

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

What is the Mystery of God?

Colossians 1:24-29

¹ God has a mystery. What is it? Our scripture today tells us from Colossians, chapter 1, verses 24 through 29. ²

Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness — the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations but is now disclosed to the saints. ¹ ³

To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me. ² ⁴

¹ Colossians 1:24-26.

² Colossians 1:27-29.

First, let's look at . . .

I. What the Mystery Isn't

What the mystery isn't. ⁵

The word **mystery** ³ literally means to shut the mouth, to be silent. So, a mystery is a secret.

The secular Greek philosophy of gnosticism had permeated the world during this time. As educated Greek and Roman people were brought into the church, they brought some of their cultural and religious thinking along with them. They tried to grasp the faith as best they could but through the lens of their backgrounds.

So, issues between Jewish Christians and non Jewish folks began to become apparent in the church and had to be dealt with through some of our New Testament letters. Although this issue didn't become a major one in the church until the next century,

³ Μυστηριον.

elements of it began to creep in enough for it to be addressed here. ⁶

Some non Jewish educated believers began to lead churches and set themselves up to be the educational elite, “the intellectual ones”. They believed that to really be a Christian you had to have a special “wisdom” that common believers lacked. ⁷ There were other mystery cults, or religions, around them, so this type of thinking was common.

The basic thinking was everything connected to the material world was inherently bad. The physical was evil. The spiritual, were God is, is good and pure. ⁸

Since Lord Jesus, our savior and redeemer, was the ultimate good man, He couldn't have been a physical man! ⁹ So, He must have been some superior angel of God Who could appear and disappear at will. He couldn't have had a physical, material body like everyone else. Maybe He was thought of, like we would think, like a ghost in a haunted movie.

This led to a type of elitest thinking that if you were not an “intellectual” Christian, with this extra “wisdom” or knowledge, you were not a real Christian. You lacked what it took to really fit into their church.

I grew up spiritually in a legalistic church with a similar attitude. If you didn’t believe the way we interpreted scripture you were not only wrong, you were not even a Christian. Christians were only the people who agreed with us doctrinally. As I left them for another church they began considering me just an “erring brother”. That was gracious. ¹⁰

But, God’s mystery is different! ¹¹ In verse 24 it says, **Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.** God’s mystery was purchased for you by the cross! ¹²

As a physical person, Lord Jesus **suffered!** ^{4 13}

⁴ Πάθημα = to suffer hardship and pain.

As a physical person, Lord Jesus **was afflicted!**⁵ 14

So, What is the “mystery” of God in contrast to this philosophical mystery? 15

God’s mystery . . .

II. It’s the Word of God – v25-26

It’s the Word of God. 16

First Corinthians, chapter 15, verses 1 through 4, call it **the gospel**. Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel . . . that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures . . .

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1. God took on a human life! John. Chapter 1, verse 14, **The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.** 18

2. Lord Jesus died on a cross to provide redemption and forgiveness. 19

⁵ Θλίβω = to have tribulations, physical trials.

3. Lord Jesus resurrected Himself to prove His deity!

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It's **in its fulness**. Verses 25 and 26, I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness — the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations but is now disclosed to the saints. ²¹

It's **universal**; it's for all the Gentiles. Verse 27, To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. A Jew would not normally accept God having a use for everyone; especially a non Jew. ²²

It's **proclaimed, admonished and taught** “with all wisdom”. Verse 28 says, We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. The gospel message is all you need; no extras! ²³

It's goal is **to complete you!** Verse 28, . . . **that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.** ²⁴ **Perfect** ⁶ means mature, complete. God wants to make you a mature Christian. ²⁵

God's mystery was also **kept hidden**. Verse 26 . . . **the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations but is now disclosed to the saints.**

It was kept hidden through the Old Testament section of our Bible in order to show us what sin is. When you know you are a sinner, then you know you need forgiveness. You need a savior! At just the right time, God introduced the gospel providing that savior! ²⁶

God's mystery . . .

III. It's Christ in You – v27

It's Christ in you. Verse 27, **To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.** ²⁷

⁶ Τέλειος.

It's Christ **in the flesh**. He was an historical, physical person! ²⁸

The Apostle Paul put it this way, **Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!** ⁷ ²⁹

The Apostle John put it this way, **This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.** ³⁰ **Again, he said, Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.** ⁸ ³¹

⁷ Philippians 2:5-8.

⁸ II John 7.

It's Christ as **the hope of glory**. Verse 27, To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ³²

This is accomplished **by you and me being in Him**, His body, His church! Verse 24, **Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church**. ³³

This is also accomplished **by Lord Jesus being in you** as the Holy Spirit! First Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 19, says, **Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?** ³⁴

Lord Jesus, God in flesh, is now dwelling in you and you in Him!

That's God's wonderful mystery!

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