

HIDDEN  
*But Now*  
REVEALED

*A Biblical Theology of Mystery*

G. K. BEALE AND  
BENJAMIN L. GLADD



HIDDEN  
*But Now*  
REVEALED

*A Biblical Theology of Mystery*

G. K. BEALE AND  
BENJAMIN L. GLADD

 IVP Academic  
An imprint of InterVarsity Press  
Downers Grove, Illinois

*InterVarsity Press*

*P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515-1426*

*World Wide Web: [www.ivpress.com](http://www.ivpress.com)*

*Email: [email@ivpress.com](mailto:email@ivpress.com)*

*©2014 by G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd*

*All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from InterVarsity Press.*

*InterVarsity Press® is the book-publishing division of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA®, a movement of students and faculty active on campus at hundreds of universities, colleges and schools of nursing in the United States of America, and a member movement of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. For information about local and regional activities, write Public Relations Dept., InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA, 6400 Schroeder Rd., P.O. Box 7895, Madison, WI 53707-7895, or visit the IVCF website at [www.intervarsity.org](http://www.intervarsity.org).*

*All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New American Standard Bible®, copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.*

*Cover design: Cindy Kiple*

*Interior design: Beth McGill*

*Images: angel: ©wynnter/iStockphoto*

*old paper: ©Rouzes/iStockphoto*

*The Last Judgment by Pieter Jansz Pourbus at Groeningemuseum, Bruges, Belgium/©Lukas—Art in Flanders*

*VZW/The Bridgeman Art Library*

*ISBN 978-0-8308-9683-7 (digital)*

*ISBN 978-0-8308-2718-3 (print)*

# CONTENTS

Preface . . . . .	7
Abbreviations . . . . .	11
Introduction . . . . .	17
1 The Use of <i>Mystery</i> in Daniel . . . . .	29
2 The Use of <i>Mystery</i> in Early Judaism . . . . .	47
3 The Use of <i>Mystery</i> in Matthew . . . . .	56
4 The Use of <i>Mystery</i> in Romans . . . . .	84
5 The Use of <i>Mystery</i> in 1 Corinthians . . . . .	109
6 The Use of <i>Mystery</i> in Ephesians . . . . .	147
7 The Use of <i>Mystery</i> in Colossians . . . . .	198
8 The Use of <i>Mystery</i> in 2 Thessalonians . . . . .	215
9 The Use of <i>Mystery</i> in 1 Timothy . . . . .	237
10 The Use of <i>Mystery</i> in Revelation . . . . .	260
11 Mystery Without <i>Mystery</i> in the New Testament . . . . .	288
12 The Christian Mystery and the Pagan Mystery Religions . . . . .	305
13 Conclusion . . . . .	320
Appendix: <i>The Cognitive Peripheral Vision of Biblical Authors</i> . . . . .	340
Bibliography . . . . .	365
Modern Authors Index . . . . .	381
Scripture Index . . . . .	383
Ancient Texts Index . . . . .	391
Praise for <i>Hidden But Now Revealed</i> . . . . .	393
About the Authors . . . . .	394
More Titles from InterVarsity Press . . . . .	395



## PREFACE



**THIS BOOK HAS BEEN A LONG TIME COMING.** Both of us worked on this topic, to some degree, for our doctoral work. Greg Beale partly worked on how the book of Daniel's conception of "mystery" connects to areas of Judaism and the book of Revelation. His dissertation was published as *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), and he then further explicated his view of mystery in the New Testament in a later book, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, JSNTSup 166 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998). Ben Gladd, as a doctoral student of Greg Beale at Wheaton College, wrote a dissertation on how mystery in the book of Daniel influences early Judaism and 1 Corinthians, which was later published as *Revealing the Mysterion: The Use of Mystery in Daniel and Second Temple Judaism with Its Bearing on First Corinthians*, BZNTW 160 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008).

By combining our research on this subject, we believed that the project would be a natural fit. We asked InterVarsity Press whether they would be interested in publishing a biblical theology of mystery. They graciously obliged. At the beginning of the project, we were somewhat surprised that no one had attempted to write a complete study of mystery in the New Testament or to reflect on the biblical-theological implications of such a study. The topic seemed ripe for the picking. We soon realized why that may have been the case: the more we investigated the notion of mystery, the more difficult the project became. A quick search of the key word *mystery* (Greek *mystērion*) in the New Testament yields some interesting results. The term is nestled in discussions of key doctrines: the nature of the end-time kingdom (Mt 13 and par.), the cruci-

fixion (1 Cor 2), the restoration of Israel (Rom 11), the relationship between Jews and Gentiles (Eph 3; Col 1), and so on. These texts are notoriously complicated in their own right and are the object of tireless debate among scholars. Meticulously working through these difficult texts required a considerable amount of time and energy.

Not only are the texts in question difficult to interpret, they also take center stage in how the two Testaments relate to one another. This is one of the reasons why mystery piques our interest: the New Testament writers employ the term *mystery* to signal a unique relationship between the Testaments. Our desire to launch this project lies in our conviction, though a minority view, that the New Testament authors, without exception, use the Old Testament contextually. That is, the New Testament authors respect to one degree or another the Old Testament authors' meaning in the original Old Testament context. The concept of mystery is a relatively untapped avenue into this debate. Because this area of biblical hermeneutics is so heavily debated, even among evangelicals, we wrote this book with an eye on this debate.

To obtain a good overview of this book, we recommend that readers first read chapter one on the use of mystery in Daniel, as this chapter forms the backbone of the entire project and is indispensable. In each subsequent chapter, we make reference to this first chapter. After reading chapter one, we recommend that the reader read through the body of each chapter to get the overall flow of the argument before extensive examination of the footnotes. For those wishing for further hermeneutical reflection on how mystery functions in the New Testament use of the Old Testament, we have included as an appendix an adaptation of Greg Beale's forthcoming essay on the cognitive peripheral vision of the biblical authors.

Our goal for this project is that the church would gain a greater appreciation for the concept of mystery and the intersection of the Old and New Testaments. The gospel itself contains both "old" and "new" elements that stand in continuity and discontinuity with the Old Testament.

Both authors are grateful for our wives, who continually illustrate God's goodness to us. Indeed, they play an integral role in the "marital mystery" of Ephesians 5:31-32.

We would also like to thank the students who diligently labored on this manuscript: Josh Darsaut and David Barry.

Above all, we are grateful to God who gave us the desire to write this project



and the energy to complete it. Our prayer is that this book would give glory to him alone.

English translations of Scripture follow the New American Standard Bible (NASB) unless otherwise indicated.

The edition of the Greek Old Testament that is used is Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta*, revised and corrected by Robert Hanhart (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006). In Daniel there are two distinct Old Testament Greek translations known as “Old Greek” and “Theodotion.” Outside of Daniel, the Greek Old Testament will be referred to variously as the “Greek Old Testament” or “Septuagint” (sometimes abbreviated as the “LXX”). The English version of the Greek Old Testament cited is *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), unless otherwise noted. We emphasized key words or phrases in the NASB by underlining them, and we preserved the NASB’s own italics that signal inserted English words with no formal Hebrew/Aramaic/Greek equivalent.

References to the Greek New Testament are from the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993). Our references to the Dead Sea Scrolls come primarily from the edition of F. G. Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated* (Boston: Brill, 1994); sometimes reference is made to *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, ed. F. Garcia Martinez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, 2 vols (Boston: Brill, 2000).

The primary sources of various Jewish works were ordinarily consulted, referred to, and sometimes quoted, in the following English editions: *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, vols. 1-3, trans. and ed. J. Z. Lauterbach (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976); *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*, trans. Judah Goldin (New York: Schocken Books, 1974); *The Midrash on Psalms*, trans. and ed. W. G. Braude, Yale Judaica Series 13:1-2 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976); *Midrash Rabbah*, vols. 1-10, ed. H. Freedman and M. Simon (London: Soncino, 1961); *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vols. 1-2, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), though sometimes reference is made to the *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, ed. R. H. Charles (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977); *The Aramaic Bible: The Targums*, ed. M. McNamara (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1987).

References to ancient Greek works, especially those of Philo and Josephus (including English translations), are from the Loeb Classical Library unless otherwise noted. References and some English translations of the apostolic

fathers come from *The Apostolic Fathers*, trans. J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, ed. M. W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).

*G. K. Beale and Benjamin Gladd*

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>1–3 En.</i>	<i>1–3 Enoch</i>
<i>1–4 Macc</i>	<i>1–4 Maccabees</i>
<i>1QH</i>	<i>Hodayot or Thanksgiving Hymns</i>
<i>1QM</i>	<i>Milḥamah or War Scroll</i>
<i>1QpHab</i>	<i>Pesher Habbakuk</i>
<i>1QS</i>	<i>Serek Hayaḥad or Rule of the Community</i>
<i>2 Bar.</i>	<i>2 Baruch</i>
<i>2 Clem.</i>	<i>2 Clement</i>
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AHD	<i>The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language</i> , 4th ed. Edited by Joseph P. Picket. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006.
<i>Ant.</i>	Josephus, <i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
<i>Apoc. Ab.</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Abraham</i>
<i>Apoc. Pet.</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Peter</i>
<i>Apoc. Zeph.</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Zephaniah</i>
<i>Ascen. Isa.</i>	<i>Ascension of Isaiah</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archeologist</i>
<i>Barn.</i>	<i>Barnabas</i>
BDAG	Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
BDF	Blass, F., A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk. <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BRS	Bible Resource Series
BS	Biblical Series

BZBW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CD	<i>Damascus Document</i>
<i>Cher.</i>	Philo, <i>De Cherubim</i>
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
ConBNT	Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series
COQG	Christian Origins and the Question of God
<i>Diogn.</i>	<i>Epistle to Diognetus</i>
DPL	<i>Dictionary of Paul and His Letters</i> . Edited by G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin and D. G. Reid. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary
ECC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
EDNT	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . 3 vols. Edited by Horst Balz and Gerhard Scheider. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.
EGGNT	Exegetical Guide to the New Testament
<i>Eph.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Ephesians</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
GTJ	<i>Grace Theological Journal</i>
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IBC	Interpretation Bible Commentary
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Ios.</i>	Philo, <i>De Iosepho</i>
ISBE	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
IVPNTC	InterVarsity Press New Testament Commentaries
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>Jos. Asen.</i>	<i>Joseph and Aseneth</i>
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSP	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>

<i>LAE</i>	<i>Life of Adam and Eve</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
<i>Leg.</i>	Philo, <i>Legum allegoriae</i>
<i>Legat.</i>	Philo, <i>Legatio ad Gaium</i>
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
<i>Magn.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Magnesians</i>
<i>Mart. Ascen.</i>	
<i>Isa.</i>	<i>Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah</i>
<i>Midr.</i>	<i>Midrash</i>
MNTC	Moffat New Testament Commentary
<i>Mos.</i>	Philo, <i>De vita Mosis</i>
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NETS	New English Translation of the Septuagint
NIBC	New International Bible Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> . 4 vols. Edited by Colin Brown. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979.
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplement Series
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NTM	New Testament Monographs
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> . 2nd edition.
OG	Old Greek translation
OTL	Old Testament Library
par.	parallel(s)
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentaries
<i>Praem.</i>	Philo, <i>De praemiis et poenis</i>
<i>Pss. Sol.</i>	<i>Psalms of Solomon</i>
PTMS	Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series
<i>RestQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>

SBLECL	Society of Biblical Literature Early Christianity and Its Literature
SBLEJL	Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and Its Literature
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSBS	Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>Sim.</i>	<i>Similitudes</i> (1 Enoch 37-71)
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>Somn.</i>	Philo, <i>De somniis</i>
<i>Spec.</i>	Philo, <i>De specialibus legibus</i>
SRB	Supplementi alla Rivista Biblica
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
<i>T. Benj.</i>	<i>Testament of Benjamin</i>
<i>T. Gad</i>	<i>Testament of Gad</i>
<i>T. Iss.</i>	<i>Testament of Issachar</i>
<i>T. Jac.</i>	<i>Testament of Jacob</i>
<i>T. Job</i>	<i>Testament of Job</i>
<i>T. Jos.</i>	<i>Testament of Joseph</i>
<i>T. Jud.</i>	<i>Testament of Judah</i>
<i>T. Levi</i>	<i>Testament of Levi</i>
<i>T. Mos.</i>	<i>Testament of Moses</i>
<i>T. Naph.</i>	<i>Testament of Naphtali</i>
<i>T. Zeb.</i>	<i>Testament of Zebulun</i>
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . 10 vols. Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977.
<i>Tg. Onq.</i>	<i>Targum Onqelos</i>
<i>Tg. Ps.-J.</i>	<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</i>
<i>Theod</i>	Theodotion
<i>TJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
TNIV	Today's New International Version
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>

VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplement Series
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
Wis	Wisdom of Solomon
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare





# INTRODUCTION



WHEN READING THROUGH THE FOUR GOSPELS, one is immediately confronted with a difficult problem: Why are Israel and its leaders unable to grasp fully Jesus' identity and mission? Jesus himself claims that he is the climax of Israel's history and that the entire Old Testament anticipates his arrival, yet why is he not welcomed with open arms? Are not the Jewish leaders, the Old Testament scholars of their day, steeled in their resolve to quell Jesus' mission to restore Israel? One of Jesus' core teachings concerns the establishment of God's eternal kingdom on the earth, which will take place through his ministry, but Israel by and large rejects Jesus' kingdom message.

When Jesus hangs on the cross, the disciples flee for their lives. When the women report to the disciples that Jesus has been raised from the dead, the disciples are reticent to believe. Yet how can the apostle Paul state in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures"? If the crucifixion and the resurrection were predicted in the Old Testament, then why were the disciples slow to believe? Jesus himself predicted his death and resurrection on several occasions! It appears, then, that even though the Old Testament anticipates Jesus and his ministry, there is some aspect of unexpectedness or *newness* to Jesus' identity and mission, which some would say cannot be found at all in the Old Testament.

Another poignant example is Jesus' interaction with the two men on the way to Emmaus. Jesus castigates them for being "slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken" (Lk 24:25). Surprisingly, Jesus then goes on to demonstrate to them that the whole Old Testament ultimately points to him. A similar event occurs in John's Gospel in the midst of Jesus' interactions with

the Jewish leaders: “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life” (Jn 5:39-40). Jesus’ words cut deeply as they expose his method of interpreting the Old Testament—the person of Jesus unlocks the ultimate meaning of the entire Old Testament. Simply put, the Jewish leaders failed to interpret the Old Testament correctly, but we must ask why. Were they not the biblical scholars of their day?

The same can be said for how the Old Testament is used in the New Testament. On a number of occasions, New Testament authors cite the Old Testament in creative ways, ways that seemingly have little to do with the original intent of the Old Testament authors. An often-cited example of this is found in Ephesians 5:31-32, where the writer cites Genesis 2:24 and applies it to Christ and the church: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church” (NIV). By all appearances, the union between Adam and Eve is viewed as ultimately pointing to Christ and the church. Christ, the author believes, is really “there” in the original context in Genesis 2:24. Is there not a “new” layer of meaning in the Genesis text that was not in the mind of the Old Testament author but was in the mind of the New Testament author? Do New Testament writers “read in” new ideas to the Old Testament texts that they cite? And if so, how can we consider there to be a consistent unity to the whole Bible?

Israel’s unbelief in Jesus, Jesus’ hermeneutical method and Paul’s use of Genesis 2:24 share a common thread: some believe that the New Testament, while resuming Israel’s story, does not stand in continuity with the Old Testament. Accordingly, an element of discontinuity or “newness” runs through the entire New Testament. Depending on the topic, some elements tend to stand more in continuity with the Old Testament and others seem to be in discontinuity. The New Testament writers, on occasion, tip their hat to this notion of continuity/discontinuity by employing the term *mystery*. They tether this term to important topics such as the nature of the latter-day kingdom (Mt 13 and par.), Jesus’ messiahship (1 Cor 2:7), the resurrection (1 Cor 15), the relationship between Jews and Gentiles (Eph 3) and the timing of Israel’s restoration (Rom 11). By using the term *mystery*, a term from the book of Daniel that embodies both continuity and discontinuity, the New Testament writers expect their audiences to understand that the topic under discussion contains both of

these elements. In other words, the term *mystery* alerts the reader that the topic at hand stands both in continuity and discontinuity to the Old Testament.

The purpose of this book is to unpack the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. We will explore all the occurrences of the term *mystery* in the New Testament and listen carefully to how the New Testament writers understand the issue of continuity and discontinuity. Throughout the book we will unpack how continuity and discontinuity relate. Studying the notion of mystery ought to sharpen our understanding of how the Old Testament relates to the New.

When modern-day readers of the New Testament happen upon the word *mystery*, images such as Sherlock Holmes pop into their heads. The first entry for *mystery* in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* defines it as something “that is not fully understood or that baffles or eludes the understanding; an enigma.”<sup>1</sup> This modern definition of mystery is unfortunately imported into the New Testament’s use of the word without any thought of what the word meant to the original, target audience. Therein lies the problem faced by Westerners in the twenty-first century when we read our Bible—unless we properly and patiently study biblical words and concepts, we will inevitably import our own preconceptions into Scripture. A brief example of this is the ubiquity of crosses in the Western culture. Crosses are affixed to cars, dangle from celebrities’ necks and are tattooed on professional athletes. In the first century, no one would have dared do such a thing; it would have been the equivalent of adorning a gold-plated electric chair or a noose around the neck. In the first century, Romans and Jews viewed crucifixion not as a sign of religious devotion but as a symbol of treachery and moral bankruptcy.

When we approach the New Testament, we must resist the temptation to read Scripture anachronistically. By performing word studies in their context, evaluating the Jewish background, and studying the Old and New Testaments in their contexts, we are on more solid hermeneutical ground. So, when we attempt to study the biblical conception of mystery in the New Testament, we must pay attention to how mystery functions in the Old Testament and in Jewish writings. To ignore the Old Testament and Jewish background of the term is to cut off much of its meaning from the New Testament, leaving us with a greatly impoverished portrait of it.

---

<sup>1</sup>AHD, p. 1163.

We will define *mystery* generally as *the revelation of God's partially hidden wisdom, particularly as it concerns events occurring in the "latter days."* As we will see, scholars are on the right track when they define *mystery* as *divine wisdom that was previously "hidden" but has now been "revealed."* We will attempt to sharpen this definition, but generally speaking this widely held understanding of the biblical mystery is correct. Augmenting this definition, *mystery* often means something close to our modern-day denotation—knowledge that is somewhat baffling. In general accordance with the contemporary understanding, several Old Testament and New Testament texts describe individuals not understanding or grasping the mystery. What makes the term *mystery* so dynamic, even complex, is that the biblical writers sometimes use two definitions *simultaneously*: (1) God's wisdom has finally been disclosed, but nevertheless (2) his wisdom remains generally incomprehensible to non-believers. The biblical conception of mystery envelops both of these notions.

The problem with word-focused projects such as the one we undertake here is that an interpreter can easily import too much meaning into a word. That is, the term can become overloaded with meaning; too much theology gets packed into a single word. James Barr launches this critique at the multivolume *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Barr criticized *TDNT* by asserting that it failed to take into account that a single word is unable to grasp the totality of a theological concept.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, different words can express the same theological concept.

Since scholars have long noted that *mystery* is a technical term in the New Testament,<sup>3</sup> Barr's protestations generally do not apply to the study of this word. With technical terms, the same theological concepts, even complex ones, can be attached wherever they occur, though of course the immediate context gives more specific meaning to how the terms are used. Moisés Silva notes, "Technical or semitechnical terms *refer to* or *stand for* defined concepts or ideas; . . . these concepts are true referents. . . . Insofar as a word can be brought into a

<sup>2</sup>James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 206-62.

<sup>3</sup>E.g., Douglas J. Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 714; David Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 250; Gerd Luedemann, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology*, trans. F. Stanley Jones (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), p. 240; Frederick David Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), p. 213; George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 421.

one-to-one correspondence with an extralinguistic object or entity, to that extent the word may be subjected to the concordance-based, word-and-thing, historico-conceptual method typified by *TDNT*” (italics original).<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, even with a technical term, it is possible to have a particular concept in mind without using the specific word. For example, at a number of places in the New Testament the concept of mystery exists, whereas the explicit term is lacking.

Although *mystery* is a technical term and carries the same general concept wherever it is used, we must be cautious about committing the fallacy of “illegitimate totality transfer,” where a word is assumed to retain all of its possible semantic meanings in a given context.<sup>5</sup> In other words, we must be careful not to overload a word with too much meaning. To avoid such pitfalls, we must cautiously and carefully investigate the immediate context of each use of the term *mystery* and examine its connection with other words and phrases.

One might question the legitimacy of this project. Why write an entire book about one word that occurs just twenty-eight times in the New Testament and only a few times in the Old Testament? The answer lies not so much with the word itself, though that is important, but with those concepts that are tethered to it. The Synoptic Gospels, for example, tie the notion of God’s end-time kingdom with mystery (Mt 13:11 and par.). Paul even weds the term with the crucifixion in 1 Corinthians 2:1, 7. Once we have grasped the meaning and significance of mystery, we can then turn to topics such as the establishment of God’s latter-day kingdom and the crucifixion and explore how this word affects our understanding of such topics. In sum, we have two primary goals:

1. Define the Old and New Testament conception of mystery and grasp its significance.
2. Articulate as precisely as possible those topics that are found in conjunction with the term *mystery* in its various uses throughout the New Testament.

The net result of our investigation ought to sharpen our understanding of various topics, such as kingdom, crucifixion, the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, and so on. It may not be a coincidence that most of the occurrences of *mystery* are linked to Old Testament quotations and allusions. The New Testament authors at times have been given a new “revelation” about pre-

<sup>4</sup>Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), p. 107.

<sup>5</sup>Barr, *Semantics*, p. 218; cf. D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), p. 45, who warns that even technical words can become “overloaded” with meaning.

viously revealed Scripture. A revelation about revelation! An additional benefit of this study is a more accurate view of the relationship between the two Testaments. As we will attempt to show, our study of the use of *mystery* will shed significant light on how other Old Testament texts are used to indicate fulfillment in the New where the word *mystery* is not found.

Before venturing into this project, it is important to discuss the presuppositions and hermeneutical approach that underlie the way we will interpret Scripture in this book.<sup>6</sup> The first important presupposition underlying this study is the divine inspiration of the entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments. This foundational perspective means that there is unity to the Bible because it is all God's Word. While there is certainly significant theological diversity, it is not ultimately irreconcilable diversity. Therefore, tracing common themes between the Testaments becomes a legitimate and healthy pursuit. Though interpreters differ about what are the most significant unifying themes, those who affirm the ultimate divine authorship of Scripture have a common database with which to discuss and debate.

Another important presupposition is that the divine authorial intentions communicated through human authors are accessible to contemporary readers. Though no one can exhaustively comprehend these intentions, they can be sufficiently understood, especially for the purposes of salvation, sanctification and the glorification of God.

Intertextuality will receive much attention in this work, though it is better to refer to inner-biblical allusion than to the faddish word *intertextuality*. A number of concerns must be kept in mind when working in this area. First, the interpreter must demonstrate that a later text is literarily connected to an earlier text (whether, e.g., by unique wording or a unique concept or both). We will draw some connections where other interpreters might not. This field contains minimalists and maximalists. Minimalists are leery of seeing allusive literary connections, so even if they do acknowledge them, they remain apprehensive about teasing out the interpretative implications. Indeed, many New Testament scholars would not even see that the original meanings of some Old Testament texts have anything to do with the New Testament use of them, even when formal quotations of such texts exist. On the opposite end of the spectrum, we are willing to explore the possibility of more legitimate allusions than others

---

<sup>6</sup>This section on intertextuality is adapted from G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), pp. 21-25.

might. We certainly try to avoid reading into the text meaning that does not exist; instead, we will attempt to give what we think is a reasonable explanation for each literary connection and its significance in the immediate context. All such proposed connections have degrees of possibility and probability. We will only propose “probable” connections, though not all will agree with the probability of our connections or our interpretations of them.

Some commentators speak of “echoes” in distinction to “allusions.” This distinction ultimately may not be that helpful for a number of reasons. First, some scholars use the two terms almost synonymously.<sup>7</sup> Second, those who clearly make a qualitative distinction between the terms view an echo as containing less volume or verbal coherence from the Old Testament than an allusion. Thus the echo is merely a reference to the Old Testament that is not as clear a reference as is an allusion. Another way to say this is that an echo is an allusion that is *possibly* dependent on an Old Testament text, in distinction to a reference that is clearly or *probably* dependent. Therefore, we will not pose criteria for discerning allusions in distinction to criteria for recognizing echoes.<sup>8</sup> It is fine to propose specific criteria for allusions and echoes, so readers can know how an interpreter is making judgments. However, the fact that scholars differ over specifically what criteria are best has led us to posit more general and basic criteria for allusions and echoes. At the end of the day, it is difficult to come up with hard and fast criteria that can be applicable to every Old Testament allusion or echo in the New Testament. A case-by-case study must be made.

Probably the most referred-to criteria for validating allusions is that offered by Richard Hays.<sup>9</sup> He discusses several criteria, which has the cumulative effect of pointing to the presence of an allusion.

---

<sup>7</sup>E.g., see Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 18-21, 30-31, 119; yet on the other hand Hays at other times clearly distinguishes between quotation, allusion and echo, representing Old Testament references on a descending scale (respectively) of *certain*, *probable* and *possible* (pp. 20, 23-24, 29).

<sup>8</sup>Echoes may also include an author’s unconscious reference to the Old Testament, though such references are more subtle and more difficult to validate. See, e.g., G. K. Beale, “Revelation,” in G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), pp. 319-21; and Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians* (Boston: Brill, 2009), pp. 20-24, 34-35, for discussion of the possibility of distinguishing conscious from unconscious allusions and echoes, though Beetham sees a clear distinction between “allusion” and “echo.” His argument for such a distinction is the best that we have seen.

<sup>9</sup>Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, pp. 29-32, further elaborated in his *The Conversion of the Imagination* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), pp. 34-44. We have added a few of our own explanatory comments to Hays’s criteria and have revised some. See also Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in Colossians*, pp. 28-34, who also follows and expands somewhat on Hays’s criteria.

1. The source text (the Greek or Hebrew Old Testament) must be available to the writer. The writer would have expected his audience on a first or subsequent readings to recognize the intended allusion.
2. There is a significant degree of verbatim repetition of words or syntactical patterns.
3. There are references in the immediate context (or elsewhere by the same author) to the same Old Testament context from which the purported allusion derives.
4. The alleged Old Testament allusion is suitable and satisfying in that its meaning in the Old Testament not only thematically fits into the New Testament writer's argument but also illuminates it and enhances the rhetorical punch.
5. There is plausibility that the New Testament writer could have intended such an allusion and that the audience could have understood it to varying degrees, especially on subsequent readings of his letters. Nevertheless, it is always possible that readers may not pick up an allusion intended by an author (this part of the criterion has some overlap with the first). Also, if it can be demonstrated that the New Testament writer's use of the Old Testament has parallels and analogies to other contemporary Jewish uses of the same Old Testament passages, then this enhances the validity of the allusion.
6. It is important to survey the history of the interpretation of the New Testament passage in order to see whether others have observed the allusion. This is, however, one of the least reliable criteria in recognizing allusions. Though a study of past interpretation may reveal the possible allusions proposed by others, it can also lead to a narrowing of the possibilities, since commentators can tend to follow earlier commentators and since commentary tradition always has the possibility of distorting or misinterpreting and losing the fresh and creative approach of the New Testament writers' inner-biblical collocations.

Hays's approach is one of the best ways of discerning and discussing the nature and validity of allusions (though he likes the term "echoes"), despite the fact, as we have seen, that some scholars have been critical of his methodology.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup>For a sampling of scholars favorable to Hays's approach, see Benjamin L. Gladd, *Revealing the Mystery: The Use of Mystery in Daniel and Second Temple Judaism with Its Bearing on First Corinthians*, BZNTW 160 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), pp. 3-4nn5, 9. See likewise G. K. Beale, *A Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rap-



Ultimately, what matters most is the uniqueness of a word, word combination, word order or even a theme (if the latter is especially unique).

Nevertheless, it needs to be remembered that weighing the evidence for recognizing allusions is not an exact science but a literary art. Readers will make different judgments on the basis of the same evidence, some categorizing a reference as probable, and others viewing the same reference as only possible, or even so faint as to not merit analysis. Some may still wonder, however, whether an author has intended to make a particular allusion. They may wonder, if the author really intended to convey all the meaning from an Old Testament text, should the author not have made the connection with that text more explicit? In some of these cases, it is possible that later authors (like Paul) may have merely presupposed the Old Testament connection in their mind, since they were deeply entrenched in the Old Testament Scriptures. This would not mean that there is no semantic link with the Old Testament text under discussion, but rather that the author was either not conscious of making the reference or was not necessarily intending his audience to pick up on the allusion or echo. In either case, identification of the reference and enhancement of meaning that comes from the context of the source text may well disclose the author's underlying or implicit presuppositions, which form the basis for his explicit statements in the text.

With this intertextual discussion in mind, we can now proceed to our approach in evaluating mystery in the Old Testament, early Judaism and the New Testament. Occurring only nine times in the canonical Old Testament, the technical term *mystery* (Aramaic *rāz*) is found in the book of Daniel, whereas *mystērion* (Greek) occurs twenty-eight times in the New Testament. For the most part, early Judaism is deeply indebted to Daniel's conception of mystery, employing both the Aramaic and Greek terms for "mystery" a few hundred times. Our project will begin with an analysis of *mystery* in Daniel, followed by a brief survey of the term in early Judaism. Once we have established the ap-

---

ids: Baker Academic, 2012), pp. 32-35, on which this section on echoes, allusions and Hays's methodology has been based (and which also discusses scholars unfavorable to Hays's approach). Helpful works that discuss similar criteria as Hays for identifying allusions made by latter Old Testament writers of earlier Old Testament passages are, among others, Richard L. Schultz, *The Search for Quotation: Verbal Parallels in the Prophets*, JSOTSup 180 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 222-39; B. D. Sommer, "Exegesis, Allusion and Intertextuality in the Hebrew Bible: A Response to Lyle Eslinger," *VT* 46 (1996): 479-89, who also cite sources in this respect for further consultation. For a case-by-case analysis of significant inner-biblical allusions, see, e.g., Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985).

appropriate background of *mystery*, we will then proceed to investigate each occurrence in the New Testament.

One may ask why we have decided to write on the topic of mystery, since there exist other surveys on this topic. Our desire to write this project stems from the lack of an exegetical and biblical-theological analysis of *mystery*, and especially of how the word informs the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Some of the older surveys of mystery do evaluate each occurrence of *mystery* in the Bible but are notoriously brief and largely void of detailed interaction with the immediate contexts. On the other hand, several monographs have been written on mystery as it pertains to a certain book or theme, and these works tend to be much more exegetically driven. Our project attempts to fill this gap by analyzing each occurrence of the word and paying special attention to the immediate context. We intend to unpack each occurrence of *mystery* by focusing on the surrounding Old Testament allusions and quotations, that occur in association with most of the uses of *mystery*. In other words, examining Old Testament quotations and allusions helps unlock the content of the revealed mystery. Part of the upshot of our work will be to confirm that, indeed, the older approach of understanding the New Testament's view of mystery against the background of pagan religions is not the best approach,<sup>11</sup> but rather, in line with more relatively recent studies, that the New Testament concept should be mainly understood in light of the Old Testament (and to a lesser degree Jewish developments of the Old Testament).

This project is intended for students, scholars, pastors and laypeople who seriously engage the Scriptures. This project is particularly complex, as it engages several extraordinarily difficult texts. Much ink has been spilled debating these texts, and scholars continue to dispute many of these passages. We have attempted to make this project more accessible by limiting our interaction with secondary sources (commentaries, journals, etc.) and focusing on the primary sources (the Old Testament and Jewish sources). We have also placed many discussions of relevant Old Testament and Jewish texts at the end of each chapter in excursuses, allowing the reader to grasp more easily the flow of the argument in the main body of the chapter. We intend the excursuses to provide further substantiation of the arguments in the main body.

Our hope is that scholars and students will benefit from the broad nature

---

<sup>11</sup>See chap. 11 below for a discussion of this "history of religions" approach.

of the investigation, especially the ways in which the term *mystery* is linked to Old Testament references (and the relevant bibliography). We hope that pastors and students will benefit from this project because of its emphasis on how the two Testaments relate. The New Testament often incorporates Old Testament quotations and themes but expresses them in new ways, though still retaining some continuity with the Old Testament. It may be helpful for lay readers to ignore some of the detailed discussions contained in the footnotes and focus on the body. We have attempted to keep the work at a level for both seriously interested laypeople, as well as students and scholars. For those looking for more detailed exploration of Old Testament and Jewish themes or texts, as noted, we have placed many of these discussions in excurses at the ends of the chapters.

Each use of *mystery* that we will study in the New Testament will be conducted in the same general methodological manner: we will first examine the immediate New Testament context of each occurrence. We will then explore the Old Testament and Jewish background in each case. Some usages simply will not require as much Old Testament or Jewish background investigation. At the end of each study of *mystery* in the New Testament, we will attempt to show how it stands in both continuity and discontinuity with the Old Testament and Judaism. The New Testament employs the term *mystery* in a variety of ways and applies it to a number of doctrines and ideas. Since the scope of this project is fairly broad, we are forced to keep our surveys relatively brief and to the point. Chapter one, though, serves as the backbone to the project, so we often refer back to that chapter and the concepts contained therein.



## THE USE OF *MYSTERY* IN DANIEL



AS WE WILL SEE WHEN WE COME TO THE USE OF *mystery* in the New Testament,<sup>1</sup> the use of the term sometimes, if not often, has its background in its use in Daniel 2 and Daniel 4. Therefore, we begin the first substantive chapter of our book with a study of *mystery* in Daniel.

The word *mystery* plays a pivotal role in the book of Daniel. The term encapsulates both the symbolic form of revelation and the interpretation. In addition, *mystery* is associated with an end-time element that accompanies the content of the revelation. In order for us to grasp the nature and significance of *mystery*, we must pay close attention to the book of Daniel's narrative.

Understanding the Old Testament and the early Jewish background of the New Testament is crucial to grasping its meaning and application.<sup>2</sup> Ignoring this background material is a little like watching a sequel to a movie but never the original; the audience would be unfamiliar with the characters and plotline. Similarly, studying only the New Testament's use of *mystery* (*mystērion*) without any knowledge of its use in Daniel or Jewish literature will inevitably lead to a skewed understanding.

As scholars have argued in recent years, the New Testament's use of *mystery* remains tethered to the book of Daniel. But the list of those who have developed significantly the concept of mystery in the book of Daniel is surprisingly brief. The discussions are generally restricted to side comments and brief remarks from other studies. Even seminal works on the Jewish nature of the

---

<sup>1</sup>E.g., see the following chapters on Mt 13; 1 Cor 2; Eph 3; 2 Thess 2; and Revelation.

<sup>2</sup>Used with permission, this chapter is adapted from Benjamin L. Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion: The Use of Mystery in Daniel and Second Temple Judaism with Its Bearing on First Corinthians*, BZBW 160 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), pp. 17-50.

term dedicate only a paragraph or so to this topic.<sup>3</sup> We, though, will work through both Daniel's and the Jewish conception of mystery in some detail, since this chapter will lay a proper foundation for the remainder of this project.<sup>4</sup>

The book of Daniel and early Judaism present mystery as a revelation concerning end-time events that were previously hidden but have been subsequently revealed. Critical to understanding the biblical mystery is the nature of hiddenness. *We will argue that the revelation of mystery is not a totally new revelation but the full disclosure of something that was to a significant extent hidden.* It is this tension between mystery being a revelation of something not completely hidden yet hidden to a significant extent that we hope to tease out in this chapter and, indeed, in the book. We will unpack the book of Daniel's conception of mystery by relating it to the hymn in Daniel 2:20-23, observing the twofold form of mystery and noting its relationship to latter-day events. After we examine Daniel's understanding of mystery, we will then briefly sift through a few prominent occurrences in early Judaism.

### **MYSTERY IN DANIEL**

It is no wonder that a book in which a king constructs a huge statue, a person is tossed into a pit of lions, four ghastly beasts arise out of the water only to be judged by a figure riding on the clouds, and hostile opponents wage war against Israel and blaspheme God continues to pique the interest of many. The book of Daniel also displays a somewhat unique view of the disclosure of God's wisdom as the revelation of a mystery. Further developing the Old Testament understanding of wisdom, Daniel presents God's wisdom as manifesting itself in the form of symbolic communication that is indeed mysterious, communication that must be interpreted by an angel or a divinely gifted individual. While previous expressions of wisdom in the Old Testament contain such features (e.g., Joseph interprets Pharaoh's symbolic dreams in Gen 41), the book of Daniel further develops these expressions: the primary manner in which God communicates within the book of Daniel is through symbolism (dreams,

<sup>3</sup>Raymond Brown, *The Semitic Background of the Term "Mystery" in the New Testament*, BS 21 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), pp. 7-8; Günther Bornkamm, "μυστήριον, μύεω," in *TDNT* 4:814-15; Markus Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity*, WUNT 36 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 15-16, 48, 101-2.

<sup>4</sup>G. K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), pp. 12-22; G. K. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, JSNTSup 166 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 215-16; Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, pp. 17-50.

writing on the wall, etc.). But not only is the mode of the communication developed, the content is as well. Nestled within the symbolic communication are highly charged end-time events. The book of Daniel has much to say about what will transpire in the “latter days.” A great persecution and rampant false teaching will befall the Israelites in the end time, but eventually the enemy will be put down. God will raise the righteous Israelites from the dead, judge the ungodly and establish his eternal kingdom.

The English word *mystery* in Daniel is a translation of an Aramaic noun (*rāz*) that appears a total of nine times in the book (Dan 2:18, 19, 27-30, 47; 4:9 [4:6 MT]). Each time the word is used, the Greek translations of Daniel consistently render it *mystērion* (“mystery”). Understanding the term *mystery* requires us to connect it with Daniel’s conception of wisdom. We will now proceed to analyze *mystery* and its companion word and concept, *wisdom*, throughout the book of Daniel.

The first two uses of *mystery* prominently occur in Daniel 2, which narrate that Nebuchadnezzar “dreamed dreams,” but with great consternation, for his “spirit was troubled” (Dan 2:1). Nebuchadnezzar envisions a magnificent colossus that possessed a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet mixed with clay and iron (Dan 2:32-33). Despite its seemingly impregnable stature, a rock that was “cut out without hands” (Dan 2:34) smashes the statue’s feet, resulting in a total decimation of the colossus. The “rock” then grows into a mountain filling the entire earth (Dan 2:35). Daniel then interprets the enigmatic dream and relates to Nebuchadnezzar that the four parts of the statue symbolize four kingdoms (which are often interpreted as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome). The fourth and final kingdom, the iron and clay feet, is eclipsed by God’s eternal kingdom that “put an end to all these kingdoms” (Dan 2:44). The rock plays a central role in the establishment of this latter-day kingdom, as it could symbolize a divinely appointed individual (Judaism interpreted the rock as messianic) or simply the eternal kingdom itself (Dan 2:45).

Before Daniel interprets the dream, the king summons the Babylonian diviners and commands them to relate the dream because his “spirit is anxious to understand the dream” (Dan 2:3). But because the Babylonian wise men are unable to relate to the king either the dream or the interpretation (Dan 2:4, 7, 10-11), Nebuchadnezzar decrees that all the wise men in Babylon are to be destroyed (Dan 2:12-13). After catching wind of this drastic measure from Arioch

(Dan 2:14-15), Daniel approaches the king and begs for time, so that he may “declare the interpretation” to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2:16).

Following his plea, Daniel and his friends “request compassion from the God of heaven” concerning “this mystery” (Dan 2:17-18), and God subsequently answers their request in Daniel’s night vision (Dan 2:19). Immediately following the reception of the mystery, Daniel blesses God through a hymn. At this juncture in the narrative, the reader is presented with a key text for understanding the entire book of Daniel. In this respect, Daniel 2:17-19, which has two uses of *mystery*, says,

Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter, so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision.

In Daniel 2:18, *mystery* appears with the demonstrative pronoun *this*, referring to the preceding discussion: Nebuchadnezzar demands to know the dream he had and its interpretation (Dan 2:4-6, 9, 16). Daniel labels the king’s dream and its meaning a “mystery.” Since Nebuchadnezzar’s request included both the dream and its interpretation, *mystery* encompasses both of these components. However, it is likely that Nebuchadnezzar himself knew the content of the dream but did not know the interpretation.<sup>5</sup>

The analogy with Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 4 points further to the king having knowledge of the content of the dream. The reason the king asks his diviners in Daniel 2 for not only the dream’s interpretation but also its content is to validate that whoever gave the interpretation had also received supernaturally the content of the dream, thus also validating the interpretation. Nebuchadnezzar had two symbolic dreams, and he knew both dreams were symbolic (Dan 2:1-3; 4:5-6). Since both dreams were symbolic, Nebuchadnezzar summoned the Babylonian wise men, and after they failed to interpret the dreams he summoned

---

<sup>5</sup>According to Dan 2:16, Daniel requests additional time, so that he may disclose “the interpretation to the king.” It is possible that *mystery* here only includes the dream’s interpretation and not the dream itself. This, however, does not do justice to the surrounding context. The dream and its interpretation are mentioned together in Dan 2:4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 26. Nebuchadnezzar desires to know the content of the dream, but it must be interpreted. When Daniel requested time to declare the interpretation to the king, he *assumed* that the dream would be part of this disclosure. Therefore, both the dream and its interpretation are a mystery (see Brown, *Semitic Background*, p. 7; Beale, *Use of Daniel*, p. 13).



Daniel. The point is that King Nebuchadnezzar was aware that his dreams required an additional revelation of the symbolism, the interpretation of which remained a mystery to him. We will address below whether or not he was *completely* unaware of the interpretation of the symbolic dreams.

Thus far, the term *mystery* includes the dream and its interpretation (from Daniel's viewpoint), but the psalm in Daniel 2:20-23 lends further insight into the relationship between mystery and wisdom. The impetus for this psalm is the disclosure of the mystery to Daniel: "Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven." Therefore, the contents of Daniel 2:20-23 should directly relate to the nature of mystery. Since these verses significantly affect Daniel 2 and the nature of mystery, we will analyze the passage and then relate it to the immediate and broader context.

### THE HYMN OF DANIEL 2:20-23

Daniel 2:20-22 uniquely describe the character of God and his relationship to the mystery:

- 20a Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever,
- 20b For wisdom and power belong to Him.
- 21a It is He who changes the times and the epochs;
- 21b He removes kings and establishes kings;
- 21c He gives wisdom to wise men
- 21d And knowledge to men of understanding.
- 22a It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things;
- 22b He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him.

Line 20b states the reason for the blessing in 20a: "Let the name of God be blessed . . . for wisdom and power belong to him." Moreover, 20b is defined in the following lines (21a-22b) and appears to be central: wisdom and power originate from God alone. Lines 21a-21b describe God's power—he "changes the times" by "removing kings"—whereas lines 21c-22a concern God disclosing his wisdom—"he gives wisdom . . . and knowledge. It is he who reveals the profound and hidden things." Line 22b grounds 21c-22a, stating the basis for that disclosure: "He who reveals the profound and hidden things . . . [because] he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him." In sum, Daniel exalts and blesses God because he is truly powerful and wise. He exercises his power by removing and establishing kings and discloses his wisdom because he is all knowing.

The second section, Daniel 2:23, shifts from the third person to second, highlighting God's actions but with reference to Daniel.<sup>6</sup>

- 23a To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise,  
 23b For You have given me wisdom and power;  
 23c Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You,  
 23d For You have made known to us the king's matter.

Daniel's praise to God is clearly exhibited in line 23a ("To You . . . I give thanks and praise") and grounded by lines 23b-d. We again detect notions of wisdom, power and revelation in 23b. God's deliverance of Daniel from distress can be seen in line 23b: "You have given me wisdom." Lines 23c-d further unpack God giving Daniel wisdom: "You have made known to me what we requested of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter." The first section, lines 20b-22b, is therefore rehearsed in the second section, yet narrowly referring to Daniel.

Keeping this psalm in mind, we are able to draw a few important conclusions. The first section (Dan 2:20-22) articulates God "removing" and "establishing" kings and giving wisdom to "wise men." In the second section (Dan 2:23), God gives Daniel wisdom concerning the rise and fall of kings (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar). To take this one step further, Daniel has already labeled this disclosure a "mystery" in Daniel 2:18-19. Therefore, according to Daniel 2:23 (which assumes Dan 2:20-22), *mystery may be initially and generally defined as the complete unveiling of hidden end-time events*.

At its most basic level, the term *mystery* concerns God *revealing* his wisdom. This accounts for the high appropriation of revealing or disclosing vocabulary throughout the book of Daniel. The verb "to reveal" (Aramaic *gālā*) appears eight times, referring to God "disclosing" either "mysteries" (Dan 2:19, 28-30), "profound and hidden things" (Dan 2:22) or a visionary "message" (Dan 10:1). The disclosure of God's wisdom is the common denominator of each of these passages.

Therefore, although revelatory language is lacking in Daniel 4, it is still valid to call Nebuchadnezzar's dream in this chapter a "revelation." The same characterization can also be applied to Daniel's visions in Daniel 7-12. Furthermore, in Daniel 7:1, Daniel "saw a dream and visions" that are likely analogous to Nebuchadnezzar's dreams in Daniel 2 and Daniel 4. Just as God delivers his

---

<sup>6</sup>G. T. M. Prinsloo, "Two Poems in a Sea of Prose: The Content and Context of Daniel 2.20-23 and 6.27-28," *JSOT* 59 (1993): 97.

wisdom to Daniel to know and interpret the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2–4, God directly discloses his wisdom to Daniel in Daniel 7–12 and furnishes Daniel with wisdom to understand them.

### FORM OF THE MYSTERY

A distinctive characteristic of Daniel is the nature of twofold revelation in contrast to other places in the Old Testament where the prophets directly receive God's revelation. Our aim in this section is to outline the basic structure of wisdom in the book of Daniel. This analysis will encompass its two major features: initial and partial revelation followed by a subsequent and fuller interpretation.

In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar dreams and desires to know the interpretation (Dan 2:1-13). God reveals both the dream and the interpretation—the mystery—to Daniel in a “night vision” (Dan 2:19), outlined in Daniel 2:31-45. This disclosure of God's wisdom is marked by the term *interpretation* (Aramaic *pešer*), which is used thirty-four times in Daniel. The term *pešer* has been extensively discussed, especially in Near Eastern<sup>7</sup> and Qumran studies,<sup>8</sup> but for our present purposes, we will only discuss how it relates to *mystery* in Daniel.

The term *interpretation* may harken back to Genesis 40–41, where the cupbearer and baker had dreams and Joseph delivered their “interpretations” (Gen 40:5-19). Likewise, Pharaoh's dream cannot be interpreted by anyone except Joseph (Gen 41:14-32). Just as Joseph delivers the interpretation to the baker, the cupbearer and Pharaoh, so Daniel interprets for Nebuchadnezzar.

We will now evaluate Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 4 and direct our attention to a subtle yet important feature of the mystery, since the word appears there also (Dan 4:9: “no mystery baffles you [Daniel]”). It appears that Nebuchadnezzar has some insight into the symbolic meaning of his dream *before* Daniel discloses the dream's interpretation. This observation affects our general understanding of mystery at a fundamental level. On this basis, we will argue that *mystery* is not a radically new revelation but a disclosure of something that was largely (but not entirely) hidden.

Following the model set in Daniel 2, king Nebuchadnezzar has another revelatory dream in Daniel 4, motivating him once again to summon the Baby-

<sup>7</sup>Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), pp. 454-56.

<sup>8</sup>E.g., W. H. Brownlee, “Biblical Interpretation Among the Sectaries of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *BA* 14 (1951): 54-76.

lonian diviners. In contrast to Daniel 2 where the king does not reveal the dream, this time Nebuchadnezzar reveals to them the content of his dream: “I related the dream to them, but they could not make its interpretation known to me” (Dan 4:7). Nebuchadnezzar not only demonstrates knowledge of his dream to Daniel, but also a *partial* understanding of its interpretation. The dream describes the story of a huge cosmic tree that provided food for all the animals (Dan 4:10-12). But in Daniel 4:13, the dream progresses (note the introductory formula in Dan 4:13a introducing an angelic interpreter), and an angelic messenger supplements the dream and gives a partial interpretation. When the angel communicates the destruction of the tree, he interprets the tree as a *person*:

He shouted out and spoke as follows:  
 “Chop down the tree and cut off its branches,  
 Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit;  
 Let the beasts flee from under it  
 And the birds from its branches.  
 Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground,  
 But with a band of iron and bronze *around it*  
 In the new grass of the field;  
 And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven,  
 And let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth.  
 Let his mind be changed from *that of a man*  
 And let a beast’s mind be given to him,  
 And let seven periods of time pass over him.” (Dan 4:14-16)

Though the Aramaic third person pronoun remains the same throughout this passage (masculine singular), referring to the tree and then to a person represented by the tree, the angel clearly interprets the tree as a prominent figure in Daniel 4:15-16. Within the dream report that Nebuchadnezzar receives, an angel interprets the tree as a royal figure.<sup>9</sup> One Greek translation (Old Greek) of Daniel 4 is particularly relevant in that the translation explicitly attributes partial understanding of the dream to Nebuchadnezzar (see excursus 1.1 below).

In Daniel 4:10-15, Nebuchadnezzar envisions a cosmic tree. Not coincidentally, cosmic trees elsewhere in the Old Testament symbolize prominent nations or individual kings. Ezekiel 17:23 (Israel), Ezekiel 31:1-2, 18 (the king of

<sup>9</sup>The mention of an angel in the Greek translation of Dan 2:11 (OG) who gives an interpretation points further to the similar nature of the Daniel 2 and Daniel 4 vision narratives.

Egypt) and Ezekiel 31:3-17 (Assyria) all contain language very similar to Daniel 4:12. In Daniel 4:5, Nebuchadnezzar states, “I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.” It is possible to understand the king’s fearful reaction to the dream strictly as an effect of the bizarre dream. On the other hand, it is also very possible that the king’s behavior stems from *his suspicion that the dream may apply to him*. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 4 follows his dream in Daniel 2, whereby the eventual destruction of the Babylonian Empire is symbolically portrayed in the annihilation of the golden head (Dan 2:32-35), which further suggests that the king senses that this second dream was also about his demise. Moreover, that the king had some sense of the dream’s interpretation of the interpretative portion of the mystery (Dan 2:36-45) may be suggested from observing that Daniel describes king Nebuchadnezzar’s rule much in the same way that the angel describes the cosmic tree in Daniel 4:11-12.

You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given *them* into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold. (Dan 2:37-38)

The tree grew large and became strong  
 And its height reached to the sky,  
 And it *was* visible to the end of the whole earth.  
 Its foliage *was* beautiful and its fruit abundant,  
 And in it *was* food for all.  
 The beasts of the field found shade under it,  
 And the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches,  
 And all living creatures fed themselves from it. (Dan 4:11-12)

The tight connection between Daniel 2 and Daniel 4 is well documented, and if the connection between the two chapters is valid, then the king most likely believed that his vision of the cosmic tree somehow involved himself, even before Daniel interpreted it for him. Whether or not this is the case, Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 4:19-27 is a further unpacking or full interpretation of a partially existing interpretation, which was already known by the king himself. The king already knew that the symbolic tree that was felled represented some leader or king somewhere, and, if he had a sense that the dream was about his own demise, then he knew even more

about the interpretation of the symbolic dream. In other words, Daniel more fully interprets the king's dream *and* a partial (perhaps very partial) interpretation of it that the king already possessed!

It may be the case that Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2 follows suit. According to Daniel 2:30b, Daniel claims to interpret "for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind" ("thoughts" already in his mind, which may have been more than the mere recollection of the symbolic dream; cf. Dan 7:1). This verse may very well reveal that Nebuchadnezzar had *some* insight into the interpretation of his dream in Daniel 2.

Similar to Daniel 4, the king was "was troubled and his sleep left him," and he was "anxious to understand the dream" (Dan 2:1-3). Though Nebuchadnezzar withholds the symbolic dream from the Babylonian wise men, he may very well have told Daniel a portion of his dream and, perhaps, even told Daniel part of what he thought the dream meant. It is difficult to say either way, as the text is silent. Nevertheless, if Daniel 2 and Daniel 4 involve similar content, identical characters (the king, Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian diviners and Daniel) and the same revelatory framework (both are labeled a "mystery": Dan 2:18-19; 4:9), then what is true of the dream report in Daniel 4 may well also be true of dream report of Daniel 2. Thus, because of the close connections between Daniel 2 and Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar may also have already had some degree of insight into the symbolic meaning of his dream in Daniel 2 before it was fully interpreted by Daniel.

The remainder of Daniel generally follows the established pattern of initial, partial revelation and a subsequent interpretation. In Daniel 5 a twofold pattern of cryptic revelation and interpretation surfaces (Dan 5:7-8, 15-17, 24-28). The cryptic revelation (like the dreams) is the inscription on the wall (Dan 5:5-9). Only Daniel has the ability to give an accurate interpretation. As in Daniel 1-6, the disclosing of wisdom in Daniel 7-12 is couched in the typical two-part structure. Daniel 7 has long been considered to be linked with Daniel 2, since the four beasts are likened to four kingdoms. In addition to this thematic tie, cryptic revelation and its interpretation closely resembles Daniel 2; 4; 5. Like Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, Daniel seeks an interpretation in Daniel 7:16 ("So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things") and Daniel 7:19 ("Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast").

As in Daniel 7, Daniel desires to receive an interpretation in Daniel 8:15-17:

“When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; . . . I heard the voice of a man between *the banks of Ulai*, and he called out and said, ‘Gabriel, give this *man* an understanding of the vision” (cf. Dan 8:18-19). Like the preceding episodes, this cryptic revelation is interpreted through an angelic messenger (Dan 8:19-26).

Daniel 9 differs from Daniel 7–8, since Daniel does not receive an initial vision (Dan 9:22-23); instead, Daniel reads from Jeremiah’s prophecy concerning the “seventy years” (Jer 25:11-12; 29:10). But it is worth noting that Jeremiah received the seventy-years prophecy “as the word of the LORD” (Dan 9:2). Thus, Daniel is reading what God *revealed* to Jeremiah. Daniel “observes” what God revealed to Jeremiah and understands that the interpretation of Jeremiah’s prediction included seventy literal years of captivity for Israel (Dan 9:2). In addition, God delivers a further interpretation to Daniel in a vision (Dan 9:22-23) concerning “Jeremiah’s revelation” and, again, through an angel (Dan 9:22-23, 24-27). It is likely that the angel’s interpretation was a figurative (or perhaps typological) understanding of Jeremiah’s prophecy.<sup>10</sup> The point is that Daniel understood the initial meaning of God’s revelation to Jeremiah but then the angel gives a further interpretation, which is based on an understanding of the initial revelation. Again, an idea of “partial hiddenness—fuller revelation” is expressed here. Likely Daniel had little understanding of the angel’s further interpretation of Jeremiah, except that this interpretation was based on and arose from his literal understanding of the original prophecy.

Daniel 10–12 constitutes the final vision of the book. This visionary experience further develops the themes found in Daniel 7–8,<sup>11</sup> as well as Daniel 2. Unlike the previous visions, this one does not explicitly use the two-tiered approach (cryptic then revealed revelation). It may, however, imply this distinction, for in Daniel 10:21 the angel is not delivering direct revelation: “I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth.” The notion of “inscribing” and

<sup>10</sup>On which see, e.g., Meredith G. Kline, “The Covenant of the Seventieth Week,” in *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies Prepared in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis*, ed. John H. Skilton (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1974), pp. 452-69. Though Kline denies that Dan 9:24-27 is an “interpretation” or “reinterpretation” of Jeremiah’s prophecy, we believe it is allowable within Kline’s framework to see Dan 9:24-27 as drawing out typological implications of the historical fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy of Israel’s seventy years of captivity (see pp. 454, 460-64, which may point to a typological interpretation). In this respect, see the close verbal parallel in the LXX between 2 Chron 36:21-22, Lev 26:34 and Jer 25:12, all of which prophesy Israel’s seventy-year captivity and show an intertextual connection. On the verbal parallels linking these three texts, see further G. K. Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), pp. 139-42.

<sup>11</sup>Tremper Longman, *Daniel*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), p. 245.

“writing” strongly allude to Daniel 5 with the writing on the wall (Dan 5:24-25) and may suggest that the angel is functioning in an interpretative role.<sup>12</sup>

Significantly, Daniel understands the interpretation of the dream revealed to him in Daniel 2, as well as the later elaboration of end-time visions and declarations of it in Daniel 10–12 (see Dan 10:1, 11-14), where Daniel is said to have understood the “word” and vision of Daniel 10–12. Nevertheless, he still does not understand the vast majority of this later revelatory elaboration, as Daniel 12:4, 8-9 makes clear (e.g., note Dan 12:8: “I heard but could not understand”). That the elaborated prophecy is to be “concealed and sealed” (Dan 12:4, 9) refers both to the time during which it remains unfulfilled and the time during which it is not understood. Fulfillment thus brings with it greater understanding. In this respect, we have Daniel initially having no understanding of the revelatory dream in Daniel 2, then having a significantly greater understanding of the dream later in Daniel 2, and then the subsequent elaboration of the Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 eschatological vision in Daniel 10–12 reaffirms Daniel’s basic understanding of the end-time events. Finally, however, in Daniel 12:4, 8-9 it is evident that even Daniel still only has a partial understanding of these events, since a much greater apprehension of what he has seen and heard in Daniel 11:1–12:3 can only come with the fulfillment of the visionary prophecy.

Therefore, in our analysis we can determine that wisdom in Daniel is characterized by a twofold structure: symbolic and interpretative revelation. Revelation has taken the form of dreams, writing, previous prophecy and visions. It would therefore be a mistake to bifurcate any of these forms of revelation, since each of these modes is an expression of God’s revealed wisdom. Revelation, albeit in several mediums, such as dreams, writing and Old Testament Scripture, remains largely hidden until the fuller interpretation has been provided. Note, however, that a partial interpretation of a dream report can be embedded within the initial revelation of the dream. The *full* interpretation remains unknown to individuals, even to the seer (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel). It is not until the fuller interpretation has been given that the initial, hidden revelation as a mystery is understood. And even then it is only when the end-time events prophesied in the vision are fulfilled that even fuller understanding comes (e.g., note the emphasis on the “wise ones” who enjoy significant insight during the unfolding of the end-time events: Dan 11:33-35; 12:3, 10).

---

<sup>12</sup>Cf. David W. Gooding, “The Literary Structure of the Book of Daniel and Its Implications,” *TynBul* 32 (1981): 68.



Though our study affirms the general maxim that mystery constitutes a revelation that was previously hidden but now has been revealed, we refine this definition by adding that the initial, symbolic revelation was not entirely hidden, though most of it was unknown. The idea of “partial hiddenness—fuller revelation” is apparent in Daniel 2 and Daniel 4, the only places in Daniel where the word *mystery* actually occurs. Thus subsequent revelation discloses the fuller meaning of end-time events. We have endeavored to show that this idea of “partial hiddenness—fuller revelation” is apparent not only in Daniel 2 and Daniel 4 but also in Daniel 9. There is not sufficient space within the scope of this book to analyze in any depth Daniel 5, Daniel 7–8 and Daniel 10–12 to see if the same notion is expressed there. It is possible that such an idea is not apparent in these other passages, though one might expect that the subsequent revelations in Daniel would follow the pattern of the earlier ones, especially since they recapitulate one another (especially Dan 2 is recapitulated to a great extent in Dan 7, and to varying degrees in Dan 8, Dan 9 and Dan 10–12). In this respect, we briefly discussed Daniel 10–12 and saw there that the fulfillment of the end-time visions and prophecies indeed do bring with them even fuller understanding of these prophecies hitherto partially understood by Daniel. Thus, there is in Daniel actually a threefold pattern: (1) little understanding of a prophetic vision (possibly by Nebuchadnezzar in Dan 2, and by Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel in Dan 4), (2) followed by an interpretation that reveals greater understanding of the prophecy, which (3) is then followed by fulfillment of the prophecy, bringing with it an even greater understanding than before.

### THE END-TIME COMPONENT OF THE MYSTERY

Wisdom, according to the book of Daniel, is related to knowledge about eschatological events. By *eschatological*, we mean those events that are to take place in the “latter days.” The phrase “latter days” and synonymous expressions refer to the end time and are used throughout the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, these expressions pertain among other things to a time of distress (Deut 4:30; 8:16; Ezek 38:8, 16), the restoration of Israel (Is 2:2; Jer 23:20; 30:24; Hos 3:5; Mic 4:1), and a ruler who ushers in peace and prosperity to Israel (Gen 49:1; Num 24:14). In Daniel 2:28, Daniel expresses one of the most insightful characteristics of the mystery: “There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days.” Daniel closely conveys to Nebuchadnezzar two concepts: his God

is a “revealer of mysteries,” and this mystery in Daniel 2 specifically pertains to the “latter days.” In Daniel 2:29, Daniel further develops this notion: “O king, *while* on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future [OG: “in the latter days”] and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place.”

The end-time terminology in Daniel 2:28-29 is very appropriate given the content of the dream. The colossus represents four kingdoms that are eventually crushed by a “stone” (Dan 2:35, 44-45) and eclipsed by a “kingdom which will never be destroyed . . . but it will itself endure forever” (Dan 2:44). In Daniel 2:45, Daniel summarizes the climax of the dream, using latter-day terminology: “Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze . . . the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future [OG: “in the latter days”].” The remainder of Daniel touches on this main theme—God’s kingdom ultimately will overthrow all others, including Nebuchadnezzar’s.

Some commentators in their analysis of the term *mystery* tend to view Daniel 4 as noneschatological and disparate from Daniel 2, but this position does not take into account Daniel 4’s relationship with Daniel 2. According to Daniel 2:21, God

changes the times and the epochs;  
He removes kings and establishes kings.

In an almost striking fashion, Daniel 4:28-33 is an example/fulfillment of God “removing” a king (Dan 2:21; 4:31) and an immediate fulfillment of the mystery in Daniel 4:10-26.<sup>13</sup> In fact, part of the vision of Daniel 2 concerns Babylon as the first kingdom (the head of gold), and Daniel 4 focuses on a beginning judgment of this kingdom’s king, which is partly prophesied in Daniel 2 (though the judgment in Dan 4 is not consummate as in Dan 2, but within the context of the book of Daniel it could be seen as leading up to such a decisive judgment).

Daniel 7-12 describes in more detail the end-time events that are outlined in Daniel 2. As in Daniel 2, four kingdoms are eclipsed by God’s eternal kingdom (Dan 7:11-14). The idea of mystery in Daniel 7 represents four beasts being identified as four kingdoms that are eclipsed by God’s reign. The concept of mystery in Daniel 8 is markedly eschatological (Dan 8:17-26).

Daniel’s final vision in Daniel 10-12 likewise contains end-time language. In

---

<sup>13</sup>Beale, *Use of Daniel*, p. 15.

Daniel 10:14, an angelic messenger prefaces the upcoming visionary content: “Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet *future*.”<sup>14</sup> The eschatological events in Daniel 11–12 comprise the rise and fall of kings and the antagonism of Antiochus IV and an end-time opponent(s). A remnant will remain despite this affliction and will eventually be vindicated at the resurrection.

In sum, the content of the unveiled mystery pertains to events that take place in the latter days. These eschatological events primarily include a final tribulation, the rise and fall of Israel’s antagonists, the establishment of God’s end-time kingdom and finally the vindication of Israel’s righteous.

## CONCLUSION

Revelation of a mystery can be defined roughly as God fully disclosing wisdom about end-time events that were mostly hitherto unknown (Dan 2:20–23). He primarily communicates his wisdom through dreams and visions mediated by either an individual or angel. In the first half of the book, God gives his wisdom to both Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel, while in Daniel 7–12 only Daniel receives God’s wisdom (via the interpreting angel).

The structure of the mystery in Daniel 2 and Daniel 4 entails a twofold characteristic—an individual receives a symbolic dream followed by a full interpretation. Elsewhere in the book this structure is also found in visions (Dan 7, 8, 10–12), writing (Dan 5) and previous prophecy (Dan 9). The two-tiered component of the mystery signals the hidden nature of the revelation and its subsequent interpretation—largely hidden but now more fully revealed. The initial revelation was not entirely hidden but only partially, and the subsequent revelation discloses the fuller meaning of end-time events.

## EXCURSUS 1.1: THE GREEK OLD TESTAMENT’S INTERPRETATION OF DANIEL 4

The Old Greek translation of Daniel 4, one of the earliest commentaries on the book of Daniel, attests to the angel’s initial interpretation of the dream (see table 1.1; the underlined wording represents the Greek expansion of the Aramaic text). The Theodotion Greek rendering is much more in line with the Masoretic Text (MT), whereas the Old Greek greatly expands the angel’s initial

<sup>14</sup>Synonymous eschatological language is also found in Dan 11:20, 27, 35; 12:4, 7, 9, 13 (cf. 11:13). Though these verses do not use the phrase “latter days,” they use terms such as *end* and *appointed time*.

interpretation. The most notable difference occurs in the last verse, where the Old Greek reads, “I [Nebuchadnezzar] described the dream for him, and he [Daniel] showed me its entire interpretation [*pasan tēn synkrisin*]” (Dan 4:15 [Dan 4:18 Eng.]). Both the MT and Theodotion read simply “interpretation” (Aramaic *pišrā*; Greek *to synkrima*). The Old Greek at this point may suggest that the king did indeed have a partial understanding or interpretation of his dream before the fuller interpretation was granted. The addition of the Old Greek in Daniel 4:14a, which is part of the dream revealed to the king, is interesting in this respect: “and he was delivered into prison and was bound by them with shackles and bronze manacles. I marveled exceedingly at all these things, and my sleep escaped from my eyes.” It is clear here that a very significant person and not a tree is in mind, which was part of the cause of the king’s “marveling” and his loss of sleep. This points further to the king realizing part of the interpretation of the symbolism of the tree in the dream itself, before its subsequent interpretation by Daniel; the king realized that the tree symbolized a significant person who was being depicted as being judged, and he may well have suspected that this person was himself. Daniel’s subsequent interpretation clarified and more fully revealed this picture to the king.

Table 1.1

Masoretic Text (NASB)	Old Greek	Theodotion
<b>Dan 4:10</b> Now <i>these were</i> the visions in my mind <i>as I lay</i> on my bed: I was looking, and behold, <i>there was</i> a tree in the midst of the earth and its height <i>was</i> great.	<b>Dan 4:7 (10)</b> I was sleeping, and lo, a tall tree was growing on the earth. Its appearance was huge, <u>and there was no other like it.</u>	<b>Dan 4:7 (10)</b> Upon my bed I was looking, and lo, a tree was at the center of the earth, and its height was great.
<b>Dan 4:11</b> The tree grew large and became strong And its height reached to the sky, And it <i>was</i> visible to the end of the whole earth.	<b>Dan 4:8 (11)</b> <u>And its appearance was great.</u> Its crown came close to heaven, and its span to the clouds, filling the area under heaven. <u>The sun and the moon dwelled in it and illuminated the whole earth.</u>	<b>Dan 4:8 (11)</b> The tree grew great and strong, and its top reached as far as heaven, and its span to the ends of the whole earth.
<b>Dan 4:12</b> Its foliage <i>was</i> beautiful and its fruit abundant, And in it <i>was</i> food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, And the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches, And all living creatures fed themselves from it.	<b>Dan 4:9 (12)</b> <u>Its branches were about thirty stadia long,</u> and all the animals of the earth found shade under it, and the birds of the air hatched their brood in it. Its fruit was abundant and good, and it sustained all living creatures.	<b>Dan 4:9 (12)</b> Its foliage was beautiful, and its fruit abundant, and food for all was on it. And the wild animals dwelled under it, and the birds of the air lived in its branches, and from it all flesh was fed.

Masoretic Text (NASB)	Old Greek	Theodotion
<p><b>Dan 4:13</b> I was looking in the visions in my mind <i>as I lay</i> on my bed, and behold, an <i>angelic</i> watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven.</p>	<p><b>Dan 4:10 (13)</b> I continued looking in my sleep; lo, an angel was sent in power out of heaven.</p>	<p><b>Dan 4:10 (13)</b> I continued looking in the vision of the night while on my bed, and lo, <u>there was an Ir</u>, and a holy one descended from heaven.</p>
<p><b>Dan 4:14</b> He shouted out and spoke as follows: "Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit; Let the beasts flee from under it And the birds from its branches.</p>	<p><b>Dan 4:11 (14)</b> And he called and said: "Cut it down, and destroy it, <u>for it has been decreed by the Most High to uproot and render it useless.</u>"</p>	<p><b>Dan 4:11 (14)</b> And he called mightily, and thus he said: "Cut down the tree, and pluck out its branches, and strip off its foliage, and scatter its fruit. Let the animals be shaken beneath it, and the birds from its branches.</p>
<p><b>Dan 4:15</b> "Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, But with a band of iron and bronze <i>around it</i> In the new grass of the field; And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, And let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth.</p>	<p><b>Dan 4:12 (15)</b> And thus he said: "Spare one of its roots in the ground <u>so that he may feed on grass like an ox with the animals of the earth in the mountains,</u></p>	<p><b>Dan 4:12 (15)</b> "Nevertheless, leave the growth of its roots in the ground and with a band of iron and bronze, and he will lie in the tender grass of the outdoors and in the dew of heaven. And his lot will be with the animals in the grass of the earth.</p>
<p><b>Dan 4:16</b> "Let his mind be changed from <i>that of a man</i> And let a beast's mind be given to him, And let seven periods of time pass over him.</p>	<p><b>Dan 4:13 (16)</b> "and his body may be changed from the dew of heaven, and he may graze with them for seven years</p>	<p><b>Dan 4:13 (16)</b> "His heart will be changed from that of humans, and the heart of an animal will be given to him, and seven seasons will be altered over him.</p>
<p><b>Dan 4:17</b> "This sentence is by the decree of the <i>angelic</i> watchers And the decision is a command of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, And bestows it on whom He wishes And sets over it the lowliest of men."</p>	<p><b>Dan 4:14 (17)</b> "<u>until he acknowledges</u> that the Lord of heaven has authority over everything which is in heaven and which is on the earth and does with them whatever he wishes." [14a] <u>It was cut down before me in one day, and its destruction was in one hour of the day. And its branches were given to every wind, and it was dragged and thrown away. He ate grass with the animals of the earth. And he was delivered into prison and was bound by them with shackles and bronze manacles. I marveled exceedingly at all these things, and my sleep escaped from my eyes.</u></p>	<p><b>Dan 4:14 (17)</b> "The sentence is <u>by meaning of Ir</u>, and the demand is the word of holy ones in order that those alive may know that the Most High is Lord of the kingdom of humans, and he will give it to whom he will, and he will set over it what is contemned of humans."</p>

Masoretic Text (NASB)	Old Greek	Theodotion
<p><b>Dan 4:18</b> "This is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, tell me its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the <u>interpretation</u> [<i>pišrā</i>]; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you.</p>	<p><b>Dan 4:15 (18)</b> And when I arose in the morning from my bed, I called Daniel, the ruler of the savants and the leader of those who decide dreams, and I described the dream for him, and he showed me the dream for him, and he showed me its <u>entire interpretation</u> [<i>pasan tēn synkrisin</i>].</p>	<p><b>Dan 4:15 (18)</b> This is the dream that I, King Nabouchodonosor, saw. And you, Baltasar, tell the meaning, since all the sages of my kingdom are unable to explain to me <u>the meaning</u> [<i>to synkrima</i>]. But you, Daniel, are able, because a holy, divine spirit is in you.</p>

If this is a correct understanding of the Old Greek, it shows what the Greek translator thought was the meaning of the Aramaic text of Daniel 4, and it is in line with our earlier definition of *mystery* in this chapter—an initial, *partially* hidden revelation that is subsequently more fully revealed.

## THE USE OF *MYSTERY* IN EARLY JUDAISM



**MYSTERY NOT ONLY FEATURES PROMINENTLY** in the book of Daniel but also in early Judaism. Indeed, the term is a favorite in the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), a literary corpus that includes a number of diverse texts (apocryphal and pseudepigraphical works, sectarian documents, Old Testament texts, etc.). The Dead Sea Scrolls appear to have been composed between the third century B.C. and the first century A.D. by the Qumran community, a Jewish sect living just north of the Dead Sea in the desert, whose writings included commentaries on the Old Testament, rules for entrance into and conduct in their community, and a text that details their preparation for an eschatological war.

The Qumran community had quite a penchant for the term *mystery*. The Dead Sea Scrolls employ the term well over a hundred times, using it not unlike the book of Daniel. What makes this term remarkably difficult to survey is the various ways in which the Qumran community picked it up and used it. We will attempt to trace some of the more prominent and creative usages, establishing a foundation together with our earlier study in Daniel that will be of use to us throughout the remainder of the project.

The sectarian group at Qumran was not the only Jewish group that deemed the term important. Mystery crops up in Jewish apocalyptic texts such as *1 Enoch*, *2 Baruch*, *Sibylline Oracles* and elsewhere. These Jewish texts give us insight into how Jews living in different contexts understood the term. In recent years, a few scholars have examined mystery in these Jewish texts, and there is no need to retrace their steps.<sup>1</sup> Our intention is to survey, albeit briefly, a few

---

<sup>1</sup>For a thorough survey of the term in early Judaism, see Benjamin L. Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*:

of the more prominent texts where mystery is referred to and developed. The hope is to give a representative sampling, though we acknowledge that the brevity results in a lack of nuance that a more thorough analysis could give. To make the information more manageable, we will proceed topically in accordance with our analysis of Daniel and synthesize the material in the Dead Sea Scrolls and other Jewish texts. As we will see below, *mystery* retains its eschatological and twofold characteristics of a revelation that is partially hidden and, subsequently, more fully revealed.

### MYSTERY IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

***Mystery and eschatology.*** There is a body of literature in Qumran that is commonly called *Sapiential Work A* or *4QInstruction*, a text that was probably not written at Qumran.<sup>2</sup> Within this body of wisdom literature, the term *mystery* and the phrase “mystery of existence” is profound and in accord with the previous uses in the *Book of Mysteries*. Some of the most pertinent texts in *4QInstruction* are the following:

[Consider the mystery of] existence and grasp the birth-times of salvation, and know who will inherit glory and t[oi]. (4Q417 1 I, 10-11 = 4Q416 2 I, 5-6; see 4Q417 2 I, 2)

Concerning the entry of years and the exit of periods [ . . . ] everything which happened in it, why it was, and what will be in it [ . . . ] its period which God uncovered to the ear of those who understand the mystery of existence. (4Q418 123 II, 2-4)

In light of these texts<sup>3</sup> and others,<sup>4</sup> we are able to observe a few peculiarities of the “mystery of existence.” First, the phrase “mystery of existence” entails knowledge of God’s redemptive plans, specifically, plans about past, present

---

*The Use of Mystery in Daniel and Second Temple Judaism with Its Bearing on First Corinthians*, BZNW 160 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), pp. 51-107; Markus Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity*, WUNT 36 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); and more recently, Samuel I. Thomas, *The “Mysteries” of Qumran: Mystery, Secrecy, and Esotericism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, SBLEJL 25 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009).

<sup>2</sup>Matthew J. Goff, *The Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom of 4QInstruction*, STDJ 50 (Boston: Brill, 2003), p. 227.

<sup>3</sup>While there is a lacuna in 4Q417 1 I, 10-11, it is likely that “mystery” is to be partly supplied in it because of the parallelism with 4Q418 123 II, 2-4, where “the mystery of existence” occurs without any lacuna.

<sup>4</sup>See also 4Q417 2 I, 6-13 = 4Q418 43-35 I, 4-10.



and future events. 4Q418 123 II, 2-4 summarizes this well: “concerning the entry of years and the exit of periods [ . . . ] everything which happened in it, why it was, and what will be in it.” The mystery, therefore, concerns all cosmic activities—from beginning to end. In particular, the “mystery of existence” is often related to end-time judgment elsewhere in the Qumran literature.<sup>5</sup> Even though the phrase encompasses and highlights events related to the latter days, eschatology is but a natural extension of the larger category of the mystery of existence. In other words, the mystery of existence is the entire determined plan of God over the created realm.<sup>6</sup> Second, *mystery* appears to include pragmatic issues and not just redemptive-historical matters, including various pragmatics such as marriage, poverty and filial relationships.<sup>7</sup> Since reference to mystery primarily involves God’s activity within the created order (e.g., creation, judgment), then social and moral issues ought also to fall in step with the created order. To put it another way, one must discern<sup>8</sup> and live in accordance with God’s design of the cosmos and of history.

***Mystery and hermeneutics.*** In recent years, scholars have looked to the Dead Sea Scrolls in search for a clearer understanding of Jewish hermeneutics. Of particular interest among these commentators is a group of texts that provide commentary on the Old Testament (known as the *pešarîm*). The term *mystery* appears only three times in these texts, yet all three occurrences generate significant insight. The first two are found in the famed commentary on Habakkuk:

And God told Habakkuk to write what was going to happen to the last generation, but he did not let him know the consummation of the era. And as for what he says: “So that may run the one who reads it.” Its interpretation concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God has made known all the mysteries of the words of his servants, the prophets. For the vision has an appointed time, it will have an end and not fail. Its interpretation: the final age will be extended and go beyond all that the prophets say, because the mysteries of God are wonderful. (1QpHab VII, 1-8)

<sup>5</sup>E.g., 4Q416 2 I, 5-6 = 4Q417 1 I, 10-11; 4Q418 77 2-4 = 4Q416 7 1-3.

<sup>6</sup>Torleif Elgvin, “Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Early Second Century BCE: The Evidence of 4QInstruction,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years after Their Discovery*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman, Emanuel Tov and James C. VanderKam (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000), p. 235.

<sup>7</sup>E.g., 4Q416 2 III, 8-10 = 4Q418 9-10; 4Q416 2 III, 13-15.

<sup>8</sup>The Qumran community placed great emphasis on the ability or inability to discern divinely revealed mysteries (1QHa IX, 21; XV, 2-3; 1QS XI, 3; CD-A II, 14; 4Q418 123 II, 4). An individual of the “flesh” lacks the ability to understand and comprehend, whereas the “spiritual” person ascertains deep knowledge.

Even though God spoke to the prophet Habakkuk concerning “what was going to happen,” according to the commentary, he did not primarily divulge *when* this would take place: “He [God] did not let him know the consummation of the era.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, the Teacher of Righteousness, the primary authoritative figure at Qumran, has received complete revelation previously given to the prophet Habakkuk—an uncanny resemblance to the prophet Daniel.<sup>10</sup> Not only has God revealed the timing and content of Habakkuk’s prophecy to the Teacher but also the *complete* meaning of the prophecy (!): “to whom God has made known all the mysteries of the words of his servants, the prophets.” This conveys the idea that despite revelation given to the Old Testament prophets, there remained a time when God would issue a second and much more complete disclosure. The Teacher did not receive a revelation in absolute discontinuity to Old Testament prophecy, but a revelation that nuances the precise timing of end-time events. This final revelation is called appropriately “mysteries”—revelation that was previously veiled to the Old Testament prophets but has now been revealed to the Teacher (cf. 1QpHab II, 7-10). According to 1QH<sup>a</sup> X, 13, the Teacher is also called a “knowledgeable mediator” or, more aptly, a “mediator of knowledge,” which refers to one of his primary roles within the community. John J. Collins, representing the vast majority of scholarship, labels the Teacher as “the official mediator of revelation for the community.”<sup>11</sup>

Second, the commentary follows a rather predictable structure that appears to be rooted in the book of Daniel: an Old Testament passage is cited followed by the word *interpretation*, while the verse subsequently is applied to the local situation at Qumran. According to Daniel, the initial vision is relatively meaningless without proper decipherment or “interpretation.” Thus, in the same manner, Qumran viewed Old Testament prophetic texts as a “vision” or something that required decoding,<sup>12</sup> for the Qumran writers did not emphasize re-

<sup>9</sup>F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), p. 9; G. K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), pp. 37-38.

<sup>10</sup>Some commentators suggest that the Teacher analogously functions like the prophet Daniel. See William H. Brownlee, *The Midrash Peshet of Habakkuk*, SBLMS 24 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), pp. 30, 112; Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 16-17; Beale, *Use of Daniel*, p. 36.

<sup>11</sup>John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed., BRS (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 151.

<sup>12</sup>Daniel Patte, *Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine*, SBLDS 22 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), pp. 300-308; I. Rabinowitz, “Peshet/Pittaron: Its Biblical Meaning and Its Significance in the Qumran Literature,” *RevQ* 8 (1973): 229-30.

velatory visions or apparently did not experience such visions.<sup>13</sup> *Therefore, in Qumran Old Testament texts, particularly prophecies are hidden mysteries, lacking a full or complete interpretation.*

### **MYSTERY IN THE TARGUMS**

Like in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the term *mystery* appears once more to be an eschatologically charged term in some of the Aramaic Targums (first century B.C. to fifth century A.D.). The Targums are Aramaic translations of the Old Testament, which often give us some insight into how Jews interpreted the Old Testament.

The Targum of Genesis 49 has undergone much expansion, yet in the midst of this elaboration the notion of mystery plays a pivotal role.<sup>14</sup> We will quote at length Neofiti's Aramaic translation of Genesis 49:1:

And Jacob called his sons and said to them: "Gather together and I will tell you *the concealed secrets, the hidden ends, giving of the rewards of the just, and the punishment of the wicked, and what the happiness of Eden is.*" The twelve tribes gathered together and surrounded the bed of gold on which our father Jacob was lying after the end was revealed to him and that the determined end of blessing and the consolation might be communicated to them. As soon as the end was revealed to him, the mystery was hidden from him. They hoped that he would relate to them the determined end of the redemption and the consolation. As soon as the mystery was revealed to him, it was hidden from him and as soon as the door was opened to him, it was closed from him.<sup>15</sup>

This targumic expansion explicitly connects mystery with several apocalyptic features that we have already discussed at length. First, "mysteries" in Genesis 49 entail knowledge of the "end," the "rewards of the just," the "punishment of the wicked" and the "happiness of Eden." Each of these is a common end-time notion, appearing throughout Judaism, especially in apocalyptic literature (e.g., *1 En.*; *2 Bar.*). Furthermore, the revelation of "mysteries" concerning the "end"

<sup>13</sup>Qumran apparently believed, however, that they participated in the heavenly realm by partaking in and issuing forth divine revelation. The community, according to the *Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice*, join with the angels in the expressions of heavenly revelations and mysteries (4Q400 2, 1-3; 4Q401 14 II, 2-8; 4Q403 1 II, 18-27).

<sup>14</sup>See Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, pp. 94-96, for additional discussion and elaboration on mystery and other revelatory concepts in the Targums.

<sup>15</sup>Italics represent targumic expansion, and underlined text reflects our emphasis.

or “latter days”<sup>16</sup> is probably a direct allusion to Daniel 2:28-29 (see table 2.1). Apparently, the Targums perceived a tension in Jacob’s revelation concerning the end and his prophetic blessing on his children in Genesis 49:2-27, for Jacob received revelation concerning the very end of history but failed to relate the specifics to his offspring. The Targums ease the tension by commenting that the disclosed mystery—the latter-day specificities—was revealed for a short period of time then subsequently hidden.

**Table 2.1**

<b>Genesis 49:1 (Neofiti)</b>	<b>Daniel 2:28</b>
“As soon as the end was revealed to him, the <u>mystery</u> was hidden from him. . . . As soon as the <u>mystery</u> was revealed to him.”	“There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days.”

Nevertheless, the thrust of the passage is that Jacob received a revelation or mystery concerning end-time events. According to the book of Daniel, the term *end* expresses an eschatological conception, since it is repeatedly located in eschatological contexts throughout and appears to be interchangeable with the phrase “latter days.”<sup>17</sup> Thus there does appear to be an awareness of the Danielic mystery in Genesis 49:1 (Neofiti).<sup>18</sup>

In sum, the word *mystery*, though often used noneschatologically in the Targums,<sup>19</sup> still retains its apocalyptic flavor on some occasions. The coupling of the term with the “end” or “latter days” shows that *mystery* can be eschatological in the Targums.

## CONCLUSION

The following is a summary of the relevant facets of mystery in Judaism, which

<sup>16</sup>The MT of Gen 49:1 explicitly uses the phrase “latter days,” thus linking it with other eschatological texts (e.g., Is 2:2; Dan 2:28). Note also strong end-time overtones in the use of *mystery* in the Num 24:14-17 Targum, where also “the end of the last days” occurs.

<sup>17</sup>Dan 8:19; 9:27; 11:13, 27; 12:13; cf. Dan 11:35; 12:4, 7.

<sup>18</sup>Roger Syrén, *The Blessings in the Targums: A Study on the Targumic Interpretations of Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33*, Acta Academiae Aboensis 64/1 (Abo: Abo Akademi, 1986), p. 121. Martin McNamara also suggests that the same language “shows dependence on apocalyptic texts, e.g., Dan 2:18, 28, 30, 47f.” *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis: Translated, with Apparatus and Notes* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1992), p. 215.

<sup>19</sup>In some instances, the term *mystery* in the targumic literature means a heavenly “secret/council” (Mic 4:12; Ps 25:14; 89:8; 91:1; 111:1; Job 15:8; 29:4) or simply a mundane “secret” or “counsel” (Gen 49:6 [Tg. Onq.]; Josh 2:1; Judg 4:21; 9:31; 1 Sam 18:22; 24:5; 2 Kings 6:11; Ezek 13:9; Ps 55:15; 64:3; 83:4; Job 19:19; Prov 3:32; 11:13; 15:22; 20:19; 25:9; Ruth 3:7).

is in line with its meaning in the book of Daniel that we discussed in the preceding chapter. (1) Mystery is eschatological—that is, it concerns those events that take place in the “latter days.” On the one hand, the end-time content of *mystery* can be very general, but more often than not, the term refers to a specific aspect of the latter days, such as rewards for the righteous and judgment or a particular feature within the process of redemptive history. (2) Central to the revelatory nature of mystery is its twofold aspect—an initial, generally hidden, revelation is often disclosed, followed by a subsequent fuller (even surprising) interpretation of its meaning.<sup>20</sup>

### EXCURSUS 2.1: MYSTERY IN FIRST ENOCH AND OTHER JEWISH TEXTS

**First Enoch: The Book of Watchers.** *First Enoch* (second century B.C.) is comprised of five works: *The Book of Watchers*, *The Book of Similitudes*, *The Book of Astronomical Writings*, *The Book of Dream Visions* and *The Book of the Epistle of Enoch*. *The Book of Watchers* (1 En. 1–36) is probably the earliest of the Enochic works. It describes the heavenly journey of Enoch and the egregious sin of the fallen angels. The first use of the technical term *mystery* occurs in 8:3B: “All these [Watchers] began to reveal mysteries [*anakalyptein ta mystēria*] to their wives and children” (our translation).<sup>21</sup> In addition, another similar occurrence is located in 9:6: “And they [Azaz’el and the other fallen angels] revealed eternal secrets [*edēlōsen ta mystēria tou aiōnos*] which are performed in heaven.” These passages are in the context of the Watchers’ *illicit* revelations to humans. For example, in 1 Enoch 7:1, they showed humankind “magical medicine” and “incantations” (cf. 8:1–3; 10:7; 65:6; 69:1–16). The Aramaic renders this as “[sor]cery, incanta[tions]” ([*lhr*]št wlkš[pt<sup>2</sup>]; 4Q202 II, 19). The root of the second word, *hṛś*, is found in the Old Testament to refer to an “enchanter” or “magician” (e.g., Is 3:3). Moreover, in his recent commentary, Nickelsburg contends that the second word should read <sup>2</sup>[špt<sup>2</sup>] (“conjurations”) and not kš[pt<sup>2</sup>] (“incantations”).<sup>22</sup> If he is correct, then this word recalls the book of

<sup>20</sup>There could be a debate about new developed meanings in Judaism, especially Qumran, concerning whether or not these new meanings are a consistent development of the meaning of the Old Testament texts or whether these developed meanings are completely unrelated to the meaning of the Old Testament texts. For the most part, we lean toward the former view, though there is not space to argue that here.

<sup>21</sup>The Aramaic is very similar to the Greek: “[And all began] [to reveal] secrets [(*lglh*)h rzyn] to their wives” (4Q202 IV, 5 = 4Q202 III, 5).

<sup>22</sup>George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 1:197–99.

Daniel, for the root *šp* (“conjure”) is exclusively used in Daniel 1–5.<sup>23</sup> The subtle allusion to the book of Daniel reinforces the programmatic nature of Daniel’s conception of mystery.

Juxtaposed with the Watchers’ revelation, Enoch stands as the divinely sanctioned recipient of revelation (1:2). His heavenly journey begins in 14:8, with his first stop at the divine throne room, where he participates in the heavenly temple and receives a commission (14:9–16:3). He will be the official “scribe of righteousness” (12:4; cf. 13:4–6; 14:1–16:4; 82:1) that records and disseminates revelation. This ascent to heaven—soon to become a Jewish tradition—is close to the Qumran participation in heavenly worship that we encounter in the *Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice*.<sup>24</sup> Enoch traverses the ends of the cosmos throughout the majority of the book (18:10–36:4).

In the book of Daniel, revelation is transmitted through “dreams” and “visions” (e.g., Dan 2:3, 19; 4:5). Compared to Enoch, Daniel’s revelations are far less cosmological; there are no journeys or visitations. But there are several similarities, namely, a focus on eschatology (including end-time judgment)—an emphasis on the afterlife, throne room and angels. Yet for this study, we need to note the medium of revelation that undergirds these two apocalyptic works: revelation or mystery in Daniel primarily manifests itself within the dream reports, and Enoch receives penetrating “mysteries” as he ascends to the heavenly throne and tours the cosmos.

**Other prominent Jewish texts.** Two distinct categories of mystery emerge from the Jewish work the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. On the one hand *mystery* can mean a secret between individuals or parties (*T. Zeb.* 1:6; *T. Gad* 6:5), while other occurrences of the term function similarly to the book of Daniel. The *Testament of Levi* is couched in a highly apocalyptic setting, and the *Testament of Judah* 12:6–7 and 16:3–4 resonate well with other Jewish documents that speak of hidden teaching (e.g., 4Q416 2 III, 8–10; 4Q416 2 III, 13–15). Therefore, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* incorporate both a secular and an apocalyptic perspective of mystery.

Philo employs the concept of mystery in application to the mystery religions, while retaining a commitment to Judaism (e.g., *Leg.* 3.71, 100; *Cher.* 48–49). Philo seeks to combine a Hellenistic worldview and Hebrew “orthodoxy.” We thus get pagan mystery rituals garbed in a cloak of Judaism. Josephus, though

<sup>23</sup>Dan 1:20; 2:2, 10, 27; 4:7; 5:7, 11, 15.

<sup>24</sup>Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, p. 54.

using the term *mystery* several times, does not reflect the usual Semitic connotation. Instead, he limits the word to the common Hellenistic usage (e.g., *Ant.* 19.30, 71, 104).

The Apocrypha, except for Wisdom of Solomon 2:21-22, do not significantly develop the end-time notion of mystery (e.g., Sir 27:16-17; Tob 12:7, 11; 2 Macc 13:21). The apocryphal writers rarely depend on or even acknowledge the apocalyptic side of the term.

## **PRAISE FOR *HIDDEN BUT NOW REVEALED***

“An intriguing theological and exegetical exploration of a key New Testament theme, especially in Paul. As the book’s authors argue, the early Christian use of ‘mysteries’ surely reflects the strong influence of Daniel.”

**Craig Keener**, professor of New Testament, Asbury Theological Seminary

“In the realm of lay readers, I can hardly think of an area that is more misunderstood than the area of prophecy; in the realm of biblical scholars, I can hardly think of a topic more controverted than the relationship between the Old and the New. At the cross-hairs of both discussions is Daniel’s term ‘mystery.’ For the sake of both readerships, I’m grateful that we finally now have a book that reduces the mystery behind ‘mystery.’ Many others will be grateful as well, and will want a copy for their own library.”

**Nicholas Perrin**, Franklin S. Dyrness Chair of Biblical Studies, Wheaton College Graduate School

“An important examination of a crucial theme for understanding some of the New Testament’s use of the Old Testament, carried out by two scholars who have thought long and hard on the issue.”

**Roy E. Ciampa**, Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

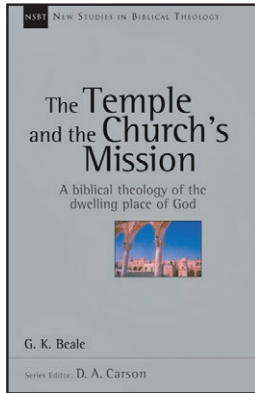


**G. K. Beale** (PhD, University of Cambridge) holds the J. Gresham Machen Chair of New Testament and is professor of New Testament and biblical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary. His books include *The Book of Revelation* (New International Greek Testament Commentary), *1-2 Thessalonians* (The IVP New Testament Commentary Series), *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, *The Temple and the Church's Mission* and *We Become What We Worship*.

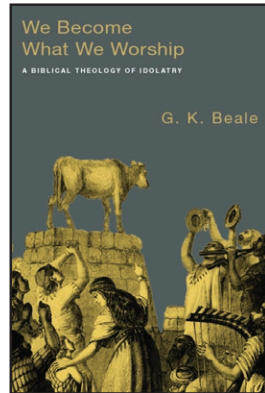


**Benjamin L. Gladd** (PhD, Wheaton College) is assistant professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. He previously taught New Testament exegesis and interpretation and Greek at Wheaton College. Gladd is the author of *Revealing the Mysterion*.

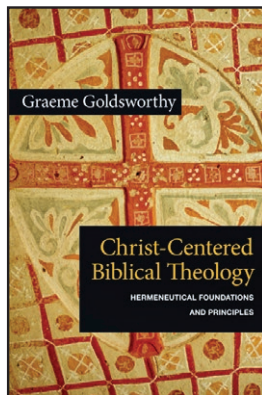
## MORE TITLES FROM INTER VARSITY PRESS



*The Temple and the Church's Mission*  
978-0-8308-2618-6



*We Become What We Worship*  
978-0-8308-7808-6



*Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*  
978-0-8308-6493-5

*For a list of IVP email newsletters, including information  
about our latest ebook releases, please visit  
[www.ivpress.com/eu1](http://www.ivpress.com/eu1).*

# **Finding the Textbook You Need**

**The IVP Academic Textbook Selector**  
is an online tool for instantly finding the IVP books  
suitable for over 250 courses across 24 disciplines.

---

**[ivpacademic.com](http://ivpacademic.com)**

---