

# Introduction to The Mystery

The mystery doctrine is one of great importance to the believer in Christ. Without a proper understanding of this doctrine, many fall into false interpretations of the scriptures. This causes confusion, disorientation and ignorance of the plan of God for the believer. To make matters worse, many believers have never heard of the mystery. In this paper, I will attempt to answer two basic questions concerning the mystery.

1. What is the mystery doctrine?
2. Why is the mystery doctrine essential to every believer?

## **What is the mystery doctrine?**

The Greek word for mystery is "MUSTERION." The word originally goes back to the ancient Greek fraternities, and referred to the secrets these fraternities held. Eventually the word came to mean something hidden, secret, something veiled.

Since this doctrine is a mystery, how can we know what it teaches? We should at this point note some scripture to determine if it is revealed, and to whom it is revealed. In Rom.16:25, 26 the bible says,

*"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,"*

Note first that the mystery is spoken of in terms of revelation, something uncovered or disclosed. Second it was *"kept secret since the world began."* This has to be something very special. verse 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:"*

So this mystery was kept secret since the world began, but *"now"* at this time, Paul is disclosing it to all nations. The world began with Adam and Eve. This mystery was kept hidden from them and everyone in the Old Testament scriptures, because the verse says *"but now is made manifest."*

**Was this really kept from all Old Testament saints?** Eph. 3:4,5:  
*"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"*

Note that the mystery was not revealed to any human beings in other ages, but NOW, at this time, is being disclosed to the prophets and apostles by means of the Holy Spirit. Eph 3, Verse 9:

*"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..."*

This mystery that began to be revealed by Paul has been hid in God, since the beginning of the world. Not even angels knew anything about the mystery, see verse 10:

*"To the intent that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."*

This verse tells us that the mystery with all its infinite and innumerable aspects can now be known to the angelic rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms by means of the church. This mystery is of utmost importance to every believer, even angels are bending an ear to see the wisdom of God in this mystery.

Think of it, none of the Old Testament saints knew anything about the mystery doctrine. They did not even know that there would be a mystery doctrine. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah and the list goes on and on. Not one knew anything about the mystery doctrine. So there is no need to look into anything written by them to try to determine what it is.

### **What the mystery is not**

Before we find out what the mystery is, let us make sure we understand what it is not. I have talked to many on this subject and have been told that the mystery is Jesus Christ. How could it be Jesus Christ when many in the Old Testament knew all about Jesus Christ the Messiah? There are literally hundreds of prophecies concerning Jesus Christ his life, work, death and resurrection. So it cannot be Jesus Christ. Some say it is salvation. If it was salvation then no one in the Old Testament could have been saved since salvation was a mystery. Some say that salvation was offered to the Gentiles. If that was the mystery, no Gentile could have been saved at all in the Old Testament. Remember Abraham was the first Jew in human history. All people before Abraham were Gentiles. None of these suggestions fill the requirements of the mystery doctrine.

### **Some points on the mystery doctrine thus far:**

1. The mystery was kept secret, hidden in God since the world began.
2. No human being knew anything about any mystery in the Old Testament
3. No angel, elect or fallen, including Satan, knew anything about the mystery.
4. The mystery began to be revealed sometime after the resurrection.

5. The Church is God's agency for revealing this mystery.
6. The mystery cannot be found in any Old Testament book, in prophecy or any other form.

### **What is the mystery?**

Since we understand what it cannot be, and have established to whom it was hidden, we should now see what it is. I hope you are excited at this point because this is one of the most important doctrines in scripture. This doctrine is many faceted. We will not attempt to study in detail every aspect, but briefly touch on the basics. First let look at some passages that make statements about the mystery.

*"I have become its (the church) servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness--the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery which is Christ in you the hope of glory." Col. 1:25-27*

First we can see a similar statement about the mystery not being revealed in past generations. One point this scripture brings out is that the mystery is related to riches. Another point would be that the Gentiles are included, or a definite part of this mystery. Remember the mystery has many aspects related to it. This scripture brings out a new one we have not seen. "*Christ in you*" Jesus Christ indwells the body of every believer. That is what is meant by the term "*Christ in you.*" in the New Testament. Jesus Christ indwelt the Holy of Holies in Old Testament Sanctuary. Christ made his abode with the Israelites. Christ's presence was called by Jewish scholars, SHEKINA. This comes from the word SHAKAN (To dwell) in Hebrew.

The shekina or the presence of Christ was always a symbol of blessing. When the temple was done away with by the death of Christ, the temple was no longer indwelt by Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit indwells the body of every believer. The first occurrence of the indwelling of the Spirit was at Pentecost circa 31AD. The term used in the Bible is "*the baptism of the Spirit.*" The baptism of the Spirit never occurred before Pentecost. The Holy Spirit never had this type of ministry anytime before Pentecost. The Spirit empowered certain believers to do certain things. Some examples are The Judges, Priests, Prophets, and some Kings. This ministry was called induement, and is very different from indwelling. The scripture that states that the Spirit had never been given in this way before, John 7:39 "*but this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*" Also some related prophesies of this occurrence, John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; Acts 1:5. In the Old Testament less than one percent of all believers had

the indument of the Spirit. Now every believer has the indwelling of the Spirit, but why?

### **The Holy Spirit makes the temple**

The Holy Spirit indwells the body of every believer to set up a temple for the Lord Jesus Christ. 1Cor 6:19 "*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, which ye have of God...*" Jesus Christ does not come and take up residence in our bodies without the Holy Spirit first making our bodies habitable for the presence of Christ. We may even call this presence the shekina glory, as they did in the Old Testament.

The presence of Jesus Christ in the sanctuary, which represented great blessing to Israel, now that same presence is in every believer--amazing! "*Christ in you the hope of glory.*" Hope does not have the same connotation as in today's vernacular. Hope means confidence or assurance here. So the fact that Christ indwells the body of every believer by means of the Spirit making a temple, is a sign of great blessing to us. It is the assurance of blessing to each of us.

None of these facts were known by anyone in the Old Testament. The only hint was by the Lord Jesus Christ who prophesied about this in some passages in the Gospels already mentioned. So these facts do qualify as truly part of the mystery doctrine. These occurrences are unprecedented in human history, and should not be taken for granted.

#### **Some points thus far:**

1. The Holy Spirit began a brand new ministry at Pentecost.
2. The Bible term is the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit"
3. The Holy Spirit indwells the body of every believer.
4. The purpose for indwelling is to make the body a temple for Jesus Christ.
5. Jesus Christ indwells the body of every believer.
6. The indwelling of Christ is a sign of great blessing.
7. These occurrences qualify as some aspects of the mystery doctrine.

#### **What other aspects are there of the mystery doctrine?**

Let us look at Eph 3:6 "*That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:*" This verse is pregnant with multiple aspects of the mystery. God had a special plan for Israel to show forth His glory and evangelize the whole world. God now has another plan of which Israel had no concept. That plan includes the Gentiles. Notice that the Gentiles would be fellow heirs. This refers to fellow-heirs with the Jews. Now there is no more racial distinction, Gal. 3:28. Notice also this "*same body*" spoken of. This is just one of the synonyms for the Church. The Church is spoken of in terms of "*...a great mystery...*" (Eph 5:32). Hence the concept of the Church where every believer would be indwelt by the Holy Spirit and by Jesus Christ is part of the mystery doctrine. The Church was never before revealed in Old Testament

scriptures, Genesis to Malachi. There was the great prophecy in Mat. 16:18 where Christ prophesied the future establishment of the Church, with Himself as the foundation. Peter verifies this in 1Pet 2:4-9 disqualifying any future claims that he founded the Church or was the first Pope.

### **Baptism of the Spirit**

Another aspect of the mystery is the Baptism of the Spirit. This was prophesied by Jesus Christ, "*John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.*" (Acts 1:8). To be exact it was ten days before this phenomenon occurred. First, this never happened to any believer in the Old Testament, and they did not know this was going to happen. For many years this doctrine has been one of confusion and misunderstanding. People have associated all kinds of emotional activity, speaking in tongues, ecstatic utterances, water baptism, etc. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit really has nothing to do with any of these things. Actually the Baptism of the Spirit takes one who is spiritually dead in Adam, and at the moment of salvation places that one into the Body of Christ. Also causing that one to be in union with Christ. The Baptism of the Spirit also breaks the power of the old sin nature. Prior to the Baptism of the Spirit, the sin nature ruled over us, but now in Christ, grace reigns supreme. It identifies the believer with Jesus Christ, His death, burial, resurrection and new life. This doctrine is so detailed that another paper will be devoted to this subject. Just the basics will be listed here to show its relationship to the mystery doctrine.

The Baptism of the Spirit places one into the body of Christ. 1Cor. 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 all been made to drink into one spirit.*" The baptism of the Spirit places one who was in Adam into the body of Christ. For more detailed mechanics of this doctrine read Romans 6.

### **The communication of the Mystery**

The main job of Pastors-Teachers or Elders is to communicate mystery doctrines. Communicating Bible truth is the primary focus of the command to Elders in 1 Peter 5:2 to "*Feed the flock of God which is among you...*" The Pastor has the responsibility of understanding and communicating these things to his fellow believer-priests. Today there seems to be silence about the subject of the mystery in many Churches. Many don't even know it exists, but it has been in the scriptures since the beginning. Paul tells us, "*Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the **mystery** of the gospel*" (Eph 6:19). How could such an important doctrine be neglected? Pastors are to be stewards of the mystery doctrines; they are to communicate God's wisdom in accordance with the revelation of the mystery and hold the mystery doctrines with a pure conscience. See the following passages:

**1 Cor 4:1**, "*Let a person regard us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.*" Pastors are supposed to

**1 Cor 2:7**, "*But we communicate God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden assets which God predestined before the ages to our glory.*"

**1 Tim 3:9**, "*Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.*"

**In conclusion**, this will serve as an introduction to a great subject. The importance of this subject must be seen or we will not know our proper standing and God's plan for our lives. In later discourses we will explore three aspects of the mystery, Who we are, What we think and Where is our destiny. Hopefully you can begin to see God's plan unfolding for us in this unique time in which we live.

Douglas E. Presley

04-19-90