

Stewardship of the Seven Mysteries

1 Corinthians 4:1-2

Most people love a good mystery, that's why shows like "*Castle*" and "*C.S.I.*" are popular today. Growing up I loved reading the Hardy Boys mystery novels. Do you know who wrote the Hardy Boys Mysteries? It was NOT Franklin Dixon. Although his name appears on all the books, he didn't write them. There never was a Franklin Dixon—it was only a pen name. The same is true about the Nancy Drew stories. There never was a Carolyn Keene. Both mystery series were the brain child of a man named Edward Stratemeyer. He had such a fertile mind for mystery stories that he had more stories than he could write. So he gathered a group of writers known as the Stratemeyer Syndicate. He outlined story plots and they wrote all 58 books in the Hardy Boys series. So, there's the solution to the mystery behind who was Franklin Dixon.

The word "mystery" occurs 28 times in the N.T. (21 by Paul). In the Bible, "mystery" doesn't mean a detective story. A New Testament mystery is a truth that was hidden in the O.T. and later revealed in the N.T. (Rom. 16:25-26; Col. 1:26). Moses never understood them. Elijah was clueless about them. David was a man after God's own heart, but he was unaware of these mysteries!

- Each mystery could only be known by Divine revelation.
- Each mystery contains a supernatural element.

➡ It is vitally important that we know what these mysteries are. God says we are to be stewards of the mysteries of God. How can a person be a steward of something he doesn't know.

I. **Mystery #1—CHRIST IS GOD** (1 Tim. 3:16).

- One of the greatest verses on the deity of Christ (cf. John 1:1, 14).
- God was made flesh! How can you explain that? A virgin has a baby!!! God showed up as a baby—Mary washed Him; nursed Him; dressed Him! It is a great mystery!
- **Three "mysteries" wrapped up in this one great mystery.**

- A. The mystery of the **UNDERTAKING**—No greater mysterious undertaking than God taking human form.
1. Prior to Christ's incarnation, He was "*in the form of God*" (Phil. 2:6). Jesus was not simply like God—He was God! He could not help to be like God, being God Himself. He was one with the Father!
 2. He created man in His own image. Now He takes upon Himself the image of the man He created. What an UNDERTAKING! He laid His glory aside... left His heavenly position... and condescended to this sinful world to be "*made of a woman*" (Gal. 4:4). Now that is a mystery indeed!
 3. The mystery gets even greater: In this mysterious undertaking He never changed His Person! He is God in eternity... He is God in creation... He was God in the womb of the virgin, Mary... He was God lying in a manger; He was God in life; He was God on the cross; and He was God in the resurrection!
- B. The mystery of the **UNION**. Dual natures of Christ.
1. Christ's deity and humanity must be distinguished as separate natures.

As God, Jesus was what He could never become.

As Man, Jesus became what He never was!

However, for Him to become flesh, His Godhood and His Manhood must become **one**— The union of Christ's divine nature and His human nature into one personality. Jesus was not half God and half man—He was ALL GOD and ALL MAN all at the same time. What a MYSTERY! He was the GOD-MAN.
 2. The truth of Christ being both God and Man is too big for our puny minds to grasp... too high for our low thoughts to reach... and, too much for our small world to take in. Yet, we read in the Bible that "*in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*" (Col. 2:9). By faith we accept this mystery.
- C. The mystery of the **UNVEILING**.

1. Jesus was the glory of God, the full display of the God's glory in human flesh—*"The Word was made flesh and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father"* (John 1:14).
2. The purpose of the incarnation was that God might save us by His grace! "The Son of God became the Son of Man, that we, the sons of men, might become the sons of God." Christ identified with us that we might be identified with Him.
3. The only hope that we, as sinful men, have is that Jesus can connect us back to the Father. Because He is God, He can take hold of God with one hand. Because He is Man, He can take hold of man with the other hand. Because He is the God-man, He can reconcile both God and men in the person of Himself. *"There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus"* (1 Tim. 2:5).

II. **Mystery #2—CHRIST IS IN US** (Col. 1:26-28).

- CHRIST IS IN US! The fact Christ now indwells every believer is a mystery unrevealed in the Old Testament. While the Old Testament revealed many things about the coming of the Messiah, His Person, His message, His program, it never revealed He would indwell every believer. Now revealed in the New Testament.
- *"CHRIST IN YOU"*—The pronoun *"you"* is plural. If Paul was writing to Southerners he would have said, "Christ in ya'll."
- It is a mystery how Jesus could be in me and in you... and you... and you. How can He be in all of us? Is there more than one Jesus? Is Christ divided? No! He is just God!
- The Christ in me is the same Christ that **connects** me with the Christ in you and makes us ONE IN HIM (John 17:11, 21).
- **Three personal applications of this mystery.**
- A SALVATION application: Salvation is not having religion— It is having Jesus living in you (Gal. 2:20).

Salvation is like inviting Jesus come into your life as if He is coming into your home (Rev. 3:20). You invite him into the family

room, the dining room, the kitchen, and even into the closet where you keep your skeletons. But the only way He can make a difference in cleaning up the house is when He becomes the owner, not just a guest. It is at that point you transfer the title deed to Him. He is no longer a resident, He becomes president. IF CHRIST IS IN YOU, HE SHOULD BE RUNNING THINGS!

- B. SECURITY application: When your heart is Christ's home, He doesn't change addresses!
1. In the O.T. God had a temple for His people. In the N.T. He has His people for His temple (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
 - ➡ The temple of God was the place where God displayed His glory. My body, and your body, are the temple of the Holy Spirit where God's glory should be displayed.
 2. Since salvation is Christ dwelling within you, the only way you could lose your salvation would be for Jesus to leave you. He promised He would never leave you or forsake you.
- C. STRENGTH application.
1. "*Christ in you*" gives you the strength to live for Him— Notice Colossians 1:29, "*Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*" It is actually you working in His strength and not your strength. Philippians 2:13, "*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*"
 2. The secret of living the Christian life is NOT trying harder, it is trusting more. It is "*Christ in you, the hope of glory!*"

III. **Mystery #3—WE ARE IN CHRIST** (Eph. 5:30-32).

➡ Mystery #1—Christ is God... #2—Christ is in us... #3—we are also IN CHRIST! It is a **reciprocal** indwelling.

- A. Fulfills the promise that Jesus made in John 14:20—"*At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.*"
- B. Body of Christ is made up of saved Jews and Gentiles together (Eph. 3:3-6, 9).

1. Jews would have nothing to do with Gentiles.
 2. Gentiles were aliens to the commonwealth of Israel.
 3. Now they both make up One Body when they are saved.
- C. To be “*in Christ*” makes you fit for heaven— “*Christ in you*” makes you fit for earth! To be “*in Christ*” changes your destination— “*Christ in you*” changes your disposition!

➡ Being “in church” is one thing—Being “in Christ” is another matter.

IV. Mystery #4—The Rapture (1 Cor. 15:51-55 cf. 1 Thess. 4:16-18).

- A. The rapture is the imminent coming of Christ to catching away His church. Since the church was a mystery in the Old Testament, anything involving the church was also a mystery.
- B. The rapture is the translation of living saints to heaven without dying.
- C. This could happen at any moment since there are no “signs” pointing to it. “Signs” are for Israel and point to the Second coming, not the rapture.

V. Mystery #5—Israel’s temporary blindness (Rom. 11:25).

➡ The mystery is, God is not through with Israel.

- A. Israel’s blindness is in part due to their rejection of their Messiah.
- B. This opened the door for the Gentiles to be saved (Acts 13:46; 15:14; 18:6; 22:21; 28:28).
- C. One day, “*the fullness of the Gentiles*” will come in, and God will deal with Israel again and Israel’s blindness will end.

VI. Mystery #6—The mystery of iniquity (2 Thess. 2:2-11).

➡ The “*man of sin*” is “Satan’s seed”— “*the son of perdition.*” —Anti-Christ (1 John 4:3).

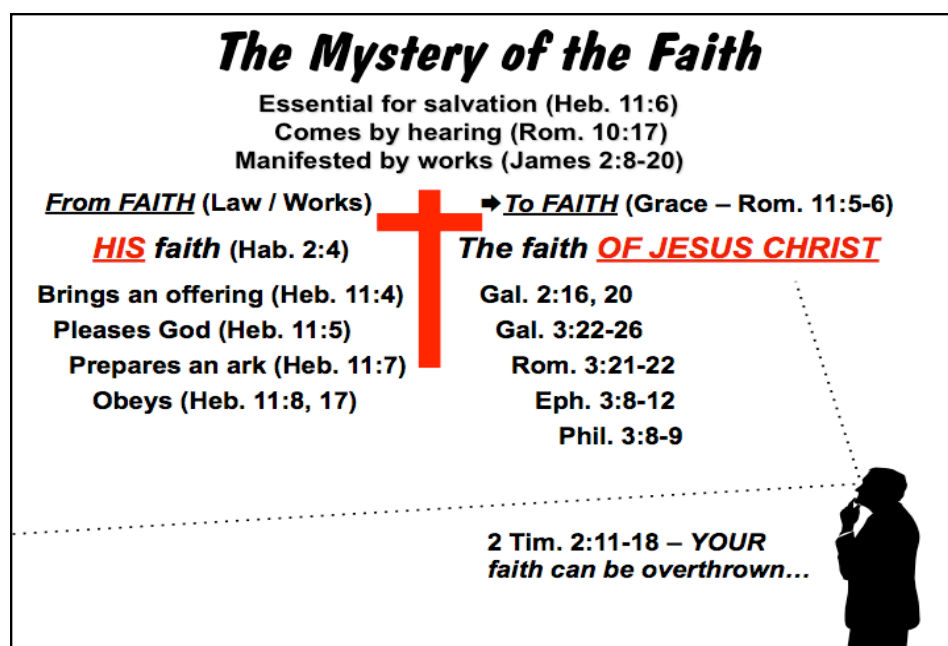
- A. The opposite of “*the mystery of Godliness*” (Christ is God manifest in the flesh)— “*The mystery of iniquity*” — Satan manifest in the flesh, posing as God!

B. He will be the next ruler of the world—He has a number (666); he has a Church.

VII. Mystery #7—The mystery of the faith (1 Tim. 3:9).

➡ There is something about FAITH that was hidden in the O.T. but is now REVEALED in the N.T. — The content of N.T. faith was hidden to the saints of the Old Testament. Now it is revealed under the Apostle Paul.

➡ **THE CROSS** divides the O.T. from the N.T. We are on the N.T. side of the cross.



- A. The CONCORD of faith. (Some things that are consistent regarding faith in all dispensations).
1. Faith is essential for salvation. "*Without faith it is impossible to please God...*"
 2. Faith is based on the Word of God (Romans 10:17).
 3. Faith is manifested by works and obedience (James 2:18-20).
- B. The CONTENT of faith. Romans 1:17— "***FROM FAITH*** [in the O.T.] ***TO FAITH***" [in the N.T.]. How God's righteousness is revealed from faith in the Old Testament TO how it is now revealed in the New Testament. [NOTE: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every*

one that *believeth*; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For *therein* [e.g. in believing the Gospel] is the righteousness of God revealed *from faith to faith*: as it is written, *The just shall live by faith*. (cf. Hab. 2:4—“*The just shall live by HIS faith.*”)

- The content and application of faith under the law differs from the content of faith under grace. Notice Abraham’s faith was in something different than N.T. faith (Galatians 3:6 cf. Genesis 15:4-6).
 - Romans 3:21-22. Notice the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD today is revealed by the faith of Jesus Christ.
1. Habukkuk 2:4 — Under the Law it a man lived by “*HIS faith.*” It was faith associated with what a man *did* (his works). It was a faith that belonged to him. It was a “manufactured” faith.
 - a) He brings an offering (Heb. 11:4)
 - b) He pleases God (Heb. 11:5). If Enoch had not pleased God, he would not have been translated.
 - c) He prepared an ark (Heb. 11:7).
 - d) He obeyed (Heb. 11:8, 17). He heard the Word of God, and DID what God told him to do (v. 17).
 2. THE LAW OF THE SIN OFFERING. If a person under the LAW heard God tell him to bring a sin offering, and he would NOT OBEY, that man would die in his sin. Numbers 9:13, “*But the man that...forbeareth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the LORD in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.*” He could not be saved while being disobedient to the FAITH that was revealed to him.
- C. The CHRIST of faith— “*THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST.*” Paul makes this statement 7 times in a King James Bible.
- ➡ The O.T. saint had to live by “*HIS FAITH*”— “*His faith*” in doing what God told him to do. N.T. faith is in Christ who did the work for me.

1. I am not living by MY FAITH, but by the faith of Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:16, 20).
 - a) "*Faith IN Jesus Christ*" is different than "*the faith OF Jesus Christ.*"
 - b) "*OF*" can mean "from" or "about / concerning."
 - c) Jesus is the AUTHOR and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2). He gives us the faith to believe (Eph. 2:8-9).

2. Galatians 3:22-26— It is the faithfulness of Christ and what HE DID that saved me when I believed on Him.
 - a) "*BEFORE faith came...*" That is, the faith *of* Jesus Christ.
 - b) "*SHUT UP unto the faith which should AFTERWARDS be REVEALED.*" The O.T. saints were "*shut up*" from the faith which is under grace. The mystery of the faith was not yet REVEALED.

SUMMATION: A young lady named "JoAnn," had problems constantly doubting her salvation. She questioned, "Did I believe in the right way? Did I believe enough?" She was always trying to **analyze HER faith**. Her FAITH was in her ability to believe. THAT IS WORKS. She was basing Her salvation UPON HER *WORKING TO BELIEVE*, and not the FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST.

Paul said, "*...I am not ashamed: for I know WHOM I have believed...*" The faith that saved me is **not my capability to believe, but in the object of faith**—The faithfulness of JESUS CHRIST. Saving faith is not having faith in YOUR FAITH.

Your faith can be OVERTHROWN (2 Tim. 2:18). Does that mean you have lost your salvation? No because, it was not your faith that saved you to begin with. The faith OF Jesus Christ can never be overthrown. GOD ABIDES FAITHFUL whether you do or not (1 Tim. 2:13)! **GLORY!**

Now that you know what the SEVEN MYSTERIES are, will you be a faithful steward of them— promote them... protect them... propagate them...