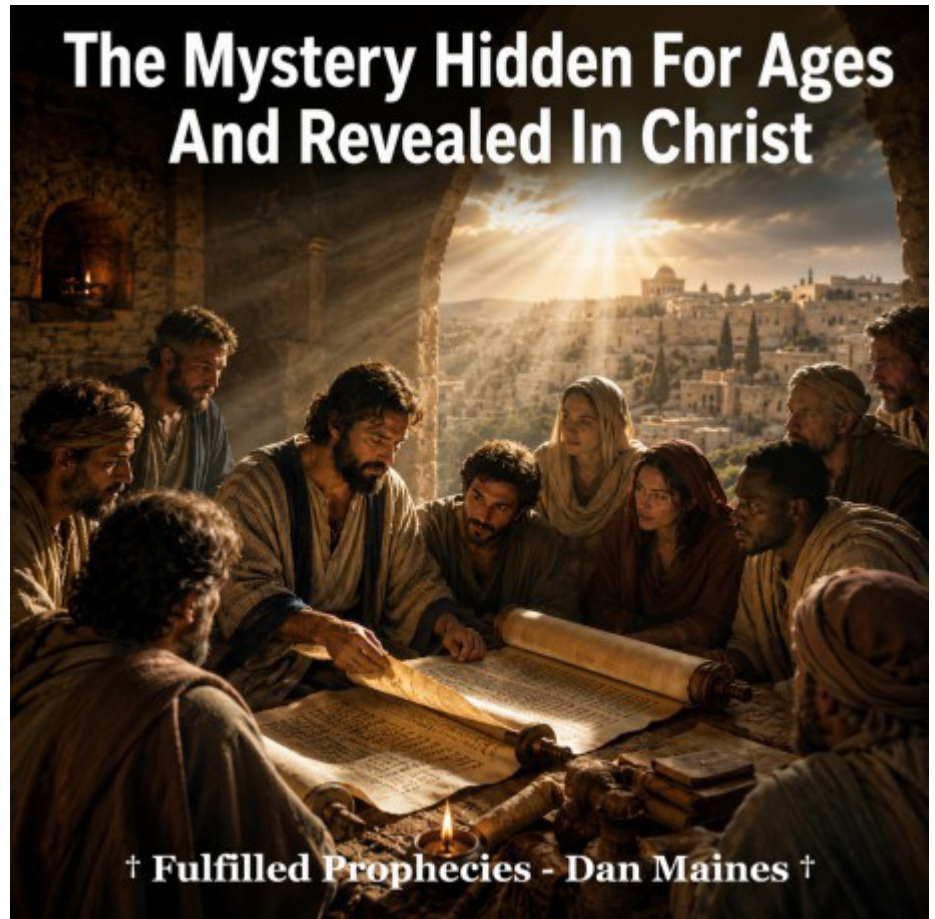


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The Mystery Hidden For Ages And Revealed In Christ



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† Many people read Paul's references to "the mystery" and assume he was speaking about several unrelated secrets.

† When we compare all of Paul's mystery passages together, we find that he was revealing different aspects of one great plan that had been hidden in previous ages and was being revealed through Christ and His apostles.

† The mystery was not that God would save people. The prophets had spoken of salvation for centuries.

† The mystery was how God would unite Jew and Gentile into one body in Christ, bring the Old Covenant age to its completion, and establish the fullness of His New Covenant kingdom. (Ephesians 2:11-22; Hebrews 8:13)

Colossians 1:26-27

that is, the mystery which had been hidden from the past ages and generations, but now has been revealed to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what the wealth of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles is, the mystery that is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

† Paul says this mystery had been hidden for ages and generations but was now being revealed.

† The focus of the mystery was Christ dwelling among both Jews and Gentiles as one covenant people. (Ephesians 2:14-18)

† What had once been limited to Israel's covenant relationship was now being extended to all nations through Christ. (Isaiah 49:6)

Ephesians 3:3-6

that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before briefly. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to mankind, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,

† Here Paul plainly defines one aspect of the mystery.

† Gentiles were not second-class citizens in God's kingdom.

† They were fellow heirs, fellow members, and fellow partakers in the same covenant blessings.

† The dividing wall between Jew and Gentile was being removed in Christ. (Ephesians 2:14-16)

Romans 16:25-26

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now has been disclosed, and through the Scriptures of the prophets, in accordance with the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;

† The mystery had been concealed but was now openly proclaimed to the nations.

† Paul explains that the mystery was consistent with the prophets, even though its full meaning had not previously been understood.

† The revelation of the mystery marked the transition from the Old Covenant age to the New Covenant age. (Hebrews 1:1-2)

Ephesians 1:9-10

He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He set forth in Him, regarding His plan of the fullness of the times, to bring all things together in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

† God's mystery included His purpose to bring all things together under Christ's authority.

† The fullness of the times was God's appointed covenant transition period.

† Christ was bringing heaven and earth together through His kingdom and His people. (Hebrews 12:22-24)

Romans 11:25-27

For I do not want you, brothers and sisters, to be uninformed of this mystery - so that you will not be wise in your own estimation - that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written:

"THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,
HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB."

"THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,

WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."

† Israel's temporary hardening was part of God's larger plan.

† Through Israel's rejection, the gospel was being extended to the Gentile world.

† This mystery explained events occurring in Paul's own generation as God fulfilled His covenant promises. (Romans 9:30-33)

† Paul called Israel's hardening a mystery because it explained how God was bringing Gentiles into the covenant while the Old Covenant system was approaching its end. (Romans 10:19-21)

Ephesians 5:31-32

FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND HIS MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

† Marriage was a picture of a greater covenant reality.

† Christ and His church were being united as one covenant body.

† The mystery revealed God's eternal purpose of dwelling with His people. (Revelation 21:2-3)

Ephesians 6:19

and pray in my behalf, that speech may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,

† Paul specifically called the gospel itself the mystery of the gospel.

† The good news revealed God's hidden plan that had now been made known to the nations.

† This shows that the various mysteries Paul discussed were connected parts of one revealed message centered in Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:7-8

but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they

had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;

† God's wisdom was hidden from the rulers and leaders of that age.

† They participated in the very events that fulfilled God's redemptive plan without recognizing it.

† The cross was not a defeat but the centerpiece of the mystery's revelation. (Acts 2:23)

1 Corinthians 15:51-54

Behold, I am telling you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written: "DEATH HAS BEEN SWALLOWED UP in victory.

† The resurrection mystery was connected to the fulfillment of God's covenant promises.

† Paul was describing the consummation anticipated by his generation. (1 Corinthians 15:23-26)

† Paul included himself among those who might remain alive, showing that this mystery belonged to the first-century expectation. (1 Corinthians 15:51; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)

† The victory over death was part of the same revealed mystery centered in Christ and His kingdom.

Historical References

† Irenaeus wrote that the apostles proclaimed to all nations the mystery that had long been hidden and was revealed through Christ.

† Clement of Alexandria described Christ as the revelation of God's hidden wisdom previously concealed from many generations.

† Eusebius recorded the rapid spread of the gospel throughout

the Roman world before the destruction of Jerusalem.

How It Applies To Us Today

† We are not waiting for the mystery to be revealed, it has already been revealed in Christ.

† We are not separated by ethnicity, nationality, or covenant status, we are one body in Christ.

† We live in the blessings that the prophets anticipated and the apostles witnessed being fulfilled.

† We can confidently proclaim the gospel because God's mystery is no longer hidden.

Q What was the mystery Paul preached?

A The mystery was God's hidden plan to unite Jew and Gentile into one body in Christ and bring His covenant purposes to fulfillment. (Colossians 1:26-27; Ephesians 3:3-6)

Q Was the mystery completely unknown in the Old Testament?

A The prophets spoke of it, but its full meaning remained hidden until Christ and His apostles revealed it. (Romans 16:25-26)

Q Why did Paul call it a mystery?

A Because it had been hidden for ages and generations but was now being made known to all nations. (Colossians 1:26-27)

Q Has the mystery already been revealed?

A Yes. Paul repeatedly said it had been revealed and was being proclaimed during his own lifetime. (Ephesians 6:19; Romans 16:25-26)

Q Were these mysteries still hidden after the apostles?

A No. Paul repeatedly said the mystery had already been revealed, manifested, and made known among the nations. (Colossians 1:26; Romans 16:25-26; Ephesians 3:5)

Q Was the mystery that Gentiles would be saved?

A No. The Old Testament repeatedly foretold that the nations would come to God. The mystery was that Jews and Gentiles would become fellow heirs and fellow members of one body in Christ. (Isaiah 49:6; Ephesians 3:6)

Q Did Paul teach many different mysteries or one mystery?

A Paul described different aspects of the same great mystery.

Whether discussing the gospel, the church, Israel's hardening, the inclusion of the Gentiles, or the resurrection, all were part of God's revealed plan in Christ. (Ephesians 1:9-10; Colossians 1:26-27)

Q Why didn't the rulers of that age understand the mystery?

A Because God's wisdom had been hidden from them. Had they understood God's plan, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (1 Corinthians 2:7-8)

Q When did the mystery begin to be revealed?

A The mystery began to be revealed through Christ and His apostles during the first century and was proclaimed throughout the nations before the end of the Old Covenant age. (Romans 16:25-26; Colossians 1:26-27; Matthew 24:14)

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Colossians 1:26-27, Ephesians 3:3-6, Romans 16:25-26, Ephesians 1:9-10, Romans 11:25-27, Ephesians 5:31-32, Ephesians 6:19, 1 Corinthians 2:7-8, 1 Corinthians 15:51-54

† Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius

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