

The Mystery of Christ

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Growing up in the church, Jesus has never been a mystery; or at least that's what I thought. Passages such as Colossians 4:3 that mention "the mystery of Christ" have always been glossed over in my personal studies. I figured I already knew the premise behind the Messiah, why should I then continue to use such mystic terminology?

In the ancient language, the word *mystery* literally means "secret" or "that which transcends normal understanding." So then, what is the secret of God that is now revealed? If you remember the dialogue between Daniel and God, you'd remember when God told him, "go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9). God was keeping a secret from Daniel and the readers of the scroll. We as 21st century Christians have a more complete picture though. The vision Daniel experienced was referring to the events that would take place at the end times. One of those events was the coming of a king and a kingdom (Daniel 2:44).

Christ's coming was affirmative but He came in a manner far more glorious than the "normal understanding" of the people's perception. The Jews expected an earthly war-lord who'd come and lay waste to the nations that were oppressing them. This, however, was not the will of God. The will of God was to raise up a King who'd express love and care toward His creation by teaching the gospel before He returned to claim His own (Rev. 19:11-16).

Prior to Colossians 4:3, Paul brings up the mystery of Christ as that which has been "hidden from ages and generations" (Col. 1:26). To the outsider, God's plan is weak, incomplete, and non-effective; life continues to move in a stagnant manner. On the contrary, to the believer, God's plan is nothing but victorious. Notice how a single verse later, Paul states the glory of the mystery is "Christ in you" (Col. 1:27). This mystery is what put Paul in prison (Col. 4:3), and was the basis of his preaching (Col. 4:4).

To summarize, the mystery of God encompasses a variety of aspects concerning His plan. First, it was a secret for over 4,000 years; since man sinned in the garden and needed a savior. Second, it was a secret that was alluded to for at least 600 years with prophecies from men such as Isaiah and Daniel - Certainly Paul's words can echo this reality as he states "hidden for ages and generations." Third, **God's secret was Christ.** Jesus, even among all of His teachings, had somewhat of a secrecy to what He was doing while on earth (Mark 1:43-45; 4:11; 8:27-30). God had a plan from the very beginning to send a Son in order to make atonement for sinful man.

This all leads us to Paul's request for the church in Colossae to pray that a door might be opened for him to declare the mystery of Christ (Col. 4:2). The world may know the name, Jesus, but do they know the mystery of His saving power? Do they know the depth and magnitude of who He is as God's glory? Read Colossians 1:15-20 and see if "transcending normal understanding" is an accurate way to encompass that section of scripture. Jesus truly is mysterious, in that, no man can fully grasp how incredible He and His message is.

