

DOCTRINE OF MYSTERIES

- I. Vocabulary.
 - A. The Chaldean term ܠܐܘܢܐ (raz) is used 9 times, and only in the book of Daniel; it is normally translated **mystery**, but focuses on those things that are beyond human comprehension, which are secret, and must be revealed. Dan. 2:27-28
 - B. The Chaldean term is translated in the Septuagint by the Greek term μυστήριον (mysterion—used 28 times in the New Testament), which denotes something that is hidden or secret, something that is not obvious to the understanding, a hidden purpose or plan.

- II. Definition and description.
 - A. The noun μυστήριον (mysterion) is derived from the Greek verb μέω (meuo), which means to learn the secret about something.
 - B. It is not used of that which cannot be understood; rather, it is used of that which is secret, hidden, or not obvious.
 - C. Outside of the New Testament, the noun was used as a technical term for the Greek religious cults, which included their secret doctrines and practices.
 - D. Those that were on the outside, those not initiated into the cult, were denied access to the knowledge of these secret doctrines and practices.
 - E. Through various forms of religious suffering, the devotees entered into the suffering of their particular god or goddess (female deities were equally as common as male deities); thus, they acquired a share in the destiny of that god or goddess.
 - F. As they progressed in terms of devotion to the god, they were gradually given access to the mysteries of that religion; in order to be given knowledge of the mysteries, they had to take a vow of absolute silence.
 - G. These historical facts provide the background for how the term is used in the New Testament to explain the reality that the precepts of doctrine are hidden from the uninitiated (negative volition), and revealed to the true devotees of God (positive volition).

- III. The mystery of the Kingdom of God.
 - A. The terms **Kingdom of Heaven** and **Kingdom of God** are used interchangeably to refer to the singular Kingdom that God rules from Heaven. Matt. 13:11; Mk. 4:11; Lk. 8:10
 - B. The singular mystery is used to refer to the totality of the mystery, which is comprised of specific mystery doctrines that explain the nature and quality of God's Kingdom.
 - C. The mystery aspect of the Kingdom began at the First Advent, which began with the revelation of the King to the nation of Israel. Col. 2:2-3
 - D. Due to the negative volition of the Jews, the King was rejected, and the Kingdom entered into the less overt and obvious **mystery phase**.
 - E. Knowing that such would be the case, Jesus Christ presented various doctrines in parabolic form in order to teach those that were positive, while concealing the information from those that were not. Mk. 4:11-12
 - F. The doctrines that Jesus taught, coupled with those that were later taught in the epistles, were new revelations that had been hidden from even the greatest believers of the Old Testament. Rom. 16:25; Col. 1:26

- G. One of the greatest mysteries that was not revealed to Old Testament prophets and wise men was the mystery of the dispensation of the Church Age. IPet. 1:10-12
- H. All the mystery doctrines, as taught by Christ and His appointed spokesmen, are not subject to human investigation and understanding; God alone must reveal the content of these mysteries, or they remain mysteries. ICor. 2:6-9
1. Paul speaks of God's wisdom in terms of a **mystery**, which he communicates only among those that are **mature**. ICor. 2:6
 2. The Greek adjective τέλειος (teleios—"mature") was a technical term used in the mystery religions to denote one that had been initiated into the mysteries of that particular religion.
 3. The mysteries are contrasted with the nature of the present world and those that rule over it, which is transient and not eternal. ICor. 2:6
 4. Paul refers to the wisdom of God as being communicated in the form of a mystery, which indicates that it is not subject to human wisdom and comprehension.
 5. In fact, this ultra-wisdom of God is of such quality that mankind could not have possibly been the origin of it. ICor. 2:9
 6. It is evident that God's wisdom is not available to the kosmos, as seen in the reality that they not only rejected, but crucified, the **Lord of glory**, who is the focal point of God's mystery. ICor. 2:8
- I. Given these realities, God provided a system by which the initiates (positive believers) could learn the secrets of God's plan. ICor. 2:10-13
1. As with the pagan mystery cults, in which the mysteries of the gods were given to humans, who were entrusted with the task of safeguarding them, and communicating them to the initiates, so God entrusted certain men with His mystery doctrines. ICor. 2:10,13
 2. The understanding of the mystery doctrines is crucial to the growth process, and forms the basis for the believer's eternal glory. ICor. 2:7
 3. The men to whom God willed to reveal the mysteries of the Kingdom, through His Holy Spirit, are then responsible to communicate these truths to positive volition. ICor. 2:10
 4. The GAP system is the method by which each believer can understand the **things freely given to us by God**. ICor. 2:12
 5. God has provided a system under which each positive believer can arrive at a full understanding of the mysteries of God's wisdom. ICor. 2:12; ITim. 2:4
 6. This system has its own unique vocabulary, which is provided via the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and communicated by those God has appointed. ICor. 2:13
- J. The mystery doctrines, as well as sound doctrine in general, are not understood or appreciated by those that are negative. ICor. 2:14
1. The unbeliever cannot understand or appreciate spiritual matters since he is lacking the necessary input from God the Holy Spirit (ICor. 2:10-11), as well as the human spirit. ICor. 2:12
 2. The Greek adjective ψυχικός (psuchikos—"natural") refers to life in the natural world and all that pertains to it; it denotes the natural or worldly in contrast to the spiritual. ICor. 2:14
 3. In that regard, it is a technical term for the unbeliever, who is limited to what he can see, hear, and understand in this world since he lacks any spiritual input.
 4. For the unbeliever, the gospel is a mystery that he cannot penetrate apart from divine intervention. Eph. 6:19

- K. The revelation of God's mystery, which is comprised of all the mystery doctrines, is only understood and fully appreciated by those that are spiritually mature.
1. Those in the kosmos cannot even begin to appreciate the nature of God's plan, as evidenced by the fact that they reject the truth about Jesus Christ. ICor. 2:6,8
 2. The immature believer lacks a frame of reference for the mysteries initially, which limits his understanding and appreciation of God's mysteries; however, consistency under the GAP system will provide the remedy for that lack.
 3. The carnal believer, the one that does not effectively deal with and isolate the sin nature, is restricted in his understanding of the mysteries, and in his understanding of doctrine in general. ICor. 3:1-3
 4. The intellectually honest believer that perseveres with the truth will be given an abundance of insight into the mysteries of God's plan. Mk. 4:24-25; Lk. 8:15
 5. Just as a person with a high IQ might appreciate a deep, philosophical argument due to his training and frame of reference, even so, the positive, mature believer has the capacity to appreciate the treasures of God's mystery. Col. 2:1-3

IV. Mysteries that are specific to the Church Age.

- A. The entire dispensation of the Church Age is called a mystery.
1. The Church Age is the mystery dispensation, in that God did not reveal specific aspects about it to even the most advanced, positive believers of the Old Testament. IPet. 1:10-12
 2. The problem that the Old Testament prophets had was that they could not discern **what time or what kind of time** was in view, as the Holy Spirit revealed to them the sufferings of Christ and His subsequent glory.
 3. Not even the angels were privy to the reality of this dispensation; therefore, the angels are very interested spectators when the doctrines of the Church Age are taught. IPet. 1:12
 4. The mystery of this dispensation was revealed to those in the foundational offices in the Church, including Paul, other apostles, and prophets. Eph. 3:5
 5. Part of the mystery aspect of this age is the fact that Jews and Gentiles would be united into a single body (Eph. 3:3-6); however, Jesus had prophesied about this eventuality. Jn. 10:16
- B. Within this dispensation, the local church, the office of the pastor-teacher, and the individual priesthood of believers form three important aspects of God's mystery. Rev. 1:12,16,20
1. Those living in the previous dispensation, the Age of Israel, would never have suspected that God would make His salvation available to the entire world through the local church.
 2. Those that had to come to the tabernacle or temple in a central location in order to learn the plan of God would likely find it amazing that God would provide a communicator of His choosing in various places throughout the world.
 3. The Aaronic priesthood, which was responsible to instruct believers with regard to the specifics of God's plan, is replaced by men in the office of pastor-teacher.
 4. As those communicators study and teach the principles of God's mysteries to others, it allows each Royal Priest to learn and execute the plan of God.
 5. There was nothing in the Old Testament that would have suggested that the Royal Priesthood would be a reality for Gentiles, a priesthood in which each believer in the Church Age represents himself to God, and represents God to the world. IPet. 2:5,9; Num. 18:7

- C. The relationship between Christ and the Church, as set forth in the marriage relationship, is designated as a mystery. Eph. 5:22-32
1. The organic union that is formed when a man and a woman enter the marriage relationship parallels the reality of our union with Jesus Christ. Eph. 5:28-31
 2. Christ is the husband in this mystery, Who is responsible for initiating a relationship between Himself and His bride; similarly, the male initiates within a normal relationship, and the female responds. Eph. 5:25
 3. In a normal marriage, the husband is the final authority, who is also responsible for the well being of his wife; similarly, Jesus Christ is the final authority over the Church, being responsible for the welfare of the Church. Eph. 5:23,26-27
 4. In a normal marriage, the wife must understand that her responsibility is to submit herself to her own husband (she does not have any obligation to submit to any other man, with a few exceptions in the Establishment and Royal Chain of Command) and obey him. Eph. 5:22,24,31
- D. The mystery of the faith is another aspect of the mystery doctrines that was not even possible prior to the Church Age. ITim. 3:9
1. The entire realm of doctrine, which comprises all the mysteries, is called **the faith**, which has been once for all delivered to the saints. Jude 3
 2. Believers prior to the completion of the canon of Scripture were not privy to the revelation that is contained in the New Testament; therefore, they could not completely orient to **the faith**.
 3. However with the completion of the canon, believers can inculcate the principles that are contained therein.
 4. The secret to this process, to understanding the **mystery of the faith** is found in the doctrine of the importance of doctrine.
 5. As the believer recognizes the importance of doctrine, pursuing the truth of God's word as his priority, He grows in grace and knowledge. IIPet. 3:18
 6. As he is correctly instructed with respect to the faith, the indwelling of Jesus Christ becomes a reality. Eph. 4:11-16; Col. 1:27
 7. This process of spiritual growth, resulting in the indwelling of Christ and mature believers, is not only a mystery, it is mysterious to those that share in it. Mk. 4:26-28
 8. The mystery of the faith, the indwelling of Christ, does not become a reality apart from an understanding of and application of such doctrines as the importance of Bible doctrine (Jn. 17:17), the local church (ITim. 3:15), the pastor-teacher (Gal. 4:19), rebound (IJn. 1:9), faith (Heb. 11:6,39a), and GAP. ICor. 2:6-13
- E. The rapture of Church Age believers, the event that closes the Church Age, and resumes the Age of Israel, is also designated as a mystery. ICor. 15:51-52
1. The mystery of the rapture was introduced by Jesus Christ on the final night of His life, but specifics were not given at that time; He provided only general information in regard to His promised return. Jn. 14:1-3
 2. Although it has been very rare in human history, it is not an unprecedented occurrence for believers to be removed from life on planet earth apart from experiencing physical death. Heb. 9:27; Gen. 5:21-24; IIKings 2:1ff
 3. Paul provided great insight into this mystery, as he instructed the Thessalonians with respect to the rapture. IThess. 4:13-17

- a. The subject of physical death was a serious concern to the Thessalonians (as it likely is to most people), and Paul provides the doctrinal direction they needed in order to deal with this eventuality.
 - b. As with all good communicators, Paul recognized that the best corrective for false teachings was sound information, so that believers were not **ignorant**. IThess. 4:13
 - c. The practical purpose for explaining this mystery is so that believers did not conduct themselves as their unbelieving counterparts did when they confronted the reality of physical death. IThess. 4:13
 - d. Paul uses the Greek verb κοιμάω (koimao—to be or fall asleep) to describe the physical death of believers; this term is quite appropriate since death, like sleep, is a state of rest from which one eventually awakens. IThess. 4:13-14
 - e. He provides the order of events, which all take place in a period defined as **in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye**. ICor. 15:52
 - f. The Lord will return from Heaven, and He will raise the dead in Christ first, providing them a resurrection body. IThess. 4:16
 - g. A split second later, the bodies of all living believers will be changed into resurrection bodies. IThess. 4:17
 - h. The Universal Church will then be transported to the Bema Seat in the air above planet earth; from there, the Church will be taken to the Third Heaven, to remain forever with the Lord. IThess. 4:17
4. Knowledge of this mystery protects the believer from dealing with physical death in the same manner as his unbelieving counterparts; further, it serves as a basis for comfort to those that confront this event. IThess. 4:13,18
- F. The negative volition of Israel (which led to the Church Age), and their subsequent spiritual recovery, are classified as mysteries. Rom. 11:13-29
1. The nation of Israel has manifested a good deal of negative volition over the centuries of its existence, beginning with rejecting the prophets sent to it, and culminating in the rejection and murder of God's Messiah. Matt. 21:33-39, 23:29-32
 2. They have continued this type of behavior, in spite of the grace that has been shown them by God. Matt. 23:34-37; Acts 5:40, 7:58-60, 8:1-3, 9:1, 12:1-3; IThess. 2:14-17
 3. Given these facts, some theologians have wrongly concluded that Israel does not have a future with God; additionally, some (covenant theologians) have incorrectly attempted to apply the promises given to Israel to the Church.
 4. However, while it may be hidden to most, there is a remnant within Israel that will make the adjustments to God and enjoy the promises that have been made to the nation. Zech. 8:11-12; Rom. 11:5
 5. Although the spiritual recovery of Israel may be seen in a limited way prior to the rapture, the full manifestation awaits Daniel's 70th week and beyond. Rev. 7:1-8
- V. Mysteries related to Daniel's 70th week.
- A. Spiritual lawlessness, which culminates in the appearance of the Antichrist, is a mystery that is at work in the current dispensation, but which will reach its zenith in Daniel's 70th week. IIThess. 2:3-8
1. Paul references the **apostasy**, which many have limited to the spiritual condition of the Church, in which sound doctrine is largely rejected. IIThess. 2:3; IITim. 4:3-4

2. While that forms the spiritual environment of the last days, there is also a political apostasy, in which the nations of the world conspire against God and His Messiah. Ps. 2
 3. This will result in the political conditions that will allow for the establishment of a one-world government, which will be centered in Europe. Rev. 13:8,16-17
 4. Although Satan actively promotes this agenda, the restraining ministry of God the Holy Spirit prevents him from bringing this to pass during the Church Age. IIThess. 2:6-7
 5. At the rapture, the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit ceases, and the satanic conspiracy to rule the earth will come to fruition. IIThess. 2:8-12
- B. The Roman Catholic Church, the final form of the mother/son cult in the last days is also called a mystery. Rev. 17:5
1. This religious system, which is designed to counterfeit the truth, has its roots in the religious apostasy that resulted in the building of the tower of Babel. Gen. 11:1ff
 2. This cult eventually spread to all nations, being manifested in various forms, and using different names, like Isis/Osiris, Ashtoreth/Baal, Ishtar/Tammuz, and Venus/Cupid.
 3. The final form of this cult finds its expression as a Christianized version, using the names Mary and Jesus, to refer to the Queen of Heaven and her son.
 4. The Roman Catholic Church has, as her children, the apostate denominations and cults that sprang from her. Rev. 2:22-23
 5. This abomination will be destroyed by another of the mystery characters of Daniel's 70th week, the Antichrist. Rev. 17:16-18
- C. The Antichrist, a resuscitated unbeliever that returns to the earth from Hades, is also among the mysteries of Daniel's 70th week.
1. The rise of religious and political apostasy, as seen in the mystery of lawlessness, will culminate in the appearance of the Man of Sin. IIThess. 2:3ff
 2. This unbeliever lived prior to the time of the Roman Empire, and must be identified with one of the previous 5 empires of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, or Greece. Rev. 17:9-10
 3. The most famous leader of antiquity that is not disqualified by being a believer (or other factors) is Alexander the Great.
 4. After God uses the Antichrist to destroy religious Babylon, He will be cast alive into the lake of fire. Rev. 19:20

VI. Concluding observations.

- A. Mysteries are divine secrets that reside with God, which He reveals to those He chooses; they are mysteries only to those that are uninitiated.
- B. While the will of God is referred to as a mystery (Eph. 1:9), the focal point of God's mystery is Jesus Christ. Eph. 1:9-10
- C. Positive volition (those that want to know and do the will of God) is blessed with insight, while negative volition is denied knowledge of the mysteries of God, since they actually do not desire to know the truth.
- D. As Church Age believers, we have been blessed with the completed canon of scripture, which provides us the **mystery of the faith**. IITim. 3:9
- E. Although God has revealed all we need to know, He has not revealed all the wisdom He possesses.
- F. Part of the eternal life niche will involve the continued learning of God's wisdom, doctrinal mysteries He has not revealed as of this time. Rev. 2:17