

Trinity Grace Fellowship

The Pauline Bootcamp

***Paul's Gospel:
The Subject of the Great Mystery***

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1. Introduction

Paul states that his Gospel (the Gospel given to him by the post-ascended Christ) is indeed the very subject of the Great Mystery (Eph 5:32):

This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

The context of Ephesians 5 describes the relationship of the Body of Christ and Christ Himself. Paul uses the imagery of the sexual union between husband and wife to illustrate the relationship in which the Body shares with Christ. Specifically, the Body made up of both Jews and Gentiles, is the non-incarnate extended humanity of Christ. The notion that a group of redeemed elect was to be the extended non-incarnate humanity of Israel's Messiah was not seen in the Old Testament or non-Pauline New Testament. This aspect of God's salvation plan was kept secret from "before the foundation of the world".

2. The Biblical Usage of the Word Mystery

The New Testament Greek word translated mystery is *μυστηριον*. *μυστηριον* occurs 27 times in the New Testament and is used in various ways, but most exclusively for Paul's Gospel. The following is a complete summary of the N.T. usage of *μυστηριον*.

A Breakdown of μυστηριον

Number	Usage	Scripture References	Interpretive Summary	Occurrences	%
1	Paul's Gospel	Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 2:7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; Eph 1:9; 3:3,4,9; 5:32; 6:19; Col 1:26,27; 2:2; 4:3; 1 Tim 3:9	The Gospel hidden from "before the foundation of the world", states that a group of redeemed sinners are being saved as the righteous extension of Christ's non-incarnate humanity. Implying the necessity of Jew-Gentile equality (e.g., no ethnicity); non-ceremonial expression; administrative authority over the angels, and more.	16	59.7
2	Rapture	1 Cor 15:51	The Body Age, the subject of the Great Mystery, ends with the mystery of the Rapture	1	3.7
3	Parables of the Mysteries of the Earthly Kingdom	Mat 13:11; Mk 4:11; Luk 8:10	Parables describing additional details of Israel's 3rd Generation not revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures; in particular the nature of the makeup of Israel during her 3rd Generation. The Wheat representing human-Israel, and the Tares representing nephilimic-Israel; the attending parables provide details as to the nature of the Wheat and Tares.	3	11.1
4	Babylon: The Mystery of the Great Harlot	Rev 17:5,7	Jerusalem is specifically labeled as "Babylon", the city playing the great harlot. This is not a reference to the physical city of Babylon, but a label for Jerusalem during the great period of Israel's future apostasy ¹ - the 3rd Generation. Like #2 above, this provides additional details to Israel's 3rd Generation.	2	7.4

¹ Stephen Rodabaugh, Chapters 14, 16-18, A Working Study of the Apocalypse, TGF Eldership, Trinity Grace Fellowship, Pittsburgh, PA, 1997.

A Breakdown of μυστηριον

Number	Usage	Scripture References	Interpretive Summary	Occurrences	%
5	The so-called "Partial" Blinding of Israel During the Body Age	Rom 11:25	Referring to the reprobate of Israel's 2nd Generation (=part) causing the casting away of the Nation (whole). This national casting away continues until the Rapture (Fullness of Nations=Body). ²	1	3.7
6	The Mystery of Iniquity	2 Thes 2:7	Remarkable passage referring to the "anti-Body" Gospel that is in direct opposition to Paul's Gospel. It is the Gospel with which we fight our earthly battle (Eph 6) and the Gospel that sets the stage for Anti-Christ after the Rapture. Thus, <i>indirectly</i> it provides details for Israel's 3rd Generation (e.g., helping in generating "Mystery, Babylon"). ³	1	3.7
7	The Incarnation and beyond	1 Tim 3:16	Refers to the totality of the Person of Christ and His Ministry w.r.t. the Body.	1	3.7
8	The Mystery of the Seven Stars	Rev 1:20	The angel-messengers that are assigned to each of the 7 synagogues of the Apocalypse. They are messengers representing the 7 synagogues to which the Apocalypse is written.	1	3.7
9	The Mystery of God	Rev 10:7	The sounding of the 7th trumpet is the Mystery of God, whence God destroys Anti-Christ's Kingdom, defeats Satan, and sets up the Millennial Kingdom. This destruction unfolds via the pouring out of the 7 Vials.	1	3.7
TOTAL				27	100.4

Table 1. Summary Biblical Usage of μυστηριον

μυστηριον comes from the Greek word family defined by the word μνω. μνω means to "shut up" or "to close", whereas μνεω means "to instruct" in the sense of "teaching the 'privileged' about the thing that is hidden".⁴ In pagan circles the instructing was the teaching of "secret things" to the "inductees" - thus, the "mysteries" were secret to only outsiders.

μνω does not occur in the New Testament nor does it occur in the LXX, and μνεω's only New Testament usage is in Phil 4:12:

I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed (μνεω) both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Paul uses μνεω for being "fully instructed" in the Gospel through experience. It also occurs in the Old Testament Apocrypha, 3 Mac 2:30.

Interestingly the LXX usage of μυστηριον occurs only in Daniel 2:18,19,27,28,29,30,47(2); 4:9. In each of these occurrences Nebuchadnezzar's dream is being revealed to Daniel, where the "hidden thing" is revealed to the "inductee" (e.g., Daniel). Furthermore, in each of these Danielian cases μυστηριον is directly used for the Hebrew רָז (raz). רָז is a Hebrew word essentially borrowed from both the Chaldee / Persian meaning "something secret". These occurrences of the Hebrew רָז form a "one-to-one, onto mapping" between רָז and the LXX Greek μυστηριον (see figure below). In other

² It is very interesting to note, that the "mystery" of Israel's Blinding, generates "The Mystery the Great" (the Body), while the terminus of the Body-Age, namely the "mystery" of the Rapture, ends the "mystery" of Israel's Blindness.

³ The object of Paul's Gospel is the Body of Christ, while the object of the "Mystery of Iniquity" is the Anti-Body. Thus, the Anti-Body is the human mechanism that helps in bringing about the evil in Israel's 3rd Generation.

⁴ For an example, see M.R. Vincent, **Word Studies in the New Testament**, Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, Vol I, p. 78.

words, every occurrence of רָזֶ (raz) is translated by μυστηριον and every occurrence of μυστηριον goes back to an occurrence of רָזֶ. Thus, if you have all of the occurrences of one, you get all of the occurrences of the other.

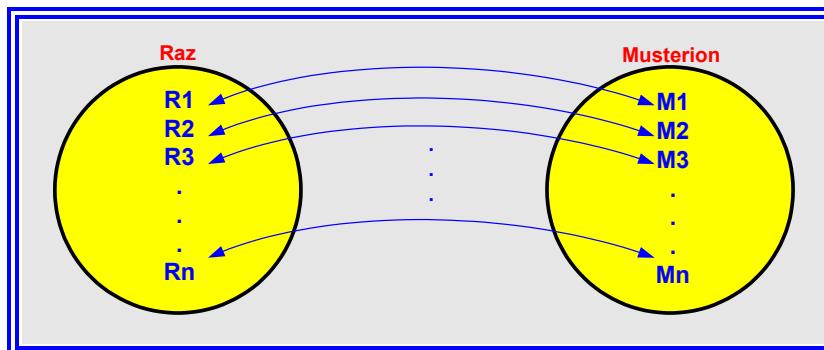


Figure 1. *The Musterion HEB-LXX Mapping*

As the figure above illustrates, every Hebrew occurrence of Raz corresponds to the LXX usage of μυστηριον. This mapping provides a wealth of information as to how the LXX Translators viewed the Hebrew רָזֶ (Raz) whereby their usage needs to be brought into our New Testament understanding.

Thus, the standard usage of μυστηριον is the "thing revealed to the inductees or initiates". If we bring this usage to the New Testament, μυστηριον is "something that was once hidden, but now revealed to the initiates" (e.g., disciples regarding things of the Kingdom Gospel and the Body regarding things of Paul's Gospel).

2.1. Non-Pauline Usage

A total of 7 occurrences of μυστηριον appear outside of Paul, corresponding to 26% of its total usage. The Gospel usage (3 in number) refer to the Parables of the Kingdom taught to Israel by the Savior himself, while the remaining 4 usages occur in John's Apocalypse, corresponding to 15%. For specific usages see the table above. Each of these occurrences reveals some aspect of the Kingdom Gospel previously unrevealed in the Hebrew Scriptures.

2.2. Pauline Usage

A total of 20 occurrences of μυστηριον occur in Paul, making an overwhelming 74% usage in Paul.

Paul's Gospel is identified as "the mystery" as seen in Rom 16:25 and Col 1:23-26:

Rom 16:25(a,b) Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery

We see a correlation and equivalence between Paul's Gospel and the Mystery. The phrase that Paul uses to describe his gospel is τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου, literally "the gospel of me". Paul uses the possessive pronoun μου and articulates "the gospel" τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν providing a very intense form. He could have simply stated εὐαγγέλιον meaning "my gospel" or "a gospel of me". **The Gospel of Paul is in fact the Mystery.**

This same theme is more explicitly in Col 1:23-26:

...the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister ... according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery

In these verses, Paul was made a minister of the very Gospel given to him. His Gospel is labeled as "the mystery", as seen in Paul's using of the emphatic form of "καὶ", which in verse 26 is translated "Even" or better yet "that is".

Thus, Paul's Gospel is the mystery that was once hidden from creation, but now revealed to his audience (the Body) by him and his apostleship.

3. The Relationship of Paul's Gospel to Time

In this section we shall examine the relationship of Paul's Gospel to time. Paul categorically states that his gospel has been hidden, but now revealed through him and his apostleship. To thoroughly understand this we need to examine the biblical view of time.

3.1. The Biblical View of Time

The Bible begins with the very notion of **time**, space, and matter (Gen 1:1):

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

The Hebrew word for "in the beginning" is בְּרֵאשִׁית (re' shiyth) which means "beginning", but here it is modified with the proclitic preposition בְ (b^e) and literally translated "IN the beginning". Thus, we see a reference to the *absolute first* for existence of time. Prior to Genesis 1:1 time did not exist. To better understand this concept the following graphic illustrates the creation of time.

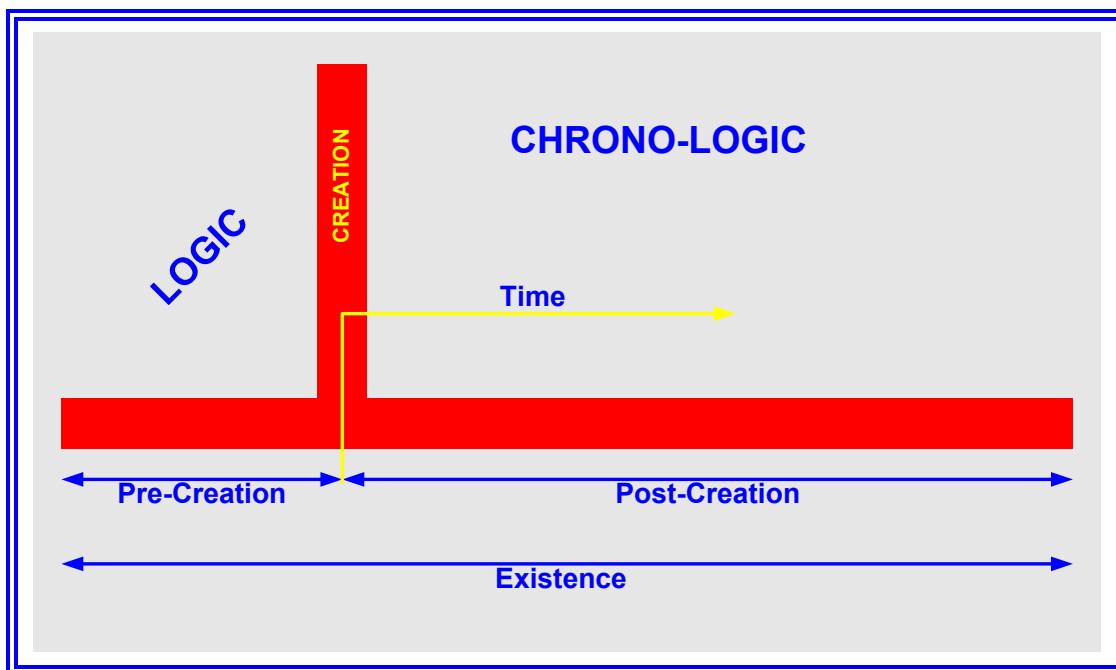


Figure 2. Time, Logic, and Chrono-Logic

The figure above illustrates the relationship of time to logic and chrono-logic. Prior to the creation of time, time did not exist; time is a created entity, and since we don't usually think in these terms, we sometimes get befuddled when talking about events or things *prior to* creation. Since time did not exist before Gen 1:1, we can not think of sequences or events in a "chronological way", only in a "logical" way. When we think about things that are said to be "before" creation, we are forced to think about them in a "logical" way and must be careful not to try and think about them "chrono-logically".

An example of this thinking is when considering the "decrees" of God - as God thought about them prior to Creation (which in itself is a decree). When considering the decrees of God prior to Creation, we can only discuss them with regard to their logical sequence and relationship. Not until time is created can we see God's decrees working out in a chronological way. So when discussing God's decrees before creation, we are discussing their logical relationship and hence their logical priority in the mind of God - In a very real sense, "thinking God's thoughts after Him". See section 3.3 below for a brief listing of items within the decrees of God.

Having this machinery at our fingertips, we can now examine the relative logical priority in the mind of God with regard to His Salvation plan. In the sub-sections below, we briefly examine the idea of "logical priority" with regard to the Kingdom Gospel and Paul's Gospel.

3.2. The Relationship of the Kingdom Gospel to Biblical Time

One of the Biblical doctrines related to the decrees of God and His "thinking about them" is the Kingdom Gospel. This Gospel is specifically stated to be "from the foundation of the world" (i.e., the creation of time).

Mat 13:35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Here we see that various items related to the Kingdom Gospel have been hidden since (from) time began. This implies that at the time of Israel's 2nd Generation the entirety of the Kingdom Gospel was not yet revealed. Various aspects of this Gospel were "hidden", and they have been hidden since (from) the creation of time (Gen 1:1).

Israel's Kingdom was "prepared from" or at the beginning of time and therefore known to Creation.

Mat 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

To summarize Israel's Gospel, the Kingdom Gospel has been known in space-time every since time began. Indeed, we see that the entire Old Testament is a record of Israel's salvation along with the salvation of the Righteous Gentiles (Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abimilech, Ninevites, Cornelius, Ethiopian Eunuch, Syro-Phonecian Woman, etc.). The "mysteries" associated with the Kingdom Gospel are elements of that program not revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures, though the general plan of the Kingdom Gospel was well known.

3.3. The Relationship of Paul's Gospel to Biblical Time

In contrast to Israel's Gospel, Paul's Gospel has been hidden from BEFORE the creation of time.

Eph 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

The phrase "BEFORE the foundation of the world" implies that Paul's Gospel was not revealed to any portion of creation, and therefore no-created-thing new about the Body Gospel - it had been hidden from the space-time-matter continuum.

3.4. A Summary of Paul's Gospel and Time

To briefly summarize and correlate the information in sections 3.1-3.3 above, the phrases "from the foundation of the world" and "before the foundation of the world" force us to consider the logical priority of God's "salvation thinking" prior to His creating time.

God decreed His plan of salvation in the following order:

1. First, He decreed Christ and His Body (1 Pet 1:20 .cp. Eph 1:4-5)
2. Secondly, He decreed the Elect Angels (by extension and implication)
3. Thirdly, He decreed Israel (Mat 13:35; 25:34; Rev 13:8; 17:8)
4. And finally, He decreed the Elect Gentiles (by extension and implication)

4. The Content of Paul's Gospel

Paul's Gospel, the Body program was hidden from all of creation and kept secret, only known within the Godhead Himself. Only at the appointed time, did God ordain to reveal His "secret" and form the Body of Christ in space-time. It is this Gospel revealed to Paul by the post-ascended Christ and taught throughout the Pauline Epistles. In this section we shall define and briefly consider the Gospel of Paul, the Mystery that is said to be Great [μεγάλη] (Eph 5:32).

4.1. Jew-Gentile Equality and the Doctrine of the One Body

In Ephesian 4, Paul provides us with the great doctrinal statement to which the Body of Christ is to master. He provides this statement in the form of 7 elements, which he calls "ONES". This statement is found in Eph 4:4-6:

Eph 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
4 *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*
5 *One Lord, one faith, one baptism,*
6 *One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

Verses 4 through 6 provide the list of elements that the Body is to master, to come into a detailed knowledge, and to obey by living a life that honors these seven great "Ones". These "Ones" are the elements that make up the Body's Doctrinal Statement, which Paul presents to us using a Grammatical Construction called *Introversion*, and illustrated in the figure below.

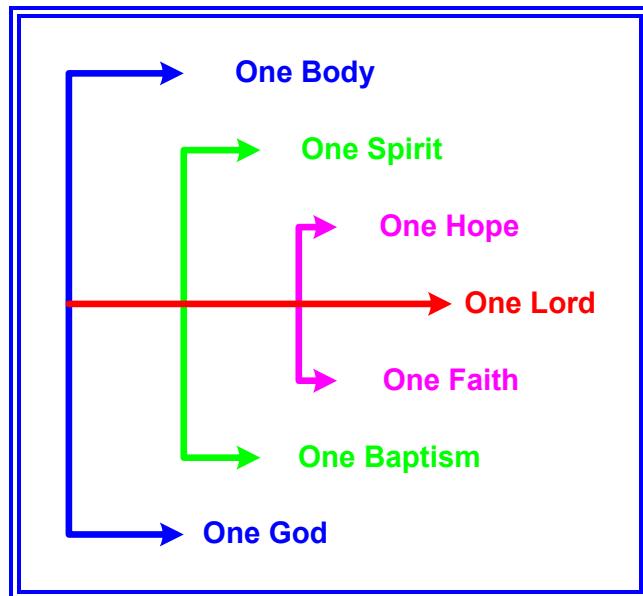


Figure 3. The Seven-Ones of Ephesians 4

The Introversion is used to show relationships among the members of the list: The first element with the last, the second with the second-to-last, and so on. In Eph 4:4-6, we see relationships exist between the One Body and the One God, the One Spirit and the One Baptism, the One Hope and the One Faith, all centered-around the One Lord. But how are we to understand this great Introversion? How are we to understand the specifics of each "One"? Like a good Algebra teacher, Paul does not leave us lurking in ignorance without the hope of mastering our subject. A good Algebra teacher always provides a sufficient number of examples in class so that his students can go home and cipher their homework problems on their own. This is precisely what Paul has done - by providing an example of one of the elements, he has given us the key to unlock the rest. Where is this example, and which element does he use as his teaching tool? It (the key) is found in Ephesians 2:11-16.⁵

- 11 Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

12 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:

13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*;

15 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;

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

The context of the Eph 2 passages above is describing the group of people (namely the Body of Christ), who will be jointly (equally) seated upon the very same throne that Christ in his Humanity is seated. To summarize the verses above, the Body of Christ is made up of both Jews and Gentiles, saved into a singular non-ethnic Body of which there is one and only one. This is only to be understood in light of Israel's Kingdom, where there are many Bodies, each of which is of a particular ethnic background (e.g., Ethiopian, Assyrian, Egyptian, etc.). The Body of Christ is a non-ethnic Body that has been constructed and formulated by the finished work of Christ. The Atonement of Christ for the Body has broken down the middle-wall of partition that separated Jew from Gentile and has brought each into the same, singular body. This singular body relationship between Jew and Gentile necessarily implies Jew and Gentile equality, which Eph 2:6 addresses when addressing the place to which we spend eternity. Furthermore, it is important to reiterate that it is the shed blood of Christ that has purchased this Jew-Gentile Equality into One Body. Paul further states that Christ's Atonement for the Body has purchased for it a non-ceremonial expression (**15 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;**), such that there exists no religious ceremony, no ritual, nor ordinance that is to be practiced today, during the Body-Age.

⁵ Recall that Eph 3 forms a Parenthesis between Chapters 2 and 4. Chapter 4 could logically start immediately after Chapter 2 if Chapter 3 was to be left out. This Grammatical Construction is called *Parenthesis*, whereby the Parenthesis is used to amplify some aspect of the item discussed before (Chapter 2 - the very example to which we turn for understanding our 7-Ones of Chapter 4).

Thus, to summarize the One Body, Paul has provided for us in Eph 2, the understanding that the One Body refers to the peace that has been made between Jew and Gentile by the Blood of Christ. Christ's Atonement has purchased this non-ethnic, non-ritualistic, singular group, called the Body of Christ.

It is this group, the Body of Christ that was kept secret from BEFORE the creation of time - never revealed in space-time (creation) until Paul. The Body is the completion of God's triad Elect, comprising Gentiles, Jew, and the non-ethnic Body of Christ.

One further element of the One Body is its awesomely close relationship to Christ. Paul reveals this relationship of Body to Christ in Eph 5:25-32:

22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.
23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.
24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.
25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;
26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,
27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.
28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.
29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:
30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.
31 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.
32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Paul uses the imagery of the sexual union between husband and wife as a picture of Christ's relationship to the Body. During the sexual union of husband and wife, they become one, whereby the woman becoming "bone of his bones" and "flesh of his flesh" is the extension of her husband. In like manner, the Body of Christ is the extended non-Incarnate humanity of Christ. This is the message of Eph 5:32 that the Great Mystery is the Body of Christ and its relationship to Christ. This awesome relationship to the Savior was not revealed to creation until Paul, but kept secret within the Godhead - the notion that a group of redeemed sinners are to be seated on the very same throne as Christ, and to be His extended humanity was not known (**Eph 1:23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.**) - had it been known, the fallen angels would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:
8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Had the demons known that their crucifying of the Savior was to bring about a group of redeemed sinners to be in authority over them, and serve in their defeat (Rom 16:20), they as the ultimate arminians, would not have crucified Christ.

4.2. Administrative Authority Over Angels

Israel is under the authority of the angels. The angels are referred to as Israel's lords (Dan 10:16, 17, 19; 12:8), gods (Psm 8:5; 82:1, 6; 1 Cor 8:5), and spirits (Ez 1:21; 2:2 .cp. Heb 7:7). In this regard the angels are the overseers of Israel's Kingdom and are the channel of blessing to the nation.

The angels were and will be the administrators of Israel's Kingdom as indicated in the following verses:

Acts 7:52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:
53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

Gal 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

In contrast to Israel, the Body of Christ is in administrative authority over the angels. This is seen directly in 1 Cor 6:3:

2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?
3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

The Greek word translated "judge" is κρινω and typically means "to judge in the sense of discern, administrate, or adjudicate" - not necessarily in the sense of condemn. Indeed, how could the Body "judge in the sense of condemn" holy righteous angels?

4.3. Eternal Location of the Body's One Hope

Israel's hope is an earthly one - to inherit the land promised to Abraham and to administrate the righteous Gentile nations. We see this explicitly stated when Peter asks about the disciples' roles in the future Kingdom:

Mat 19:27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? 28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man **shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**

In contrast to Israel, the Body's hope is heavenly:

Eph 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:**

The place from which the Body's blessings flow is heaven. Indeed, it is just not heaven, but the "upon-heaven", the Greek word being *επουρανος*, meaning the "upon-heavens" or "super-heavens". We know from 2 Cor 12 that the specific heaven to which Paul refers is the highest of heavens, namely the Third Heaven⁶:

2 Corinthians 12:1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.
2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up **to the third heaven.**
3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) 4 How that **he was caught up into paradise**, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Moreover, the Body is to sit on the Father's throne for eternity:

Eph 1:20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and **set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,**
21 **Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:**
22 And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church,
23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Note that Christ in His Humanity is seated upon the Father's Throne in authority over the angelic realm. Continuing on in Ephesians in the very same context:

Eph 2:6 And hath **raised us up together**, and made **us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:**

The Body is to sit on the very same throne as Christ is seated in His Humanity. For eternity the Body sits on the Father's Throne ruling the entire created order - this is the Body's Hope!!!

4.4. Summary of the Body's Hope

The Hope of the Body of Christ is the personal and eternal union with Christ BOTH in His holy state and exaltation over all powers and authorities, including all of the angelic hosts. In its administrative position over all the heavens, the Body is the direct, personal, and full expression of Christ's administrative position over God's eternal, created order. Everything manifested in the Humanity of Christ as he now sits in the Third Heaven is manifested both individually and corporately by members of His Body.⁷

⁶ From a Biblical usage point of view, typically the First Heaven is the Earth's Atmosphere, the Second Heaven being the created Universe, and the Third Heaven being the uncreated Heaven.

⁷ Stephen Rodabaugh, **A Dispensational Survey of Scripture Centered-Around the Seven Ones of the Body of Christ**, Trinity Grace Fellowship, Pittsburgh, PA, 1983, revised 1997.

4.5. The Revealing of the Great Mystery

(A) Christ directly revealed the mystery to Paul.

(1) Paul personally saw Christ after the Ascension.

1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?

(2) Paul's "revealed visions" from Christ, whereby the Greek word αποαλυψης, translated "revealed" carries with it the notion of "personal" revealing. That Christ personally revealed the mystery to Paul.

2 Corinthians 12:1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and **revelations** of the Lord.

2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but *now* I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me *to be*, or *that* he heareth of me.

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the **revelations**, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure

(3) Personally taught by Christ 3 years in the Wilderness.

Gal 1:12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the **revelation of Jesus Christ**.

13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace,

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

(4) The Dispensation of the Mystery is given to Paul.

Ephesians 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

5 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;

6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

9 And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

Col 1:23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

27 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:

(5) First revelation of the Mystery may have been at Paul's regeneration.

Acts 9:3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5 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.

6 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.

(6) The Mystery committed into Paul's Trust.

1 Tim 1:11 According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

(B) The Pauline Apostleship received the Mystery either through Paul directly or through the One Spirit, never through Christ personally.

(1) Timothy received the Mystery through Paul.

1 Tim 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, *which is our hope;*

2 **Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith:** Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord

2 Tim 1:13 Hold fast the form of sound words, **which thou hast heard of me**, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

2 Tim 2:1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 **And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses,** the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

2 Tim 3:14 **But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;**

15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

(2) Titus received the Mystery through Paul.

Tit 1:4 To Titus, **mine own son after the common faith:** Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

(3) Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus received the Mystery through Paul.

Phlm 1:1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy *our* brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer,

2 And to *our* beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house

19 I Paul have written *it* with **mine own hand**, I will repay *it*: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.

(4) The Pauline Apostleship received the Mystery through the One Spirit.

Eph 3:5 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;**

Eph 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the **apostles and prophets**, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner **stone**

1 Cor 2:6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, **even the hidden wisdom**, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

10 But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

13 **Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.**

14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

(5) Corollary Note.

When Paul died, his Apostleship ceased. There is no Biblical warrant for apostolic succession.

5. Related Mysteries

As enumerated in Table 1, there are 9 explicit mysteries discussed in the New Testament. These mysteries are logically related, starting with the mystery of the Israel's blindness through the mystery Babylon.⁸

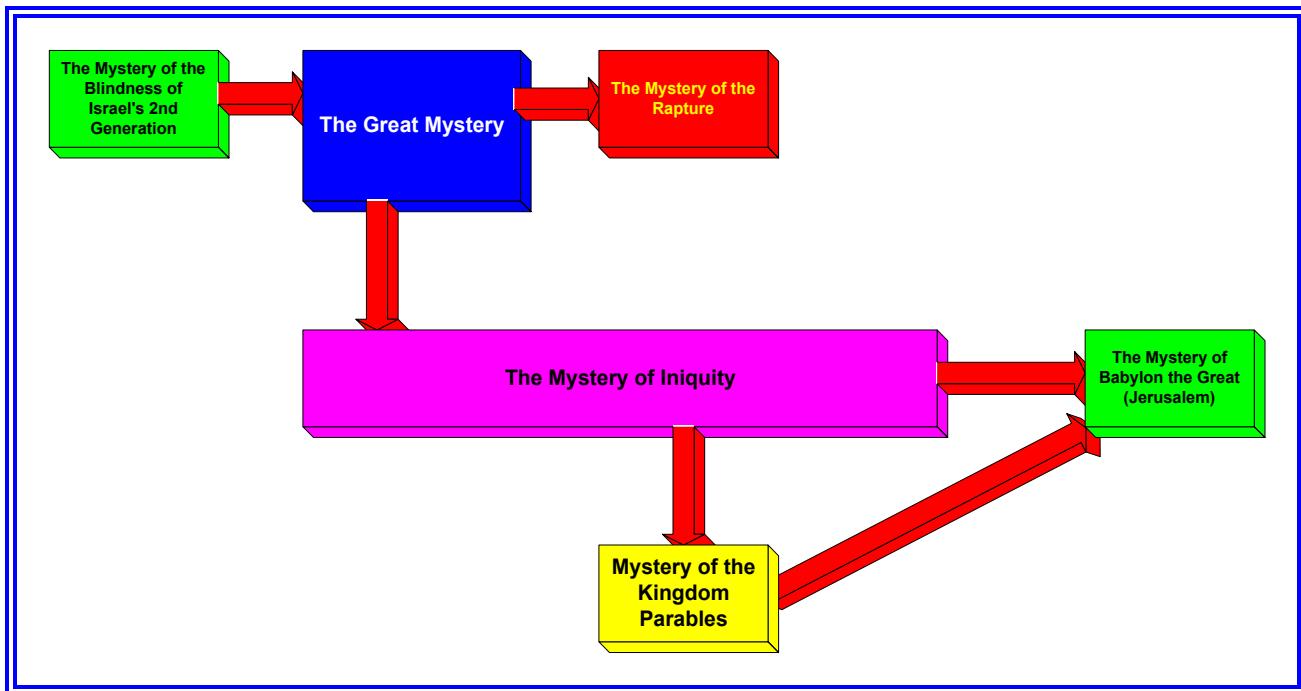


Figure 4. A Correlation of the Biblical Mysteries

The Figure above illustrates the relationship of 6 of the 9 mysteries of the New Testament. The following sections briefly discuss each of the mysteries in this figure.

5.1. The Mystery of Israel's Blindness - God's Mechanism for the Body's Generation

This mystery states that the apostasy of Israel's 2nd Generation is the mechanism that God uses to usher in His great secret, the Body of Christ. Because Israel's 2nd Generation rejects Messiah and the ministry of the Twelve, God casts off the nation, and ushers in the Body Program. It is important to note that this is not going from "Plan A" to "Plan B", but rather as the Scripture indicates, is God's means by which He chose to bring in the Great Mystery - the Body of Christ.

Rom 11:25 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.

5.2. The Mystery of the Rapture - the Body's Earthly Terminus

The Body of Christ is the subject of the Great Mystery - the notion that a group of redeemed men and women are saved to be the Christ's righteous extended non-incarnate humanity, ruling over the entire created order, and seated upon the Father's Throne as Christ now sits in His Humanity.

Because the Body is a mystery, it naturally falls out that its terminus must also be a mystery. Thus, the Rapture, the ending the Body Age upon the Earth is called a mystery.

1 Cor 15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,
52 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.
53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

The Rapture is that event which causes the Body to enter its hope, and the very event that begins God's dealing with Israel as a nation. So while the Blindness of Israel generated the Body Age, the ending of the Body Age is the cue for God dealing with Israel on a national level.

This has God's ordained plan.

⁸ In this study, I have not discussed the last three usages of μυστήριον.

5.3. The Mystery of Iniquity - the Gospel of the Anti-Body

The great mystery, the Body of Christ was a total surprise to all of creation, including Satan and his minions. Once the Body was started Satan immediately followed with a "Body Gospel" of his own, called the "Mystery of Iniquity". It is the Gospel in opposition to Paul's Gospel, and it is the Gospel of the Anti-Body, the reprobates within the Body-Age. It is this mystery-Gospel that is used to generate the apostasy of Israel's 3rd Generation.

2 Thes 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way

The mystery of Iniquity will continue to oppose Paul's Gospel until the Rapture, when the Body is taken out of the way and whose presence no longer restrains.

5.4. The Mystery of the Kingdom Parables - the Nature of Future Israel

The Kingdom Parable Mysteries as discussed in Mat 13 are parables that describe the nature of 3rd Generation Israel.

Mat 13:24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The Wheat is described as God's Servants, while the Tares are those sown by Satan. The Wheat represent true-human-Israelites of Israel's 3rd Generation, while the Tares represent nephilimic-Israelites, sired by Satan and His minions who come out of Tartarus and attempt to destroy the seed of Israel who ultimately play their part in destroying Satan's Kingdom. The seed of Israel, who are God's human instrument, who participate in a very large way in the destruction Satan's Kingdom is the 144K.

5.5. The Mystery Babylon - Future Jerusalem, the City Beloved of Reprobates

The Mystery of Babylon discusses the condition of the city of Jerusalem during Israel's 3rd Generation.

8 And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of **the great city**, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was **crucified**.

Rev 14:8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of her fornication.

Rev 16:19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

Revelation 17:1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

It is Jerusalem that is being labeled Babylon, not the Chaldean City of Babylon. Jerusalem becomes thoroughly corrupted during the 3rd Generation, being an epi-center of nephilimic activity.

6. Summary

Paul's Gospel, describes the Atonement of Christ as appropriating a group of redeemed sinners, from out of both Jew and Gentile, placing them into a singular non-ethnic Body, whose hope is to spend eternity in the 3rd Heaven, seated upon the Father's Throne, ruling the entire created order, and administrating the affairs of the angelic realm. This group is called the Body of Christ and represents the full expression of Christ's Humanity, just as the wife expresses her husband's full manliness within the marriage union.

It is this group, called the Body of Christ and its associated Gospel that is the Great Mystery.