

The woman represents a great religious and economic system which will have its headquarters in Rome; it will be a world church with vast financial resources.

The beast represents the revived Roman Empire in a ten-kingdom form, somewhat along the geographical lines of the European Common Market. After supporting the world church for awhile, the ruler of the revived Roman Empire and the ten kings who are his allies will turn against the system and destroy it. Further details concerning Babylon and her destruction are found in **Revelation 18**.

CONCLUSION

There are four other references to mysteries in the New Testament.

In **1 Corinthians 2:7** Paul says that he and the other apostles spoke the wisdom of God in a mystery. Then he explains that he means truths which were hidden to previous generations but which have now been revealed through the Holy Spirit.

He and the other apostles were "stewards of the mysteries of God" (**1 Cor. 4:1**). Here again the word is used in a general sense to cover all the new truth of the Christian dispensation.

But he reminds us in **1 Corinthians 13:2** that it is not enough to know all mysteries and all knowledge, if we do not have love, we are nothing.

And finally, in **1 Corinthians 14:2** Paul explains that if a man speaks in a foreign language with no interpreter present, he benefits no one, even though he may be speaking the most profound mysteries.

MYSTERIES OF SCRIPTURE

The New Testament presents us with a series of mysteries. This little paper gives a short summary of the meanings of the various mysteries.

DEFINITION

A mystery is a secret of God which has never before been revealed, which man could not arrive at by his own intellect, and which has now been revealed by God to men.

1. THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Matthew 13:3-50

In **Matthew 13:11** we read of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. They are presented in this chapter in the form of seven parables.

In the early chapters of Matthew we find the Lord Jesus presenting Himself to Israel as Messiah-King. But in **Chapter 12** the religious leaders rejected Him by accusing Him of performing miracles in the power of the Devil. So now that the King has been rejected, the kingdom takes a different form. That is what is found in **Matthew 13**. These seven parables give a description of the kingdom in its interim form-during the time between the rejection of the King and His return to reign over the earth. The King is absent, but His kingdom is found wherever men profess to be His subjects and under His Lordship. There is both profession and reality. At the close of this interim period the true will be separated from the false and will enjoy the blessings of His millennial reign. The false will be destroyed and judged in eternal Hell.

2. THE MYSTERY OF ISRAEL'S BLINDNESS

Romans 11:25 (JND)

“For I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, of this mystery, that ye may not be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the nations be come in”

Because of Israel's rejection of the King, God has caused a judicial blindness to come upon the Jewish nation. This partly explains the great difficulty which Jewish people have in accepting The Lord Jesus as their Messiah, and the relatively small number who are saved. But this blindness is neither total nor final. Some do see that The Lord Jesus is the One of whom the prophets spoke. And the blindness will continue only until the "fulness of the Gentiles" has come, that is, until the Lord takes His bride home to be with Himself. Then a believing remnant out of Israel will turn to Christ.

3. THE MYSTERY OF THE RAPTURE

1 Corinthians 15:51, 52 (JND)

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and **we** shall be changed.”

Up to this time in human history it was always believed that everyone would die sooner or later. But now the Apostle Paul makes the startling announcement that not all believers will die. Those who are living at the time of the Rapture will go to heaven without dying. They will be changed-that is, they will receive glorified bodies-and they will never see death. Those who have died in Christ will be raised and taken to heaven with the living saints. Further details are found in **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**, **Philippians 3:21**.

At that time the Lord's faithful Tribulation saints will be rewarded and His enemies will be destroyed (**v. 18**). The mystery of God will then be fulfilled.

The evil which has been so persistent and apparently triumphant will be put down. God's seeming indifference to man's wickedness and His apparent inaction will have ended. "The mystery of God is forever finished; the glory of God shines like the sun; faith is completely justified, the murmur of doubt forever silenced".

10. THE MYSTERY OF BABYLON

Revelation 17:5-7 (JND)

“and upon her forehead a name written, Mystery, great Babylon, the mother of the harlots, and of the abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And I wondered, seeing her, with great wonder. And the angel said to me, Why hast thou wondered? **I** will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast which carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.”

Babylon the Great is pictured in **Revelation 17** as a harlot sitting on a beast with seven heads and ten horns. She is named Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the earth. The explanation of the mystery is given in **verses 8-18**. The woman is a great city that reigns over the kings of the earth (**v. 18**). The beast is an empire that in turn existed at one time, passed out of existence, will be revived, and will be destroyed (**v. 8**). The seven heads are seven kings of this empire (**v. 9**). The ten horns are ten kings who will be federated with this empire (**v. 12**). The harlot rides on the back of the beast for awhile, but is then destroyed by it (**v. 16**). The empire itself will eventually be destroyed by the Lord (**v. 14**).

8. THE MYSTERY OF THE SEVEN STARS

Revelation 1:20 (JND)

"The mystery of the seven stars which thou hast seen on my right hand, and the seven golden lamps. —The seven stars are angels of the seven assemblies; and the seven lamps are seven assemblies."

This mystery is clearly defined. The seven stars in John's vision are the angels or messengers of the seven churches of Asia. The seven golden lamp stands are the seven churches. In the next two chapters, the Lord addresses letters to the angels of the seven churches. These letters give two different pictures.

1. They were seven literal letters written to seven literal churches that existed in John's day – (Historical).
2. They give a sequential prophetic view of the deteriorating conditions in the Church from the days of the apostles to the end of the Church era showing what pleases Christ and what does not.

9. THE MYSTERY OF GOD

Revelation 10:7 (JND)

" but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound the trumpet, the mystery of God also shall be completed, as he has made known the glad tidings to his own bondmen the prophets."

When the seventh trumpet of Revelation 10 sounds, the mystery of God will be fulfilled. From this we know that the seventh trumpet sounds at the close of the Great Tribulation, when Christ returns to earth to reign (**Rev. 11:17**).

4. THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

Romans 16:25; Ephesians 3:5 (JND)

"Now to him that is able to establish you, according to my glad tidings and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, as to which silence has been kept in the times of the ages ..."

"which in other generations has not been made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the power of the Spirit,"

The Church was a truth kept secret since the world began (**Rom. 16:25**) but revealed to the apostles and prophets of the New Testament period (**Eph. 3:5**). This mystery embraces some very important features as:

1. The headship of Christ (**Col. 1:18**).
2. The membership of all believers (**1 Cor. 10:17; 12:13**).
3. The fact that believing Gentiles share equally with believing Jews, that Christ is their hope of glory, and that the ancient enmity between Jew and Gentile has been abolished in Christ (**Eph. 2:14, 15; 3:6; Col. 1:26, 27**).
4. The Church is the body of Christ (**Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:12, 13**).
5. The Church is the bride of Christ (**Eph. 5:25-27, 31, 32**).
6. The Church is a display of the manifold wisdom of God to principalities and powers in heavenly places (**Eph. 3:10**).
7. God's purpose to make Christ the Head of a redeemed universe (**Eph. 1:9, 10**), with the Church reigning as His bride and sharing His glory forever.

"This mystery among the Gentiles" in Colossians 1:27 is defined as "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

This is the same mystery as the Church; it emphasizes that Christ is the hope of glory for believing Gentiles as well as believing Jews—all now have the same standing before God in Christ.

In **Colossians 2:2** the mystery of God refers to the mystical body of Christ with Christ Himself as the Head and all believers comprising the body. Other passages that refer to the mystery of the Church are **Ephesians 6:19 and Colossians 4:3**. There is a sense in which this mystery of the Church is the capstone of Scriptural revelation. The Apostle Paul fulfilled the Word of God when he passed on this truth (**Col. 1:25**). It was not chronologically the last part of the Bible to be written but, as far as the revelation of important new truth, it was the end.

5. THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY

2 Thessalonians 2:7, 8 (JND)

"For the mystery of lawlessness already works; only there is he who restrains now until he be gone, and then the lawless one shall be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the breath of his mouth, and shall annul by the appearing of his coming;"

Even in the early days of the Church a spirit of lawlessness was already operating. There were many antichrists. But the full development of lawlessness was restrained by an unnamed Person (whom we believe to be the Holy Spirit). When that restraining Person is removed (the Holy Spirit will be taken away as the permanent Indweller at the Rapture), then the Man of Lawlessness, the Antichrist, will stride onto the stage of history. He will be the very embodiment of sin and lawlessness. The world will never before have seen such a concentration of wickedness in any human being.

6. THE MYSTERY OF THE FAITH

1 Timothy 3:9 (JND)

"holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience."

The "*mystery of the faith*" refers to the body of Christian doctrine, or what we call the Christian faith. It is called a mystery because so many of its truths were completely unknown in Old Testament times.

7. THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

1 Timothy 3:16 JND

"And confessedly the mystery of piety is great. God has been manifested in flesh, has been justified in the Spirit, has appeared to angels, has been preached among the nations, has been believed on in the world, has been received up in glory."

The verse speaks of one person—our Lord Jesus Christ. Up to the time that Christ came into the world, men had never seen perfect godliness in a human life. But the Lord Jesus came and gave a practical demonstration of what an absolutely godly person is like.

When Paul says that the mystery of godliness is great, he does not mean that it is deeply mysterious, but rather that the truth of the Person of Christ is marvelous and wonderful.

The mystery of godliness stands in contrast to the mystery of iniquity. The first presents a Man who perfectly embodies piety. The second presents the living embodiment of sin. It is the stark contrast between Christ and Antichrist.