

# LIVING ON THE RAGGED EDGE: COMING TO TERMS WITH REALITY

## MYSTERIES THAT DEFY EXPLANATION

### ECCLESIASTES 8:10–17



## The Heart of the Matter

Just in case you haven't noticed, God operates in the realm of mystery. His wisdom is not based on human logic or human knowledge. When we forget that other-worldly nature of God's wisdom, frankly, we're headed for trouble. As we have learned in previous messages, we cannot get God's wisdom through academic pursuit. We can't go to school and earn a degree in God's wisdom. Our God is profoundly deep and mysterious, and His thoughts and ways are far beyond our ability to comprehend.

Not only do we scratch our heads at God's ways, our lives take mysterious turns now and then. In this segment of Solomon's journal, Ecclesiastes 8:10–17, we will learn about three rather familiar mysteries: unjust triumph, unfair consequences, and untimely pleasure.



## Discovering the Way

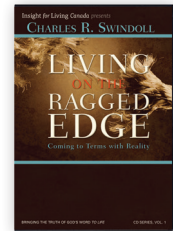
### 1. Random Thoughts about Mysteries

Life is mysterious. The mysteries of the universe attract the curiosity and excitement of scientists, and each new discovery forces them to reexamine their earlier conclusions. There are other mysteries people do *not* get excited about—mysteries that produce nagging questions such as: Why did I develop this incurable disease? Why isn't marriage counseling working? Why did my child die? Why does evil so often seem to triumph over good? These mysteries can cause us to question the goodness and sovereignty of God.

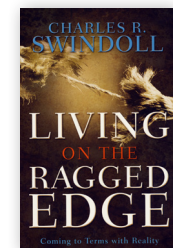
The Bible also contains numerous mysteries: the mystery of the kingdom (Mark 4); the mystery of Israel (Romans 11); the mystery of resurrection (1 Corinthians 15); the mystery of God's will (Ephesians 1); the mystery of the church (Ephesians 3); the mystery of marriage (Ephesians 5); the mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 6); the mystery of lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2); and the mystery of godliness (1 Timothy 3).



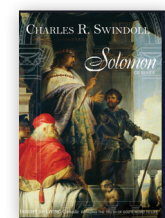
## Tools for Digging Deeper



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2. Solomon's Additional Mysteries (Ecclesiastes 8:10–17)

To get the most out of our study of Ecclesiastes 8:10–17, let's flip to the end and see how all the pieces of the puzzle will eventually fit together. Ecclesiastes 8:16–17 gives us a twofold outlook on divine mysteries that will put our thoughts in proper perspective:

- *God's mysteries defy human discovery:* No matter how hard we try in our own human strength, we can't explain the infinite workings of God.
  
- *God's mysteries go beyond human wisdom:* Not only can we not explain what God is doing, but we lack the intellect to even grasp it. If God wants us to know even part of His infinite mind, He must reveal it to us by His Spirit.



GETTING TO THE ROOT

*Our Mysterious God*

Our English word *mystery* comes from the Greek *musterion*. In the New Testament, the word refers to the thoughts and plans of God that are hidden from humanity and must be made known by divine revelation.<sup>1</sup> In the Old Testament, the word *raz* corresponds to *musterion* and appears only in Daniel.<sup>2</sup> *Raz* usually refers to dreams or secrets about things that must be revealed by God. Daniel said to King Nebuchadnezzar, regarding the interpretation of his dream, “As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians nor diviners are able to declare it to the king. However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries” (Daniel 2:27–28).

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## Starting Your Journey

Solomon gave us several truths that will help us handle the mysterious nature of life:

- I am only human—limited and weak.
- I do not understand why.
- I am not able to bring about change.
- God alone can do the impossible and provide answers, but not until He is ready.
- I must wait on God and deliberately adopt a lifestyle of contentment and joy.

**How would you communicate these important truths to young believers struggling with the tough questions of God’s goodness and sovereignty? Do you believe these statements?**

### ENDNOTES

1. Walter Bauer and others, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 661–62.
2. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006), 1112.