

Thursday, May 4th

Books and Bagels

7:30 - 10:30

National Day of Prayer Service

12:00-1:00pm

Halifax Mall

Introduction:

Historical mysteries captivate people. Like a puzzle, the clues hold pieces of fact that help researchers create the biggest and best picture. Unsolvables abound. Perhaps the greatest American mystery is- Who killed JFK? Today, fifty years later, there are 10 Kennedy assassination theories! In North Carolina, the lost colony is an unsolved mystery. Perhaps you have visited Manteo, NC, to explore the facts of this historical mystery. Mysteries captivate, fascinate and create the craving to know more. Writers understand this attraction. Some of the best books and movies are mystery thrillers. What is your favorite?

Mystery writing began with God. One reason God has written the Bible with mystery is to keep Satan from understanding God's next move.

“Mystery’, which appears twenty-one times in Paul’s letters (out of a total of twenty-seven New Testament occurrences), ...[points to] revelation of what was previously hidden but has now been disclosed by God (Rom. 16:25–26; 1 Cor. 2:10; Col. 1:26–27; Eph. 3:3, 5). The ‘mystery of God’ (1 Cor. 2:1, 7) focuses on salvation through the cross of Jesus Christ.”¹

Mystery in Scripture is an open sacred secret hitherto concealed, now revealed. God the Holy Spirit reveals answers to a few mysteries found in Ephesians 1:9,10; 3:1-10. Today, we’ll just take a glimpse at the text.

1. A Plan Set Forth in Christ

God the Father has orchestrated a plan of time that is moving forward to an appointed end. The Old Testament contains more than 2,000 specific and detailed predictive prophecies. One reason God wrote predictive prophecies

was to prove it was written by Him. Jesus Christ himself uniquely fulfilled 456 identifiable prophecies. The chance of anyone fulfilling just 48 of such prophecies is a probability of 10¹⁵⁷. Yes, you read that correctly, ten to the one hundred and fifty-seventh power.² No person could fulfill these prophecies, making it his life quest to fulfill them. The predictive prophecies of Christ convey specific details and situations around his birth-events beyond a person’s control. Only Christ fulfilled the predictive prophecies and He fulfilled all of them.

Ephesians 1:9 states that "God the Father made known to us, the believers being written to, the mystery of His will and good pleasure, as He “set forth” in Christ. [The Greek verb *protithemai*, means that God planned and carried out that plan.]

There is comfort in knowing that the plans of God will come true. Think about it! If thousands of specific predictive prophecies have been fulfilled, isn’t that great assurance that the remaining will also be specifically fulfilled! Consider the fact that in 1948 Israel became a nation fulfilling God’s specific prophecy by Ezekiel. For over 18 centuries the nation of Israel did not exist, it was just a land marked as “wasteland.” The fact that Israel exists today as a nation, that it has become a nation exporting crops from the drip irrigation gardens, points to Ezekiel’s specific prophecy (36:35). No reasonable person can dismiss the reality of God shown in prophetic fulfillment.

See the passage below and take careful thought to the role of God the Son, Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:7-10 (ESV)

*“In him [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he [God the Father] lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight **making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.**”*

¹ O’Brien, P. T. (1999). *The letter to the Ephesians* (p. 109). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

² Dr. Frank Harber, “Got Life Teacher Notes”, 36-37
Calculation by Peter Stoner, professor emeritus in science at Westmont College, Santa Barbara, California ; confirmed by American Scientific Affiliation.

2. Mystery Made Known in the Fullness of Time

This phrase “fullness of time” is used in Galatians 4:4, “*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive the adoption as sons.*”

This phrase points to the incarnation of God the Son. Emmanuel, a name for the Messiah, means “God with us!” Jesus Christ came into this world through the miraculous virgin birth.

Our history is divided into BC and AD. God who has established time is exalted by the dividing line! (Even with modern attempts to redefine the break without God, there is an undeniable event that is a point of change!) This undeniable point is the “fullness of time!”

The phrase “fullness of time” in Ephesians goes beyond the incarnation of Christ. The text speaks of Christ uniting all things in the fullness of time referring to the life of Christ and the work on the cross.

Christ was able to unite all things by fulfilling the Law of God. Jesus’ work of fulfilling the Law, which no human had ever done nor could ever do, is part of the mystery of God. Christ provided the performing enduring work of living a life keeping the law of God. The other part of Jesus’ salvific work was His death on the cross. Jesus was the perfect Lamb of God that took away the sin of the world (Isaiah 53). Holy, God the Son was on the cross, pure and sinless, yet God the Father took the ugliness of this world’s sin and smeared sin upon Him- All of the sin of every person ever born, past, present, and future. There in three hours the eternal Son of God paid your eternal debt! The cry of the Greek word “Tetelestai” translated “It is finished” was shouted as loudly as a physically weakened crucified Christ could exclaim! *Tetelestai* means “the debt is paid in full.” The gift of salvation offered by Christ to you is the gift of forgiveness of the entirety of your sin, no matter what it is! But it is more than that it is God placing His own performance of the Law of God on your account! This is why Christ told the religious, “*Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.*” This rest is rest with God. Are you trying to be good enough for God to accept you? That is not possible. But you can, no matter what your background or sin, trust Christ and accept His gift (Romans 6:23). You do not work for a gift; you receive it! This gift of redemption cost the Son of God dearly, yet the writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus went to the cross and endured the shame with joy because He was thinking of you, (12:2). You can receive this gift by a

decision of faith. Years ago I prayed this prayer putting my trust in Christ: “Dear Heavenly Father, I know I am lost and on a path to be eternally separated from you by my sin. I know I cannot through my own effort, religion or goodness be good enough; I cannot save myself. I believe Jesus is God the Son and that He died in my place and paid my debt of sin, I also believe He arose bodily from the grave. I turn from my sin to put my trust in the work of Christ. I ask you to forgive me of my sin and come into my life as my Lord and Savior. In the Name of Jesus Christ, Amen.”

3. The Mystery has More Fulfillment to Come.

If you have ever prayed the Lord’s Prayer, you have prayed for the outcome of Ephesians 1:10. You prayed, “*Our Father, who are in heaven, Hallowed be Your Name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*” That is the prayer of the second advent of Christ which is His return and reign on a literal throne on this earth. Psalm 2 speaks of Christ’s rule and it is the pivotal accomplishment of his resurrection.

I Corinthians 15:20-28 speaks of the enemies of Christ being placed under his feet. The last enemy is death. In this dispensation the enemies of God fall down not by sword and protest; not by the advancement of literal armies but by the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Believers living out the truth and empowered by the Spirit of God bring a taste of heaven to planet earth. Why? Because the greatest organizer of society is God. The greatest lover of humanity is God, and the greatest answers to human life are God’s.

This gospel changes hearts, lives and breaks down walls making a new creation; this is the person who is “in Christ” (Ephesians 3). Christ in you, the hope of glory, makes all people kindred spirit brothers and sisters. At the foot of the cross all walls are taken down. What a wonderful mystery revealed! C.S. Lewis said it well, “Aim at earth and miss heaven, but aim at heaven and get earth thrown in for free!”

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

TUESDAY @ 7:30AM – 8:00AM, LOB 414
MONDAY @ 12:00PM – 1:00PM, LB 2ND FLR.
MONDAY @ 12 NOON – 12:45PM, CHAPEL