



Greek Mystery Religions Used to Illustrate Church Age Mysteries, Rom 16:25; Eph 3:1-6, Col 1:25-27; Marriage Is A Mystery Doctrine, Eph 5:25-27

66) This divine institution is described by Paul as a mystery in:

Ephesians 5:30 - ... we are members of His body [the universal church: positional sanctification].

v. 31 - For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall have sexual relations face-to-face with his wife; and the two shall become one flesh.

v. 32 - This mystery is continuously great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and His church.

- 1) The key to understanding the corporate testimony of the marriage is found in the Greek word **μυέω, mueō** which means "to initiate into the mysteries" [Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*]. This is the root verb of several derivatives that describe the elements of ancient secret societies known as fraternities and sororities and especially the "mystery religions" of Greece.
- 2) Those who were initiated were the **μύστης, mustēs**. These initiates were sponsored and introduced by a **μυσταγωγός, mustagōgos**, the leader of recruits. Initiates were taught the rites of sacrifice and worship by an **ιεροφαντής, hierophantēs**, the "revealer of holy things." The secret doctrines he taught were referred to as **μυστήριον, mustērion**, the "mysteries of secret rites."
- 3) Only those who were initiated into these ancient fraternities or cults knew the mystery doctrines or their secrets and they were never to be revealed to outsiders.
- 4) This word is used by our Lord in the Gospels and by Paul in his epistles to describe the doctrines that have to do with the unique spiritual life of the Church Age believer.
- 5) In fact, these doctrines can only be understood by believers and thus remain "mysterious" to unbelievers who hear them. The Lord's use of parables confirms this principle:

Matthew 13:10 - And the disciples came and said to Jesus, "Why do you speak to them in parables?"

v. 11 - And He answered and said to them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.

v. 13 - "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand."

- 6) The Lord made reference to the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven which place their emphasis on those things that are unique to the Church Age although in context some of the parables refer to the Tribulation and Second Advent.
- 7) The principle of the mystery doctrines pertaining to the Church Age are found in three major passages:



Romans 16:25 - Now to Him who has the power to provide support for you according to my gospel [**salvation**], and the preaching of Jesus Christ [**the Lord teaching ministry in the Incarnation**], and according to the revelation of the mystery [**Church Age doctrine in the New Testament**] which has been kept concealed during past dispensations,

v. 26 - but now [**in the Church Age**] is disclosed, and by the Scripture of the prophets, according to the decree of the eternal God, has been made known to the Gentiles for the purpose of bringing them into obedience to these doctrines.

Ephesians 3:1 - For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—

v. 2 - if you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God having been given to me for your benefit;

v. 3 - that from divine disclosure the mystery doctrines were revealed to me just as I have written before in brief.

v. 4 - And when you study this you ought to be able to understand my insight into the mystery that belongs to Christ,

v. 5 - which in other dispensations were not revealed to the sons of men so that now it has been revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by means of the Holy Spirit;

v. 6 - that the Gentiles are joint-heirs and fellow members of the same body, and joint-possessors together of the same promise of blessings in union with Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Colossians 1:25 - Of the church I have become a minister according to the dispensation of God [**Church Age**] having been given to you for the purpose of preaching it to you for your benefit,

v. 26 - that is, the mystery [**Church Age doctrine**] which has been concealed from the past dispensations and from the generations, but has now been revealed to His saints.

v. 27 - to whom God decreed to make known what is the wealth of the glory of this mystery in the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the absolute confidence of glory.

- 8) There are several passages that speak of the “mystery doctrines” that are unique to the Church Age and that were never revealed in the Old Testament Scripture. Four are pertinent to our study:

- 1) The baptism of the Holy Spirit: The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a real baptism in which the believer is actually identified with Christ in His spiritual death, physical death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and session. The baptism of the Holy Spirit, at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone, enters the new believer into union with the Person of Jesus Christ. This results in the believer possessing all the assets possessed by Christ in His resurrection: (1) righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21), (2) eternal life (1 John 5:11-13), (3) sonship (John 1:12; Galatians 3:26), (4) heirship (Romans 8:16-17; 1 Peter 1:4), (5) royalty (Colossians 1:13; 2 Timothy 2:11-12), (6) priesthood (1 Peter 2:5, 9), (7) election (Ephesians 1:4), (8) destiny (Ephesians 1:5), (9) sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:2, 20; Ephesians 1:4). Those who are “in Christ” become the “body of Christ” and form not only the “universal church” but also the “royal family of God.”



Paul's dissertation on right man-right woman in Ephesians 5 makes the comparison between the "body of Christ," the "universal church" with the union of one man with one woman: "the two shall become one flesh."

Verses 25 through 32 explain the "mystery" of the corporate marriage as an illustration of the relationship between Christ and His church:

Ephesians 5:25 - Husbands love your wives just as also Christ loved the Church [**Church Age believes who are "in Him"**], and has delivered over Himself [**note that it was from the Lord's own free will that he agreed to become our Sacrifice**] as a substitute for her;

v. 26 - that He might sanctify her by means of cleansing from the water of the Word [**experiential sanctification through spiritual growth**],

v. 27 - in order that He might present to Himself the church [**the body of Christ as the bride of Christ at the resurrection**] in her glory, not having spot [**of the sinful nature**], or wrinkle [**the production of dead works**] or any such thing; but that she should be blameless saints.

1. The principle Paul presents is that the love of Christ for the church is reciprocated by the Church Age believer's submission to the Lord's spiritual leadership. This is illustrated by the right woman's reciprocal love for her right man's spiritual leadership.
2. In other words, the church is the Lord's right woman who commemorates this relationship by her spiritual growth attained by her submission to His mandates. Likewise, the wife's submission to her right man's spiritual leadership is an illustration of this.