

Progressive Revelation and the Revelation of the Mystery

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;”
(Hebrews 1:1-2 AV)

God has revealed new information over time which has augmented and sometimes superseded the information he gave out previously.

- Adam had no real idea of the extraordinary consequences of disobeying God and listening to his wife. God revealed them after the deed was done.
- The law was not revealed in Abraham’s time. It was revealed hundreds of years later through Moses.
- Moses did not reveal the Messianic kingdom prophecies that God revealed through later prophets like Isaiah and Zechariah.
- The prophesied redeemer was manifest in due course.

“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:” (Job 19:25 AV)

“But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.”
(1Pet 1:19-21 AV)

- Paul was trying to stamp out Peter’s little flock of believers until the Lord revealed that he had other plans for him.

“Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.” (Acts 9:13-16 AV)

- Peter was not keen on visiting the house of an ‘unclean’ Gentile (Cornelius) as late as Acts chapter 10. He agreed to go after God revealed to him in a trance that the Gentiles had been cleansed.

“And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a

Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean." (Acts 10:28 AV)

The revelation of the mystery

God had the mystery in mind before he created heaven and earth. It was a mystery in the sense that it was hidden. It was not, and could not, be revealed to any prophet prior to the crucifixion. If the devil's earthly princes had known that God's plan was to offer salvation by grace through faith in the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord, they would not have crucified him.

"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." (1Cor 2:7-8 AV)

"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," (Rom 16:25 AV)

The earthly Lord knew about the mystery - he was God manifest in the flesh. But even the need for him to die for the sins of many, be buried and rise again on the third day, was hid from his disciples. Though these things had been prophesied, they were hid from his disciples (and Satan).

"Then he took *unto him* the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge *him*, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." (Luke 18:31-34 AV)

The introduction of the mystery

Acts 7 – the setting aside of Israel

Although the revelation of the mystery came later, with the benefit of hindsight it is possible to backtrack and see when the Lord actually started introducing it. Most mid-Acts dispensationalists agree that the mystery program (the Lord's hidden eternal purpose since before the world began) began to be introduced here on earth soon after Israel's rejection of the Holy Spirit – made abundantly clear by their stoning of Stephen, 'full of the Holy Ghost' (Acts 7). God's setting aside of Israel as a vehicle for his purpose (a key component of the mystery) most likely occurred at that moment.

"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." (Matthew 12:31 AV)

Acts 9 – the mystery apostle and the salvation by grace of an enemy

Soon after this the Lord saved his mystery apostle Paul (Acts 9). I call Paul the Lord's mystery apostle, not only because the Lord revealed the mystery to him, but also because the Lord already had his twelve apostles. Why did he need another one? I believe the precedent for this was established during the Lord's earthly ministry. His apostles and disciples were selected because they had the potential to be filled with new teachings.

"And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved." (Luke 5:37-38 AV)

To launch a new dispensation to both Gentiles and Jews, the Lord required a new wine bottle. Paul was the perfect candidate – staunch, young and highly educated in the scriptures, fluent in the Hebrew and Greek languages and a Roman citizen. But he was also the most energetic and aggressive persecutor of the Lord's Spirit-filled flock. So the Lord saved his worst enemy by his first exercise of irresistible grace. Call me a Calvinist but what else was it? One minute Paul is breathing out threatenings and slaughter and charging toward Damascus to arrest any of the Lord's disciples he could find and bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. The next minute he is meekly submitting to that same Lord.

"And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." (Acts 9:1-6 AV)

This glorious manifestation from heaven instilled in Paul an almighty fear of the Lord and he remained the Lord's faithful servant until his death.

"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16 AV)

"The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the

holy is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10 AV)

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith:" (2 Timothy 4:6-7 AV)

Paul referred to his salvation as being the first of its kind when he used the words "me first" in his first letter to Timothy

"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it **ignorantly in unbelief**. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in **me first** Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." (1 Timothy 1:12-16 AV)

Taking note of the exact wording around Paul's "me first" pattern is critical. Paul's salvation was not the first example of Jesus Christ shewing forth mercy toward sinners. He could not claim to be the first sinner to have obtained mercy. Above eight thousand souls had been saved prior to Paul and they were all sinners because all have sinned.

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41 AV)

"Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand." (Acts 4:4 AV)

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" (Romans 3:23 AV)

Paul's salvation is a "me first" pattern of Jesus Christ shewing forth all longsuffering toward **ignorant** and **unbelieving** sinners. Since the Holy Spirit was first poured out on the apostles on the day of Pentecost, all who had received it were believers who had gladly received – they had received voluntarily. They had become believers and gladly repented and were baptised on the strength of the preaching of Peter's little flock and the wonders and signs that were regularly occurring. They were not ignorant and they were not unbelieving. They were deserving to a greater or lesser extent.

Paul was not a willing volunteer but a rebel. Paul was a self-righteous Pharisee who thought he could see. (Perhaps the Lord was making this point to Paul when he blinded him for three days).

“And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.” (John 9:40-41 AV)

“Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.” (Acts 26:5 AV)

Yet the Lord saved him by grace through faith, without works, because he rebelled in ignorance and unbelief. (Don't we all?) The thousands saved prior to Paul got saved by their choice and works. Paul got saved by God's choice in spite of his works. But God hath chosen

“But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;” (1 Corinthians 1:27 AV)

GRACE = UNMERITED FAVOUR. Paul's salvation is the first salvation by grace alone, without works.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9 AV)

Ok. So the Lord saved Paul by grace but where was the faith coming from? Paul was an unbeliever.

“Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.” (1 Timothy 1:13 AV)

The answer to this seeming riddle is contained in scriptures such as the following. (This important distinction between faith **IN** Jesus Christ and the faith **OF** Jesus Christ has been lost in many modern translations.)

“Even the righteousness of God *which is* by **faith of Jesus Christ** unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:” (Romans 3:22 AV)

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the **faith of Jesus Christ**, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the **faith of Christ**, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” (Galatians 2:16 AV)

Believers are saved by grace through the faith **OF** Christ. But they must first be believers. At what point did Paul become a believer? Paul became a believer when the risen and glorified Lord appeared unto him. His ignorance of the deity of Christ was addressed by a personal deific appearance. He became a believer on the road to Damascus and received the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, three days later. (Why did

Paul have to wait three days? I believe the Lord did this to drive home to this spiritually blind Pharisee his declaration of John 9:40-41 above, and to deeply approve Paul's apostleship of the new dispensation with a type of his own death, burial and resurrection.) After three days, when he received the Spirit of Christ, he was saved by the faith OF Jesus Christ. (Paul had not been ignorant and unbelieving regarding the then existing scriptures and the law of Moses. He was ignorant and unbelieving that Jesus Christ was and is the fulfilment of both.)

So the sequence of events in salvation by grace through faith (based upon my own experience and to the best of my understanding,) is as follows:

1. Ignorant and unbelieving sinner (like Paul)
2. Ignorance is dealt to (in Paul's case by glorious appearing of the Lord)
3. The sinner, no longer ignorant, is a believer, and is immediately (3 days later in Paul's case) indwelt by the Spirit of Christ and "in Christ"; justified by grace through the faith OF Christ - the faith of he who died for his enemies (ignorant and unbelieving sinners).

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." (Romans 5:10 AV)

Other aspects of Paul's salvation were clearly *not* a pattern for us who have been saved since. The Lord did not deal to my ignorance and unbelief with a personal visitation or even a vision. I did not receive the Holy Spirit after three days of blindness through water baptism and the laying on of hands (as Paul did). The Holy Spirit came into my heart during an argument with a grace preacher – precisely at the moment I conceded that perhaps Paul was my apostle. I had been ignorant of the Lord's revelations to Paul and that Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles. Once my ignorance was dealt to, belief became possible. Once I believed I was saved by grace through the faith OF Jesus Christ.

I had been seeking a long time, and I had found. I had knocked a long time and the door was opened. I cannot say if I was saved due to irresistible grace. Perhaps I was ordained to eternal life or perhaps I just persisted and got lucky. I can say that it was unexpected and that my faith took on a whole new dimension with the arrival of the Holy Spirit.

"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48 AV)

Acts 10 – Gentile inclusion and the power of the preaching of the cross

The Lord's next move was to send Peter to the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10), after revealing to him that uncircumcised Gentiles were now on equal terms with the Jews before God. God would soon reveal to Peter that the baptism with the Holy Ghost was

not exclusive to Jews. He had broken down the middle wall of partition and made the Gentiles nigh.

“And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.” (Acts 10:15 AV)

“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” (Acts 10:34-35 AV)

“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 10:44-45 AV)

“And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” (Acts 11:15-18 AV)

The above scriptures make it quite clear that this was the first occurrence of Gentiles receiving the Holy Ghost. I am speaking here of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, sent by the Lord from heaven after his ascension, and first poured out on the Jewish believers on the day of Pentecost. To be baptised with the post-Pentecostal Holy Ghost is to be baptised into the Lord's death, burial and resurrection – i.e. to be washed by the Lord's death, burial and resurrection. (Don't be confused by the various names that the Holy Spirit is referred to. Lots of names but the same Spirit – the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of truth.)

“I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” (Mark 1:8 AV)

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection:” (Rom 6:3-5 AV)

“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Cor 6:11 AV)

This was not the Holy Spirit’s ministry in Old Testament times so if there were any Spirit-filled Gentiles prior to Calvary, they don’t count.

I am convinced that the Lord’s timing of Peter’s visit with Cornelius, being right after Paul’s salvation, is greatly significant. Paul was to become the Lord’s apostle of the Gentiles and he would need the approval of kingdom-keys carrying Peter to give his Gentile apostleship legitimacy. In due course Peter and the other apostles of the circumcision gave their approval to Paul’s Gentile apostleship.

“But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that *we should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.” (Gal 2:7-9 AV)

The Lord went to great lengths to arrange the encounter between Peter and Cornelius – as great as or greater than any God-arranged meeting in the Bible. First he gave Cornelius a vision:

“He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.” (Acts 10:3-6 AV)

Then he gave Peter a vision to ensure he would visit the house of an ‘unclean’ Gentile. Though Peter was initially unclear as to what the vision meant, the arrival of Gentiles from Cornelius at the gate helped him to understand it:

“Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon’s house, and stood before the gate,” (Acts 10:17 AV)

The risen and glorified Lord’s direct interference in the course of events, as recorded in Acts chapters 9 and 10, was brief, concise and economical – he did only what was necessary to ensure the establishment and spread of the Christian Church among the Gentiles.

Most mid-Acts teachers would disagree with my introductory point for these mysteries. Their main objection would probably be that Cornelius heard and believed Peter's preaching - therefore his salvation (which astonished the Jews who were present) did not signify that anything new had started and that Cornelius and his gathering of kinfolk and near friends were merely saved into Peter's little flock - believing Israel, not the body of Christ. Methinks that some get carried away with dividing (rightly or wrongly). God at no time had two separate bodies of believers. (See the study - 'Rightly dividing Israel and the Christian Church'.)

The mystery was not revealed to Paul until much later but it seems clear from the scriptural evidence that the revelation of the mystery lagged behind the actual introduction of the mystery. At least two of the mystery revelations were introduced by the Lord with the saving of Cornelius and his gathering; the mystery of the Gentiles being fellowheirs of the promise of Christ, and the mystery of the gospel - the power of the preaching of the cross.

Two chapters before in Acts 8, Samaritans had required the laying on of hands to receive the Holy Ghost - 'apostolic mediation' as C.I. Scofield put it.

"Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." (Acts 8:14-17 AV)

One chapter back in Acts 9 our apostle Paul was filled with the Holy Ghost, through the laying on of hands and water baptism, three days after his blinding encounter with the risen and glorified Lord. (The three days have God-given death and resurrection significance and mark Paul out as a very important servant of the Lord. Saul the persecutor of the Lord died on the road to Damascus. He was born of the Spirit three days later.)

"And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized." (Acts 9:17-18 AV)

No such mediation was required in the saving of Cornelius and his gathering who were saved way before Peter could get them into a tank of water or lay hands on them. *Hands-off, dry baptism of Gentiles* - things had changed; God's dispensation had changed. It is clear from the context that God was 'ringing the changes'. He had just recruited his mystery apostle Paul and his next move was to bring his kingdom keys-carrying chief apostle Peter up to date.

Peter and the other believing Jews with him were aware that they had just witnessed the first occurrence of Gentiles receiving the Holy Ghost but they were not aware that they had just witnessed the first occurrence of people being saved by the power of the preaching of the cross alone. By simply telling the story of the events concerning Jesus Christ, Peter had of course told them that the Lord had been slain and had been raised up by God on the third day, and that through his name whosoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins. By simply relating to others the events that had occurred, Peter had quite inadvertently 'preached the cross'. Cornelius and his gathering believed what they heard and were saved.

"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:38-43 AV)

Peter's tidings covered the same main points as what was to become Paul's gospel declared in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. The Lord gave Paul the full revelation of the mystery over the years leading up to the writing of his epistles.

The components of the mystery

I have detected seven mysteries that Paul spoke of. Combined they form the unprophesied arrangement which is currently in place between man and God. I believe the heart of the mystery to be what I have called Mystery 3 - the mystery of the gospel of Christ and of Godliness.

Mystery 1: Israel's blindness

God's holy nation Israel is blinded in part - the 'part' being in fact nearly all of them. Blinded Israelites persist in attempting to establish their own righteousness by the works of the law. A remnant of Jewish believers, according to the election of grace, is not blinded. In Paul's time there was an elect remnant and there probably still is today.

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Rom 10:3-4 AV)

"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." (Rom 11:5 AV)

“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.” (Rom 11:25 AV)

Mystery 2: Middle wall of partition broken down. Gentiles fellowheirs, of the same body, partakers of his promise in Christ

God has concluded his holy nation Israel in unbelief, along with us heathen, pagan Gentiles 😊, so that he might show mercy to all. Through Israel’s diminishing we Gentiles have greatly benefited (though the world will benefit even more greatly by Israel’s ultimate fulness). For the first time God reveals that he is making a new creature, the church, the body of Christ, in which there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile.

“I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but *rather* through their fall salvation *is come* unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them *be* the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?” (Rom 11:11-12 AV)

“For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.” (Rom 11:32 AV)

“That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” (Eph 2:12-18 AV)

“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:” (Eph 3:2-6 AV)

Mystery 3: The mystery of the gospel of Christ, and of Godliness

The mystery of the gospel is a mystery indeed. The preaching of the cross alone is now the power of God unto salvation. Through simple unfeigned belief we are gifted the earnest of the Holy Spirit, righteousness, sanctification, justification, glorification, eternal life – did I miss anything?

“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:” (1 Cor 15:1-4 AV)

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” (1 Cor 1:18 AV)

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Rom 1:16 AV)

“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.” (Eph 6:19-20 AV)

“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;” (Col 2:2 AV)

“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:” (Col 4:3 AV)

“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.” (1 Tim 3:16 AV)

Mystery 4: Christ's oneness with his church

Each member of the body is a member of Christ. It is not a human hierarchy or organisation but a Godly organism.

“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make *them* the members of an harlot? God forbid.” (1 Cor 6:15 AV)

“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.” (Ephesians 5:29-32 AV)

“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.” (Col 1:18 AV)

“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 AV)

Mystery 5: The mystery of iniquity – the spirit of antichrist

The spirit of antichrist did not waste any time. It got to work on the church right from day one. John also spoke of it in an epistle to the Hebrew believers. The unrestrained, full manifestation of that Wicked awaits those who will experience the great tribulation.

“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:” (2Thess 2:7-8 AV)

“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.” (1John 4:3 AV)

Mystery 6: The catching up of the church mystery prophecy

We even have prophecy within mystery – commonly known as the rapture.

“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.” (1Cor 15:51-52 AV)

In Old Testament times the focus of prophecy was earthly; the restoration of David’s kingdom to Israel on a much grander scale, through which all the people of earth will be blessed.

The New Testament reveals that our earthly bodies are not our eternal bodies but merely seeds that must die so we can be transformed into our eternal, heavenly form. The whole focus of Christianity is heavenly and the man Jesus Christ, God manifested among us, declared the shift in focus and personally led the way from earth to heaven.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” (John 12:24-25 AV)

“*Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other *grain*: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.” (1Cor 15:36-38 AV)

Mystery 7: The dispensation of the fulness of times

The Father’s ultimate purpose to gather all things in heaven and earth together in Christ.

“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:” (Eph 1:9-10 AV)

“For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.” (Col 1:19-20 AV)