

The Gospel According to Paul: Romans

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Doxological Closing (16:25-27)

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 ²⁶but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith - ²⁷to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen

These are Paul's final words of this epistle. He speaks to them of "being established" according to the message or divine story he had presented to them. This message, according to Paul, was the very power of God unto salvation (Rom 1:16). It could establish (*sterizo* - firmly implant) them, and it could empower them. This story Paul calls "the gospel" is about a person who became to the human race the standard of what it ought to be. A person who is a paradigm or exemplar of everything we as beings created in the image of God ought to be. Even more, what he accomplished by his coming into the world made it possible for every member of the human race to become "who and what" is – a new creation brought about by the very power of God. This "godstory" Paul calls "the gospel," the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes!

The Mystery

Paul called this message, "the revelation of **the mystery** kept secret since the world began but now made manifest or known." What is this mystery that has been revealed? The term mystery is often associated with the sense of "wonder," i.e., to send the mind into a search for answers. But

the concept of mystery can also cause a “sense of wonder” in that what is revealed by the mystery is so overwhelming to the mind that it fills one with wonder. God was here, in person. Does the very thought of that not fill your with wonder, in both senses?

Our word "mystery" is a transliteration of the Greek word *musterion*, from *mueo* - to initiate or admit to secrets; *mustes* was used of the person so initiated. The term *musterion* was often used for a “sacred secret” in that the content of the secret was the possession of a deity and was given only to those to whom he chose to reveal it.

It occurs in the Greek Septuagint nine times as the translation of the Aramaic *raz* in that portion of Daniel which was written in Aramaic. *Raz* means to conceal, hence, it was something concealed that can only be known when revealed (see: Daniel 2:18, 19, 27, 28, 29, 30, 47; and 4:9).

It occurs frequently in the Jewish Intertestamental writings; e.g., the apocryphal and pseudepigraphal writings: Judith 2:2. Wisdom 2:22; 14:23; Sirach 22:22; 27:16, 17, 21; 2 Maccabees 13:21.

Jesus spoke to his disciples of the *musteria tas basileias ton ouranon* - the mysteries/secrets of the kingdom of heaven (Matt 13:11); so also in Mark 4:11 and Luke 8:9-10,

*His disciples asked him what this parable meant. ¹⁰He said, "The knowledge of **the secrets/mystery** (musteria) of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that," 'though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.' [Isaiah 6:9].*

Jesus repeatedly used this term to speak of the hidden nature of the kingdom of God. It is not “a Camelot” or even a kingdom like that of David; rather, it is the rule of God in the lives of his new creation in Christ. God’s redemption of the human race by means of new creation had been concealed, until Jesus revealed it to his disciples through sayings and stories called parables. Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is within you,” (Luke 17:21); it is the presence and power of God reigning in those created anew in Christ.

Paul's Special Use of This Concept

This term was also used by Paul in Romans 11:25 to speak of God's offer of salvation to the Gentiles and the rejection of his deliverance by the nation of Israel's (cf. Isaiah 6:9-10). It was also used by Paul in 1 Cor 15:51 to speak of the coming of Christ and the general resurrection, "Behold, I tell you **a mystery**, we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed."

What Paul is speaking of here in Romans 16:25, however, is not the same as these other usages of the term. Throughout Paul letters he speaks of this "**mystery**" as, "that which was not made known to men in other generations but as has now been revealed (Eph 3:5); and in verse 9 as that, "which for ages past was kept hidden in God," (Eph 3:9); in Col 1:26, as "**the mystery** that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints," (Col 1:26), and here in Romans 16:25 as, "the revelation of **the mystery** hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God," (Rom 16:25).

This **mystery** concerned how it would be possible for both Gentiles and Jews to stand before God equal, both recognized as sons and daughters of God, both the redeemed of God, both saints of the most high, both beings created in the image of God and reclaimed by God. This **mystery** is the revelation of the redemptive act of new creation that occurs at the moment of one's resurrection into new existence (**2 Cor 5:16-17, Rom 6:1-14; Eph 3:1-12, Col 1:24-2:7; 3:1-11**).

The Mystery of "God with Us"

The revelation or "good news" that God himself was coming into the world to bring about the deliverance of mankind was foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures. This was, "made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God." The apostles and prophets wrote of the coming of God into the world in person (see: Isaiah 40:3-5, with Luke 3:4-6). Paul said that this "knowledge" or "wisdom of God" was too great for the world to accept, even among the greatest thinkers of the world into which God came. This is precisely what Paul says in 1 Cor 2:6-9,

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the accomplished, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this

age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷No, we speak of **God's secret wisdom (theou sophia en musterio)**, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. ⁸None of the rulers/leaders (archontes) of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹However, as it is written: No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" [Isaiah 64:4] (1 Cor 2:6-9)

The **musterion** Paul speaks of is the visitation of God, but it is also about what he did when he came. This aspect of the mystery is what Paul is speaks about in Ephesians 3:2-6:

*Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, **the mystery made known to me by revelation**, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets [The New Testament apostles and prophets]. **This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus** (Eph 3:2-6).*

Paul is referring to the fact that God's purpose in coming into the world was to unite the whole human race, both Jews and Gentiles, into one humanity - one man (humanity) in Christ. The mystery of which Paul speaks is that of God's deliverance through "new creation" in Christ.

The Mystery of Divine Reversal

How was this accomplished? Through new creation in Christ,

*Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. I have become its 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 1:24-27).

As mentioned earlier, the term **mystery** is often associated with the sense of “wonder” or “a sense of wonder” in that what is revealed by the mystery is so overwhelming. God was here, in person! Does the very thought of that not fill your with wonder? This is what Paul is speaking of 1 Timothy 3:16,

*Beyond all question, **the mystery of godliness** is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory (1 Tim 3:16).*

Jesus, the incarnation of God, is at the heart of **the mystery** - this wondrous thing that has been revealed. This is what the apostles claimed had what happened 2,000 years ago, God was here, in our world. He was here then and he is here now, “in each of us;” that’s happens in every conversion to Christ. Paul said in Col 1:27 that God had, “chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of **this mystery**, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

This is the secret God has revealed: that he will create man anew and give him his very moral character as an indwelling presence. It doesn’t make any difference if you are a Jew or a Gentile; all the divisions of race, gender, class, and national origin are eliminated. We are all one in Christ. This transformation of existence from the old man “in Adam” to the new being “in Christ,” is the experienced through “new creation,” new birth; a transfer of existence from Adam to Christ - the new Adam, sent to effect a divine reversal of the fall of Man in Adam. This is what Paul meant when he said that this mystery was "hidden for long ages past, but is now revealed."

Conclusion

The writer of Hebrews said that, “God has made known his will, at sundry times and in divers manners" (Hebrews 1:1-2). He also kept certain things secret, and revealed them in his own good time in accordance with his purpose and counsels. The Apostle Peter says the same thing,

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that

was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care,¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things (1 Peter 1:10-12).

God has given us this wonderful story to be believed and lived out in our own lives, as Paul says in Rom 16:26, “for the obedience of faith.” To believe this “godstory” or “gospel” is to live it, every day of you lives; and that life will go on into eternity – that is why it is called “eternal life!”

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