysteries were secret religious doctrines and rites made known only to initiated persons, who formed associations stately assembling at certain sacred spots, of which Eleusis near Athens was the most famous. These systems exercised a vast influence over the Greek mind, and Greek literature is full of allusions to them; but their secret has been well kept, and little is known of their real character. Some of these mystic systems, probably, inculcated doctrines of a purer and more spiritual type than those of the vulgar polytheism. The ascetic and mystical doctrines ascribed to Pythagoras were propagated by secret societies. The language and ideas connected with the mysteries were readily adopted by the Jewish Broad Church of Alexandria, whose endeavour it was to expand Judaism by a symbolical and allegorizing method into a philosophic and universal religious system, and who were compelled to veil their inner doctrine**

from the eyes of their stricter, unenlightened (or unsophisticated) fellowbelievers. Μυστήριον appears in the Apocrypha as an epithet of the Divine Wisdom (Wisdom 2:22; Wisdom 8:4; etc.): Psalm 49:4; Psalm 78:2 (comp. Matthew 13:34, 35) furnished the Old Testament basis of this usage. (See Philo, 'On the Cherubim,' § 12; 'On Fugitives,' § 16; etc., for the place of mystery in the Alexandrine theology.) St. Paul, writing to men accustomed, either as Greeks or as Hellenistic Jews, to this phraseology, calls the gospel "a mystery," as that which is "hidden from the natural understanding and from the previous searchings of men" (1 Corinthians 2:6-16). But in the words that follow he repudiates the notion of any secrecy or exclusiveness in its proclamation (comp. 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:6); in his language, "mystery is the correlate of revelation." The thrice-repeated ἀπὸ ("from," "away"), with the double indication of time, "gives a solemn emphasis" (Meyer) to the statement. Ages are successive epochs of time, with their states and conditions (comp. Galatians 1:4); generations are successive races of men, with their traditions and hereditary tendencies. But now it was made manifest to his saints (Colossians 2:2; Colossians 4:3; Ephesians 1:9; Ephesians 3:5; Ephesians 6:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 1:20). The word "reveal" (Ephesians 3:5; 1 Corinthians 2:10) indicates a process, "make manifest" points to the result of this Divine act (Romans 16:25, 26; comp. Romans 1:17 with Romans 3:21; see Trench's 'Synonyms'). The transition from the participle in the last clause to the strongly assertive finite verb in this almost disappears in English idiom: comp. vers. 5, 6; Ephesians 1:20-22 (Greek); and see Winer's 'N.T. Grammar,' p. 717, or A. Buttmann, p. 382. There is also a change of tense: the manifestation is a single, sudden event (aorist), breaking through the long and seemingly final concealment of all previous time (present perfect participle); similarly in Romans 16:25, 26 and 1 Peter 1:20 (comp. Colossians 2:14, note). To his saints; i.e. to the Church at large (ver. 2; Colossians 3:12); but this implies a spiritual qualification (1 Corinthians 2:14). "His saints" are the recipients; "his holy apostles and prophets, in the Spirit," the organs (Ephesians 3:5) of this manifestation. The Church had long ago formally accepted this revelation (Acts 11:18); it was St. Paul's office to make it practically effectual.