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A Mystery Solved

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Series: I Timothy

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Nothing is more satisfying than to pick up a mystery and begin to read it, and think you know whodunit. Granted, you're probably wrong more than two thirds of the time, but most of the time, part way through, it looks to you as though the butler hid the knife, tricked the maid into knocking on the door, while the master of the house was sleeping, and well, you know that he hid the knife in the gardener's shed. The gardener had a motive and he was being discharged by the owner and had been heard threatening him the same day. The butler, however, owed the master 700 shillings and was being pressured to pay up, since that gambling debt the master owed, that nobody knew about, had to be paid or else.

Meanwhile, Essie, the nosy neighbor, left her fingerprints on the knife, because she had been tricked into borrowing it to prune a tree. Anyway, you get the picture. But *you know* (even though no one else does), that it's really the master's sister who did it, because she's still holding a grudge over how they handled Mommy's will.

It all seems so obvious. Why doesn't the inspector wake up? He's barking up the wrong tree. Doesn't he know that the butler couldn't have done it? You race to the last chapter, skipping no less than a third of the book, seeking to prove that your wisdom borders on that of Alfred Hitchcock and Erle Stanley Gardner combined. But, alas, the author of the book somehow missed the obvious. It wasn't the sister at all. It was Melvin Mortenheimer, the delivery boy for the florist who had been in love with the other daughter, and was bitter that he was not allowed to marry her. What a silly conclusion. You almost wish you'd never read it. Oh, well, at least the mystery has been solved.

So it's exciting to solve a mystery. And that is why for generations a handful of simple plots have been resurrected with slightly different characters and have sold millions of books,

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been made into thousands of movies, and hundreds of plays. Everybody loves a mystery because everybody loves to be the one to solve it.

God seems to understand that. He loves mysteries, too. All throughout the New Testament, the theme is the revelation of a great mystery. The gospel is a miraculous, marvelous mystery story. It is a secret that has been hidden for generations. Everywhere there were hidden clues. Page after page promises that the day was coming when the secret would be revealed. The answer to the greatest whodunit of the ages would one day be unveiled. The Old Testament prophets with their pipes and cloaks and magnifying glasses searched for the answer. They thought they had an idea. But the revelation is ours. We have been made heirs to the last chapter. It is no wonder, then, that the word “mystery” played such a big part in the New Testament. Paul wrote of it no less than twelve times. The mystery of eternity had been solved at last. No small wonder, then, that the apostle, in his first letter to Timothy, went to such great lengths to explain it.

When we left Paul, he had been interviewing men for positions of leadership in the local church. He had been giving them instructions about both the characteristics and the character of the godly man. He spoke of two basic positions that must be filled in the local fellowship: the role of elder (those who would act as spiritual shepherds) and the role of deacon (those who would act as spiritual servants). The requirements were amazingly similar for both offices.

Then Paul inserts a parenthesis, explaining the reason he was writing. It went like this:

These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly;

but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth.

(I Timothy 3:14,15 NKJV)

Paul suddenly inserts an explanation for the letter, which by now is about half finished. It is Paul’s goal, if it is God’s will, to see Timothy face to face before long. But Paul is not sure God will allow that. So he is writing this letter to remind young Tim to teach the Ephesians, “how to conduct themselves in the house of God”. Now Paul does something

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unusual. He literally breaks into song. He begins to pour out an anthem of the revelation of God's great mystery. Listen to what Paul says:

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. (I Timothy 3:16 NKJV)

Now it is common knowledge among many biblical scholars that these words became a hymn that was sung in the early church, and while there was a kind of poetic lilt to the lyrics, the message was heavy.

This revelation is the culmination of the entire gospel rolled into one brief anthem of worship. It is the ultimate mystery revealed. But before we look at what it says, let's take a walk through Scripture and look at the other places that Greek word *musterion* is used.

It is a most unusual journey. We will see that God has a number of special secrets he has revealed only to "those who have eyes to see". There are those to whom the secrets will remain secrets, and those to whom the answers are clear. Our title and our outline:

- I- The Secret of the Secrets
- II- The Secrets of the Kingdom
 - A- The Secret of the Israeli Veil
 - B- The Secret of the Graveyard
 - C- The Secret of the Newfound Door
 - D- The Secret of the Angel Academy
 - E- The Secret of the Marriage Vow
 - F- The Secret of the Invisible One

THE SECRET OF THE SECRETS

The Bible is filled with secrets. And it is filled with secrets about the secrets. Christianity is actually a "secret" society with open membership. "Whosoever will" may join, but once in, there are things those "inside" come to know that those "outside" never can. And no one can break the code. It is the Order of GOSYS. GOSYS stands for "Grace Only Saved Your Soul", and once you recognize that and receive God's gift, you are "in" Christ. You are "in" the secret society of "Born-Again Ones". Once in, you receive

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your “secret decoder”. His name is the Holy Spirit. He acts as an interpreter who takes the secrets of the Kingdom and reveals them to all those who are “in” Christ. And the secrets about the secrets tell the story.

Let’s look at what the Scripture says first, then, *about the secrets themselves*. Two in particular must be noted:

1- These secrets are hidden by God from all unbelievers, but revealed to every believer. What that means is that an unbeliever *cannot* understand or interpret spiritual truth or see the secrets of the Kingdom revealed. Jesus said in Mark,

“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.”
(Mark 4:11 NKJV)

Paul wrote in I Corinthians 2:14,

But the natural man [the unbeliever] does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

In verse 7, however, he said this:

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

But as it is written:

*“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”*

But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

(I Corinthians 2:7-10a,12 NKJV)

Either you’re in the society or not. If you are, all the truth that exists is yours. If you’re not, all your good works, all your education, all your religiosity won’t help. The secrets of the kingdom are hidden from you.

2- God’s secrets are locked up in His Word, and when it was

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completed, everything hidden was made known...but only to those who had eyes to see.

Revelation 10:7 says,

but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.

Revelation 22:18 adds,

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;

The secrets are all out. It's all in the handbook. God's not going to find some prophet in Louisiana or Beirut or Scotland or Korea and whisper something new in his ear that man has never heard before. He's not going to invent some new secrets and give exclusive rights to a chosen few. Satan does that. God doesn't. God's Word is finished.

Deuteronomy 4:2 adds,

You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

So the secrets about the secrets are two-fold:

- 1) No unbeliever can understand them and all believers can.
- 2) There are no new secrets. Everything that ever will be revealed has been revealed in the manual of the society, The Word of God.

THE SECRETS OF THE KINGDOM

Now for the secrets themselves. The Bible is filled with them, but we will only look at those that the Scripture specifically refers to with that one Greek word *musterion*. Imagine, if you will, that you are in your favorite bookstore, and there in the section marked "mysteries" are all your favorite authors. Suddenly your eye strikes another shelf. The sign says, "Mysteries of The Kingdom Series," Jehovah God, author. Imagine that, because it is exactly what we are about to see. We will look at six different volumes of them, and though the names we are giving them are fictional, the secrets contained therein are not.

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The Secret of the Israeli Veil

The first title to catch your attention is called “The Secret of the Israeli Veil”. The subtitle below adds, “*They see, but they do not see.*” Sounds intriguing, doesn’t it? Let’s read the jacket on the book and see just what it’s about. Apparently it comes from Romans 11:25. There it says,

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. (Romans 11:25 NKJV)

It’s a mystery! But you and I know the answer. The clues are written for all to see; but they do not have eyes to see, so they see not. The *mystery* has been revealed. It is this: Israel has a veil over its eyes, so that except for isolated Jews who choose to believe, the nation of Israel cannot see who Jesus is! God, you see, has allowed a veil to cover their spirits and they think Jesus was a good man, or a hypocrite, or even a phony! But they do not know He was God. And they won’t know. They won’t understand until the last Gentile has been saved. Then the mystery will be revealed to them, as well. So God is saying, “I’ve got a secret. It is that the Jews have been purposefully blinded until the time of the Gentiles has passed.”

Now don’t try to share that secret with anyone who is not a Christian. Why? God didn’t intend for you to. It’s one of the secrets of the society of the saints. Sharing it with someone else is like speaking in a foreign tongue; they do not understand.

The Secret of the Graveyard

Mystery number two has an equally intriguing title. You almost have to buy that one and see the plot unfold. It’s called “The Secret of the Graveyard”. It’s found in I Corinthians 15,

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.

“Oh Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”
(I Corinthians 15:51,52,55 NKJV)

Paul is saying that here’s another secret the unbeliever

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cannot grasp. No wonder those outside of Christ are so afraid of death. No wonder the world wants to prolong life even at the expense of adding pain and suffering and additional grief. They cannot understand that death is the beginning! Death is the door through which man enters into a world where there is no pain; there is no suffering; there is no grief. Unbelieving man does not have that hope and cannot understand that truth. But we do... and we can.

One glorious day, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, in a split second of time so fast it is immeasurable, a trumpet will blast; and those who have died “in Christ” will be given brand new bodies. Their graves will be emptied; they will receive bodies likened to Christ’s glorious resurrection body and they shall be changed. Oh, Beloved, these pain-riddled, age-assaulted bodies of ours are going the way of the Dempsey Dumpster. We won’t ever have to mess with them again. Your arthritis will be cured. Your ailing heart will beat like a new one. Your eyesight will be restored. Your mind will function with the quickness of a genius. Your body will be so free from encumbrances you will be able to pass through space and through matter as though it were not there.

You won’t need a suburban to get from here to there. You won’t need an airline ticket to reach your destination. You won’t have to run to avoid missing the last bus or the next service or the beginning of school. You won’t have to run or rush at all. You will but decide and you will be where you decide to be. And in a body that *cannot hurt, cannot weaken, cannot die*. It’s a mystery! But you know, and I know, the secret. The secret of the graveyard need never trouble us again.

The Secret of the Newfound Door

The next novel on the shelf of God’s mystery section is entitled “The Mystery of the Newfound Door”. The cover indicates it came from an original story written by a man named Saul of Tarsus, though that apparently was his pre-conversion pen name. In Ephesians, chapter 3, we read,

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—

if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

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how that by revelation He made known to me the *mystery*
(as I have briefly written already,

by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge
in the mystery of Christ),

which in other ages was not made known to the sons of
men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to his holy
apostles and prophets:

that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body,
and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,

of which I became a minister according to the gift of the
grace of God given to me by the effective working of His
power. (Ephesians 3:1-7 NKJV)

Paul is saying, “Hey, guys, I’ve learned another secret! I know who dunit! God did! God has opened the door of heaven to the Gentiles.” Paul is saying that he’s been appointed to tell the world. This gospel that once was reserved only for His chosen Jews is now available to all. Read all about it! The mystery’s been solved. God has opened a newfound door to heaven. And you are invited to come in.

The Secret of the Academy of Angels

Secret number four takes us straight to heaven for a glimpse at choir practice, and a word about the whispering taking place in the cloakroom at the Eternal Church of Heaven. Angela Angel is telling Cherry Abim what she just saw. “Cherry, the young soprano, is saying, “I just looked down from heaven, and I saw a man named Paul, and he was offering heaven to Gentiles. Wow! How wise is our God. He has taken the foolishness of men and turned it for His glory. The Jews rejected His only Son, so He used that rejection to free the whole world from sin. Praise God!”

Far-fetched? I think not. Look at Ephesians 3. Listen to the Amplified New Testament It reads,

To me, though I am the very least of all the saints (God’s consecrated people), this grace (favor, privilege) was granted and graciously entrusted: to proclaim to the Gentiles the unending (boundless, fathomless, incalculable, and exhaustless) riches of Christ [wealth which no human being could have searched out],

Also to enlighten all men and make plain to them what is the plan [regarding the Gentiles and providing for the salvation

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of all men] of the mystery kept hidden through the ages and concealed until now in [the mind of] God Who created all things by Christ Jesus.

[The purpose is] that through the church the complicated, many-sided wisdom of God in all its infinite variety and innumerable aspects might now be made known to the angelic rulers and authorities (principalities and powers) in the heavenly sphere.

This is in accordance with the terms of the eternal and timeless purpose which He has realized and carried into effect in [the person of] Jesus Christ, our Lord,

(Ephesians 3:8-11 AMP)

Another mystery has been solved. Why did God choose the precise moment He did and the exact way He did to reveal His plan to the Gentiles through Paul? Because there is an academy for angels in heaven, and you and I are their instructors. They learn by watching us. And the moment God revealed His plan to the Gentiles, the angelic host burst into song because they even more perfectly than before understood the manifold wisdom of God.

The Secret of the Marriage Vow

Mystery number five is revealed every time two believers walk down the aisle and say, "I Do". It is the mystery of the marriage vow. Paul speaks of it in Ephesians 5 that reads,

"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.

(Ephesians 5:31,32 NKJV)

It's a mystery. Why did God design marriage the way He did? Why did God call Israel His bride? Why does a man leave his parents and give himself solely to his wife? Because our Savior left His Father in heaven and came to take us as his bride. He will cleave to us, and we shall be one with Him even as His very Spirit indwells us and guarantees that He will never leave us *no matter what*. It's a mystery! God just revealed the secret. It is that the husband represents Christ, and the wife represents the church in God's scheme of things. This is why marriage was designed to be permanent, because our relationship with Him is permanent. It's a mystery. But Paul is saying, it need no longer be a secret to the Christian. The unbeliever can't comprehend this truth. But we can.

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The Secret of the Invisible One

I like this next title. It sounds *mysterious* indeed. “The Secret of the Invisible One”. Sounds like the kind of stuff great stories are made of.

Colossians 1 is where this mystery is solved. Listen to what it says:

of which I [Paul] became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God,

the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:25-27 NKJV)

Christ within...that's the mystery. How to live this Christian life? That's the question. *Christ in you, the hope of glory*. That's the answer. That's the secret revealed. It is a mystery the unbeliever cannot understand. God live *in you*? That makes no sense to the natural mind. But the mysteries of the kingdom are not supposed to make sense to the natural mind. Ah, but to those who have *eyes to see*, nothing else makes sense. The invisible God is alive in me! He is alive in you! He has revealed to us the mystery of the One within, praise God!

Back now to the mystery of mysteries and back to I Timothy 3:16. “Great is the mystery of godliness.” What is the mystery of godliness? It is the whole gamut of the mysteries unfolded. It is that God became a man so that man, could be inhabited by God. It is that God became a slave, so man could one day rule. It is that God died so that man need *never die*. It is that those who believe, *even now*, cannot only be spared the horrors of hell, not only be assured the glories of heaven; but that any man, any woman, Jew or Gentile, male or female, could, *by receiving a simple gift in childlike faith*, actually have God Himself come to live in him, to live in her, granting a taste of heaven on their way to heaven...the likeness of God in the body of man. God inhabiting fallen man, “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy...” That's the mystery of mysteries...the mystery of godliness.

Here it is one more time from the pen of Paul. First he said:

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God was manifested in the flesh, (I Timothy 3:16b NKJV)

The living God, sinless, perfect, took on our humanity so we could one day share His deity—the perfect God coming to rescue sinful man. Unless you believe that, the mystery will never be solved for you. The secret of the ages, Christ in you, will never become a reality. The whole counsel of God is that “though He was God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, He made Himself nothing, and became a man. And being found in fashion as a man, He chose deliberately to humble Himself even unto the death of the Cross.”¹

That is the mystery of godliness. Secondly, Paul added: “He was vindicated by the Spirit.” In the flesh He died, in the Spirit He rose again triumphantly to reign forever. “He was seen by angels”. This angelic chorus who sits in the grandstands observing the miracle of the grace they’ve never experienced *actually gathered around in heaven and watched God die!* They saw fallen man crucify the Lord of glory, and they watched in awe as He *who could have called ten thousand angels*, submitted to the death of a criminal to save the souls of the likes of us. They must have been volunteering by the legion to rush to His side. They must have wept such tears that the heavens broke forth with a torrential rain at the sight the incarnate God, bleeding to death on a Roman cross.

They must have said to themselves, “This is a mystery”. But, ah, Paul goes on, “He was preached among the Gentiles.” The God who called the Jews out of nothing and gave them everything watched in anguish as they crucified the King of Glory. And then the mystery began to unfold. He called out a new people to Himself, a people who knew Him not. And you and I became the heirs of God; the joint-heirs with Christ.

“He was believed on in the world”², says Paul. This one who “came to His own and His own received Him not”³ reached out to those who were not His own, and they began, one by one, to say, “Yes”. And “to as many as received Him, to them gave He the power to become sons of God.”⁴ A mystery? Oh, dear God, what a mystery.

¹ Philippians 2:6-8

² I Timothy 3:16

³ John 1:11

⁴ John 1:12

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The anthem concludes, “He was received up in glory”⁵. The triumphant Christ, having broken forever the shackles of death, having conquered sin and brought down the judge’s gavel on the satanic host, condemning them to an eventual eternal home where the worm never dies and the fire is never quenched,⁶ this triumphant Christ ascended once again to assume His rightful place at the right hand of the Father, where He, even now, ever lives to make intercession for us.⁷

It was a mystery! But the secret’s out. The truth is known. Man who was destined to an eternal hell has been given the keys to life, and we know who dun’ it, don’t we? Jesus did. God Himself gave Himself so that you and I could enter into a whole new realm of life—life as it was meant to be, reunited with the Creator God, regenerated by His precious blood, returned to that state of holiness in His sight that existed before sin came into the world and the fall. Is that a mystery? To the unbeliever it is indeed. It is the unsolved mystery of man.

But to those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, the mystery has been solved. The story has a happy ending. The enemy who caused it all will rot in hell forever; redeemed man will be caught up together one day soon in the heavens with Him to forever be with the Lord.⁸ Those who have died in Christ will have their resurrection bodies, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and we shall all be changed.⁹

We know the end of the story. It is no longer a secret. It is a secret revealed. To those who have ears to hear and eyes to see, the book is finished. The story is complete. The end is in sight.

But to those who are, even right now, unsure of whether or not their names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, the secret remains a secret. The mystery has not been solved. Man wants to write his own ending to the story, but no matter how he writes it, it’s not a happy ending.

Maybe you know someone who has still not solved the mystery. Or maybe you are someone who has not yet found the answer. If you have never received the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, what you have just heard or read must seem to you like a

⁵ I Timothy 3:16

⁶ Mark 9:48

⁷ Romans 8:34

⁸ I Thessalonians 4:17

⁹ I Corinthians 15:51,52

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mystery, and to you it is.

But Jesus Christ is beckoning to you even this moment. He wants to forgive you of your sins; He wants to cleanse your heart. He wants to come into your life and live there forever. His Father has personally prepared a mansion for you, and He will take you one day into His very presence where there will be no sin, no suffering, no sadness, no sorrow, no mysteries.

And all you have to do is ask Him.

Reach out and take the gift of eternal life that He has purchased for you. Take Him, and you have the gift. When you have Him, you have eternal life and the unsolved secrets of eternity will all be solved at last.

Jesus Christ will save your soul,
He'll open Heaven's door;
And the mysteries of the ages
Will be mysteries no more!

Let's pray.

Our Father and our God,

Thank You that You've solved all the mysteries of the ages and written the answers in a beautiful book and given the book and the secrets to whosoever will. And yet, Father, it's so easy to assume that everyone in a place like this has already solved the mystery, that already knows the secret, and is already in the kingdom, but it's not likely.

And so, our Father, we simply beg You and plead with You to continue the process of reaching out and reaching into the hearts of those who do not know the secrets, who never solved the mystery, who have never ask Jesus to come into their lives. Maybe they've even written about the mysteries or preached about the mysteries or taught about the mysteries, or talked about the mysteries and maybe they have been in the church a long time but have never met the King. It is our prayer this very moment that heaven would touch earth again and quietly in the confines of their own heart they would say yes to Jesus.

Dear Lord Jesus, forgive me of my sin, come into my heart and make me Yours. We pray that even this moment that the transaction may be taking place, and all the mysteries

of the heavens suddenly will be open to them, and the book of books will make sense at last. And the promises of the kingdom will be theirs at last, and they with us shall reign forever and forever and forever.

In Jesus Name,

Amen.

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