

STUDY EIGHT –THE RAPTURE...A MYSTERY FINALLY REVEALED! THE REVEALING OF NEW TESTAMENT MYSTERIES

INTRODUCTION

“Behold, I tell 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 trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” (1 Corinthians 15:51-53)

In this study, we will examine what Paul wrote in First Corinthians 15:51-53. Paul wrote that the dual resurrection of the bodies of the righteous dead and the righteous living had previously been a mystery, but that it was now being "shown" or revealed. Based on the clear teaching of Scripture, we can confidently declare there will be a day when the bodies of the righteous dead will rise — and there will be a generation of Christians who will never taste physical death but will be raptured - caught up to meet the Lord in the clouds. On that day, first the dead in Christ will be raised, and then those who are alive and are still vigorously engaged in the faith will suddenly be caught up in the air to meet the Lord.

We can anticipate from Scripture much of what the last-days countdown will look like for true saints who are alive on the earth when Jesus finally shouts and pierces the sky in the long-awaited event called the Rapture. But as He appears from behind the veil that separates time and eternity, we can only imagine what the saints will experience in that exact moment — what they will think and feel as they are changed in the "twinkling of an eye." Those who are vibrantly filled with this blessed hope are living their lives in purity and holiness, looking earnestly for this time of Christ's appearing (see 1 John 3:3).

Although the rapture of the Church was a mystery that was unknown in Old Testament times, Paul clearly stated that it was revealed in the time of the New Testament, along with other mysteries that were not previously known. Old Testament believers may have seen faint glimmers of the rapture of the Church, along with other mysteries, but there were a number of mysteries that were simply not known until the Holy Spirit revealed them as New Testament writers wrote under inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The word "mystery" appears multiple times in the New Testament to describe truths that were not known in Old Testament times. The word "mystery" itself is a translation of the Greek word *mysterion*, a word that denotes a hidden thing, a mystery, or a secret that is not naturally knowable and that can only be divinely revealed. Paul used this Greek word *mysterion* to inform us that mysteries and secrets that were previously unknown have now been revealed in Christ.

For the sake of learning, I am providing a list of previously concealed mysteries that were finally revealed in the pages of the New Testament.

The MYSTERY of the Incarnation

The mystery of the Incarnation is at the very core of the Christian message. Paul referred to this mystery in First Timothy 3:16 when he wrote, *“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.”*

Although the mystery of the Incarnation was a previously kept secret, it was revealed in the Person of Christ, and it is now well known as a theological matter of fact. In Old Testament times and among pagan

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cultures, it was unthinkable that a god would become a man or, even more, that a god would die for others. But Paul wrote about the mystery of the Incarnation in Philippians 2:8, where he vividly described God Himself becoming a man - and this is the mystery of the Incarnation.

In this verse, Paul stated that Jesus was "...found in fashion as a man..." That word "fashion" is translated from the Greek word *schema*, a word that was used in ancient times to depict a king who for a brief period of time exchanged his kingly garments for the clothing of a beggar. The use of this word tells us that when Jesus came to the earth, it was a moment when God Almighty shed His glorious appearance and exchanged it for the clothing of human flesh. For the sake of our redemption, God laid aside all His external, radiant glory and took upon Himself flesh, manifesting Himself as a human being. This is the true story of a King who traded His glorious kingly garments and took upon Himself the clothing of a servant — in the case of the Incarnation, the "clothing" of human flesh.

This mystery of the Incarnation was previously incomprehensible, but in Christ—and in the pages of the New Testament—the wrappings were removed from this mystery, and it became divinely revealed. Now the mystery of the Incarnation is the very centre of Christian dogma and is no longer a secret.

The MYSTERY of the Kingdom of God

The mystery of the Kingdom of God was a frequent topic of Jesus teaching. He referred to this mystery in Mark 4:11, when He said to the disciples, *"...To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables."*

Jesus freely spoke of the mystery of the Kingdom of God to His disciples, but when speaking to others about it, He spoke in parables because He was speaking of a secret that He only wished to reveal to His disciples at that time.

Although the mystery of the Kingdom of God was previously incomprehensible, in Christ's ministry, and in the pages of the New Testament, many facets of this mystery have been divinely revealed. Now Jesus' teachings about the mystery of the Kingdom of God are well known and are no longer a secret.

The MYSTERY of Salvation for All Nations

The mystery of salvation for all nations was completely unknown in Old Testament times, but Paul spoke about this mystery in Romans 16:25 when he wrote, *"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 kept secret since the world began Romans."*

In these verses, there are several key words. Paul referred to the "revelation" of the "mystery" that was kept "secret" since the world began. Again, the word "mystery" is the Greek word *mysterion*, which denotes a hidden thing, a mystery, or a secret that is not naturally knowable and that can only be divinely revealed.

Paul wrote that the mystery of salvation for all nations was given by "revelation". Paul furthermore wrote that the mystery of salvation for all nations was a previously kept "secret." The word "secret" is translated from the Greek word *sigao*, which denotes something that is kept silent or under wraps. However, Paul stated that this previously kept "secret," kept under wraps since the world began, has now been revealed.

The mystery of salvation for all nations was previously incomprehensible, but in Christ, and in the pages of the New Testament, this amazing mystery has been divinely revealed. Today the belief in the mystery of salvation for all nations is no longer a secret.

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The MYSTERY of the Church

The mystery of the Church was always in the heart of God but was unknown until the time of the New Testament. Paul referred to this mystery in Ephesians 5:25-33, where he wrote, *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So, husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. "*

Although in this passage, Paul was addressing the marital relationship between husbands and wives, he likened this husband-wife relationship to Christ and the Church, which Paul said is a "great mystery." The word "great" is from the Greek word mega, and it speaks of that which is enormous, giant, huge, or massive. As a phrase, the words "great mystery" tells us that the unveiling of the Church was an enormous, great, huge, massive mystery that previous generations did not see or understand.

In Ephesians 3:8 to 10, Paul wrote that part of his own ministry was *"To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places."*

Paul herein stated that the Church was a "mystery" that was "hid" in God since the world began. The word "hid" is an interpretation of a form of apokrupto, a compound of the words apo and krupto. As a compound, it means to hide away from sight, to put out of sight, or to tuck away from visibility. It pictures concealing something so no one can see it or to hide something so deeply that no one will come across it.

Thus, the mystery of the Church was previously incomprehensible, but in Christ, and in the pages of the New Testament, the mystery of the Church was divinely revealed. What was kept hidden since the world began is now completely understood and accepted. Previously the idea of the Church was God's big mystery, but now it is no longer a secret.