

Paul's Mysteries

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In the Old Testament, God used His prophets to take His word to His people. We learn from the prophet Amos, that God wouldn't do anything that He hadn't revealed to His prophets, who would then tell God's people what He was going to do.

Amos 3:7

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

But if you study the letters of the apostle Paul, Romans through Philemon, you find that there were mysteries that God kept hidden! This study will discuss what the mysteries were, and why it was that they were hidden.

Paul calls the mystery, "hidden wisdom," and said that God ordained it for our glory before the world began.

1 Corinthians 2:6-8

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: 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.**

So it was a mystery for our glory, and the reason it was hidden is because the princes of this world would not have crucified Christ had they known it! Not crucifying Christ sounds like a good thing, right?

The mystery was for our benefit. The following passage was written by Paul, so we know he is talking about the Church, the Body of Christ. There are other “clues” to tell us that Paul is talking about us. 1) It was not according to works, but God’s purpose and grace. 2) It was given before the world began, and 3) it became known through Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection that saved us.

2 Timothy 1:9-11

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath

abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

“The princes of this world” also sounds like a good thing until you look to see how those princes appear in other verses. Jesus called Satan, “the prince of this world.” So, the princes of this world are Satan and his followers.

John 12:31

Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

We know Jesus was talking about Satan because Jesus had nothing to do with him.

John 14:30

Hereafter I will not talk much with you: **for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.**

We know that it was Satan that Jesus was talking about in the following verse because it is Satan that will ultimately be judged.

John 16:11

Of judgment, **because the prince of this world is judged.**

The “princes of this world,” like Satan, are not people--flesh and blood. The princes, principalities, powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world are wicked, spiritual beings.

Ephesians 6:11-12

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able **to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.**

Wicked beings in high places rule this world. The high places are literally that—above, in heaven. Satan and the angels that followed him, have access to heaven and earth right now.

What kind of information had to be hidden because it would cause these wicked beings *not* to crucify the Lord Jesus Christ?

It was that God was taking His message of salvation straight to the Gentiles. Paul explains

that the revelation of this mystery was given to him to give to the Gentiles.

It was new information, unknown by the apostles and prophets of the past. Now, the Gentiles were, like Jews, saved by Christ's death, burial, and resurrection and were "partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel."

Ephesians 3:1-7

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that **by revelation he made known unto me the mystery;** (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in **the mystery of Christ) 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; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:** Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

Romans 16:25

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**, which was kept secret since the world began,

Paul discusses the mystery many places in his letters.

Colossians 1:25-27

Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even **the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints**: 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**:

Paul calls this mystery, “the mystery of Christ.”

Colossians 4:3

Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak **the mystery of Christ**, for which I am also in bonds:

Ephesians 3:4

Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand **my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)**

Paul also calls it, “the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.”

Colossians 2:2

That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, **to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;**

Part of the mystery was the creation of a new creature called the Church, the Body of Christ, consisting of Jews and Gentiles together, who believe in salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

Galatians 6

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

When we believe, we actually become part of the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Ephesians 5:29-32

For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, **even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.** For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a **great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.**

How can someone be saved and become a member of the Church, the Body of Christ? Simply believe the gospel that the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ took everyone's sins away.

1 Timothy 4:9-10

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation. For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in **the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.**

That's it!! Paul calls it "the mystery of the gospel" because salvation is by faith alone, not by following the Law of Moses, as it had been.

Ephesians 6:19-20

And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known **the mystery of the gospel**, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Following is the gospel that saves us.

1 Corinthians 15:1-6

Moreover, brethren, I **declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved**, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. **For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:** And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

Salvation by simply believing in the death, burial, and resurrection is also called the mystery of faith. Everyone had been under God's law,

which taught us that we needed a savior, Christ. After Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, we were no longer under law, we were justified by faith alone.

1 Timothy 3:9

Holding **the mystery of the faith** in a pure conscience.

All believers are children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ. There is no difference. Because we are in Christ, and Christ is in Abraham's line, we are Abraham's seed and heirs!

Galatians 3:23

But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. **But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.** For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. **There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then**

are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

As soon as we believe the Gospel, the Holy Ghost places us into the Church, the Body of Christ and we become a new creature. Today, the Jews, too, must also believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation.

1 Corinthians 12:13

For **by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body**, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

There are several more mysteries, and all of these mysteries begin with the Church, the Body of Christ. God had decided to adopt us as children before the foundation of the world, but kept it as a mystery like everything else about the Church, the Body of Christ. This is the mystery of His will.

Ephesians 1:9

Having made known unto us **the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure** which he hath purposed in himself:

Ephesians 1:4-6

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: **Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,** To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

We are children and heirs of God through Jesus Christ!

Galatians 4:4-7

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, **To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.**

Saving the Gentiles was always in God's plan, but it was Israel that was prophesied to take God's word to the Gentiles.

Isaiah 49:6

And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: **I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.**

Paul quotes this prophecy and then adds the information that was hidden—that God is now taking His salvation straight to the Gentiles, and that the Gentiles will hear it!

Acts 28:26-28

Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. **Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.**

Taking God's message straight to the Gentiles is also called the mystery of godliness.

1 Timothy 3:16

And without controversy great is **the mystery of godliness**: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, **preached unto the Gentiles**, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

What has happened to Israel? Israel, as a nation, has been temporarily blinded because of her unbelief. Isaiah prophesied about it. But there is a mystery here, too.

Isaiah 6:8-12

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, **Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.**

The mystery is the intervening “fullness of the Gentiles,” which Isaiah did not know about. Following, is Paul citing the passage from Isaiah, with the addition of the fullness of the Gentiles.

Romans 11:25

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of **this mystery**, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; **that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.**

What is the fullness of the Gentiles? It is also known as the “Rapture” or the “Adoption.” The Lord Jesus Christ will meet His body, the Church in the clouds and we will forever be with the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:51-54

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. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on**

immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Paul doesn't use the word "mystery" but tells the Thessalonians that he would not have them to be ignorant of this event.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. **For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.** Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Then comes another mystery: the mystery of iniquity. When the Church, the Body of Christ meets the Lord in the air, the Holy Ghost, who indwells each member's heart, will also be taken out of the way. Currently, the Holy Ghost, through believers, restrains (a.k.a. the word "lets") iniquity on the earth. Once we are gone, there will be no more restraint, and the wicked one, the antichrist, will be revealed.

2 Thessalonians 2:6-10

And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: **Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish;** because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

John tells the Jews of the future of this mystery. He explains that the spirit of antichrist is already in the world.

1 John 4:1-3

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and **this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.**

Part of the mystery was that Christ would assemble His Church, His Body, in heaven, to rule and reign with Him.

2 Timothy 2:11-13

It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: **If we suffer, we shall also reign with him:** if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

This new creature will reign with Christ as the principalities and powers that were previously in the hands of Satan and his followers.

Paul called this, “the fellowship of the mystery.”

Ephesians 3:8-13

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is **the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God**, who created all things by Jesus Christ: **To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:** In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

As you see in the next passage, Christ is set far above all principality and power and might and dominion. He is head over all things to the Church, His Body (us.)

Ephesians 1:17-23

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may **give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:** The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that **ye may know what is the hope of his calling,**

and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, **and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.**

Because we are in Christ, we will be the principalities and powers ruling in heaven. The rulers of the darkness of this world will be kicked out of heaven, never to return.

Revelation 12:7-9

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; **neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the**

whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Now you can understand why God had to keep some information a mystery. Satan and his followers are going to lose their place in heaven! The positions they once held will be given to us, who are the Church, the Body of Christ!

The princes of this world would not have crucified Christ, had they known what would happen. The salvation of the Gentiles and the formation of the Church, the Body of Christ, will bring about their destruction.

That is why Paul tells the Romans:

Romans 16:20

And **the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.