

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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## The Mysteries of the Kingdom of God

by Dan Trygg

“And the disciples came and said to Him, ‘Why do You speak to them in parables?’ <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, “‘You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; and you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; <sup>15</sup> for the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I should heal them.’” <sup>16</sup> But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. <sup>17</sup> For truly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.’”

Matthew 13:10-17

It was an exciting time to be alive! Jesus of Nazareth was traveling through the land, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God, and doing “the works of the kingdom”, ...healing diseases, casting out demons, setting people free, turning their hearts toward faith in God. **Wherever He went, a crowd quickly gathered. He took the opportunity to proclaim the good news message, ...that the kingdom of God was at hand..., and to teach people about the kingdom.** What was it like? How does it come? How does it grow? What does it *mean*? How does it work? **On one of those occasions, Jesus preached the parable of the soils, concluding His message with, “He who has ears, let him hear.”**

Afterwards, when He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables (Mk. 4:10). **“Why do you speak to them in parables?”** they said. In His response, **He mentioned that so many do not really have a heart to know and respond to the truth.** Their hearts are dull, and they barely hear the truth, ...and what they hear, they don’t understand. They can see certain aspects of the working of God, but they *close* their eyes because they don’t really *want* to see and acknowledge the truth. Instead of returning and being healed, they *turn away from* the glimpses of truth that come into their experience.

**Jesus told His followers that their hearts were not like that.** They *have* eyes that see and ears that hear. **And God was granting to them to come to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,** but to those who are outside, ...those whose hearts are *not* eager to know God..., to them access to the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has *not* been granted. **Jesus spoke in parables and dark sayings to keep the unresponsive from being able to misuse what He said against Him.** In spite of His incredible popularity, He was also encountering a growing opposition and hostility, ...from traditionalists, who were offended by His apparent disregard of established customs, ...and from people in power, who were threatened by His message, or who were afraid that His popularity would spur a tightening of Roman oppression. Jesus had to be more careful of what He declared openly, because people were beginning to look for things to criticize Him, or even to accuse Him to people in authority.

**What is a “mystery”?** Is it something that is hard to understand? Is it “mysterious”, as in difficult to comprehend, puzzling, inexplicable, or something strange or secretive? Not necessarily. **In the Bible, a mystery is something hidden from view.** It is something we may not yet understand, ...not because it is difficult, but simply because we don’t have all the information. There *are* plans or purposes of God, which He has intended from the beginning, but which we cannot have anticipated. **God has *not* revealed everything to us.** Moses declared that “the secret things belong to Yahweh our God, but the things revealed belong to us and our children” (Deut. 29:29). So, there *are* secret things, hidden plans or intentions or future events, which God has not shared with us, ...or He has only given us *partial knowledge* of these things. **Many of the prophecies of the Bible are partial glimpses into what God intended (or intends) to do in the future.**

**However, it is important to understand that God often takes people into His confidence,** or shares some of this hidden information with people. The prophet Daniel told king Nebuchadnezzar, “...**there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries**” (2:28). The prophet Amos declared, “**Surely the Lord Yahweh does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets**” (3:7). Again, in Psalm 25:14, David wrote, “**The secret counsel of Yahweh is for those who reverence Him,** and He will make them know His covenant (promise).” In the NT, Jesus would later tell His followers, “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but **I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you**” (Jn 15:15). **In fact, one of the key functions of the Holy Spirit is to reveal to us the things of God,** ...both the things He

*has given* to us, as well as the things that are *yet to come* (1 Cor. 2:12; Jn. 16:13,14). **So, it is consistent with God's character and practice throughout the scriptures to reveal the hidden mysteries to those in relationship with Him.**

Jesus told His followers, "...to you it *has been given* to experientially-know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." **The verbal form translated in that phrase, "it has been given", means that it *was* granted to them, and it *remained available* to them.** This seems to imply that God had granted permission for them to know the hidden truths of the kingdom, and this permission remained in effect. **This has application to us.** If *we* are among those who have been granted permission to experientially-know the hidden realities of the kingdom, and this permission remains available to *us*, then **we can pursue and expect a greater understanding of those things that have remained hidden from us.** This is important, because there are *mysteries*, plural. **There are *multiple hidden truths* about the kingdom to come to understand and experience.**

**The work for "know" is not just to intellectually learn or observe.** The Greek word means to "experientially-know, perceive, discover, find out, or recognize". **Jesus is not interested in just teaching theological truths, here. He is talking about *an experiential, experimental, acquaintance and familiarity with aspects, realities, dynamics or principles of the reign and rule of God.***

**Remember, the kingdom of God is *not* limited to a future place or time. It is the active reign and rule of God that is *already here*.** In fact, the kingdom of God *has always been here*. God never left, even when Adam and Eve sinned, ...or through the ages of disobedience and willful disregard of Him. God remained the all-powerful Creator and Ruler of All, even though humans were not recognizing or acknowledging Him as their King. **Throughout history, however, God has sought out people for Himself.** We know the story of Abram, the history of the children of Israel, and the covenant Yahweh made with them to be their King. There were many who wandered away, and many others who walked in faith in obedience to God as their King. **One of the "mysteries of the kingdom" is that God was bringing about a plan to defeat and displace the devil, and establish and expand His kingdom through a redeemed, recreated and empowered people of faith. *Jesus came to inaugurate this new dynamic.*** He came as the prophesied Messianic King, the Suffering Servant, the Lamb to take away the sin of the world. How all those threads of revelation would be worked out remained hidden to great extent, until they were fulfilled in historical fact before the eyes of amazed and shocked onlookers. Then, He rose in power, another hidden mystery that could not be perceived until it was made known. Then, when He ascended, **He sent the Holy Spirit to recreate and transform those who would believe in Him, and these transformed people of faith would become the visible front line of the kingdom of God on planet earth.** As He leads us, we are to be the advancing force of the kingdom, proclaiming the good news of Jesus' victory, rooting out the enemy's influence, and raising up an army of freed-up people to walk in the freedom and power of the reign and rule of God. **We will be the light of revelation that God will use to draw others to Himself.**

**At the time Jesus spoke the parables of Matthew 13, these plans for the kingdom remained hidden,** ...mysteries that were yet to be revealed. Many people in the past had received prophetic glimpses of these things, but they did not live to see them come to pass in their lifetimes. They longed to know more, and they prayed for God's kingdom to come and His will to be done. **In just a matter of months, Jesus' disciples would come to see and understand,** ...they would hear Him explain to them the hidden mysteries that He came to fulfill (Lk. 24:44-48), **and they would experience things that they could not even imagine at this time** (Acts 2:1-4).

**The word for "mystery" occurs 28 times in the NT alone, referring to a number of different things, ...truths that *were* (or, *are*) hidden, but *are now* (or, *will be*) revealed.** First and foremost is **the mystery of the kingdom of God *itself*** (Matt. 13:11; Mk. 4:11; Lk. 8:10). It is, at the same time, the often unseen rule of God, which is made visible at times in the here and now through the people and activity of God. **There is the mystery of Christ *Himself*.** Who would have thought that God Himself would come to redeem His people as He did? There are depths of revelation and understanding of this amazing reality which remain for us to grasp and experience, ...this age-old plan which was God's purpose all along, but was hidden for generations (1 Cor. 2:6-8), including the summing up of all things in Christ (Eph. 1:9-12), the salvation and inclusion of all nations in Him (Eph. 3:3-10), and the mind-blowing potential of the Messiah living *in us* as our hope of indwelling and transformational glory (Col. 1:25-2:2). **There remains a future mystery of resurrection,** the transformation of our bodies to put on immortality and reign with Christ (1 Cor. 15:51-53). **There are *other mysteries*, too:** The mystery of a partial hardening that has come upon Israel, and how God will yet bring them in (Rom. 11:25-36); or the mystery of lawlessness that is already at work in the world, but will yet become more clearly manifested (2 Thess. 2:7); and the mystery of prophetic word pictures yet to come (Rev. 17:5-7).

**To us, ...to you and to me..., it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.** They are our heritage and our equipment for our calling. **There remain things for us to perceive, discover and experience.** God *has already* granted them to us, but **these things come through a relational knowledge of Him, the Revealer of Mysteries, and the application of His promises** (2 Pet. 1:3). ***Don't turn away from this offer; ...seek to discover more!***