



COLOSSIANS

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...the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. Colossians 1:26

Paul continues with words concerning his ministry. The previous verse, taken together with this one, says -

“...of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, ²⁶the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.”

In fulfilling the word of God, “the mystery” that he now writes about becomes the subject. The explanation of what this mystery is comes in the next verse, it being the idea that salvation has come not only to the Jews, but to the Gentiles as well. Paul describes this as a “mystery.” In the Bible, a mystery is something which has been hidden in God’s wise counsel until a time when He determines to reveal it. It is something that could not be known apart from His special revelation.

Types, shadows, and pictures of it may be seen in the Old Testament, but until those were explained through the word of Christ, they remained hidden as mystery. The book of Jonah, for example, gives a picture of what Paul is referring to, but only by looking at the story through the lens of Christ Jesus can it be properly understood. Thus, Paul says that the mystery “has been hidden from ages and generations.” Vincent’s Word Studies notes that this term includes, “The unit and the factors: the *aeon* or age being made up of generations.” He goes on to say that, “Before the beginning of the ages of the world the counsel of God was ordained, but not concealed, because there were no human beings from whom to conceal it. The concealment began from the beginning of the world, with the entrance of subjects to whom it could be a fact.”

In other words, God determined from eternity past what He would do, and the plan was fixed. However, it is a plan which He has kept unknown to His creatures until a set point when it would be revealed. This plan is now explained in the coming of Christ, and in the forgiveness of

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sins even to the Gentiles. Even those who walked with Jesus didn't grasp it at first. This is seen, for example, in Acts 11 –

“When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.’” Acts 11:18

The mystery was hidden until a certain point. It was concealed, but it “now has been revealed to His saints.” Those in Acts 11 began to understand what was happening, but Christ selected Paul to be the one to fully reveal the mystery to the world through His writings. The saints, meaning the believers in Christ, can refer to his writings in order to fully grasp what has occurred and to look for proper doctrine in how to conduct themselves in the age of the revealed mystery.

Life application: Whether a Jew or a Gentile, you are a saint of God if you have called on Christ Jesus. Rejoice in what He has done for you. If a Jew, you are brought out from being under a heavy burden and are granted complete restoration with God through Christ. If a Gentile, without ever having been under the yoke of the law, you are brought directly into the people of God by simple faith in what He has done. Rejoice in this and give God the glory!

To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Colossians 1:27

The words “To them” are referring to the saints as stated in the previous verse. It is to the saints that “God willed.” The words are emphatic in the Greek. Thus it reads, “To whom has willed God...” It was God's sovereign choice alone “to make known what are the riches.”

The “riches” of God are many. The word indicates a great amount in number or quantity, and thus abundance. These riches are described by Paul in Romans 2 and include His 1) “goodness” – this is His benign nature. He is a compassionate God who is in no way arbitrary or vindictive; 2) His “forbearance” – this reflects God's restraint. When judgment would be expected under almost any conceivable circumstance, He still withholds His wrath, understanding that we are prone to sin from birth; and 3) because of His forbearance, He is also “long-suffering.” This concept shows that not only does He withhold His wrath, but He is also “slow to anger” as is noted in Exodus 34:6, 7 –

“And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.”

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Such riches as these are included in “the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles.” The Old Testament deals almost exclusively with a single line of people who became Israel. God revealed Himself to them, and they were considered the people of God. However, in Christ, that honorable title now extends to any and all. This is the “mystery” that Paul speaks of. He, the apostle to the Gentiles” is making it fully known to the Gentile people of the world who now can share in these riches of God.

He makes this explicitly known by finishing with, “which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” The words, “Christ in you” indicate what has occurred when a person (Jew or Gentile) believes in the finished work of Jesus. The moment that belief is exercised, he is sealed with the Holy Spirit, and is thus saved. He moves from Adam to Jesus and has a new and glorious hope. There is a slight variation in some manuscripts concerning the words, “which is Christ in you.” Some have it as masculine, and thus it would be referring to the riches. Others have it as neuter, and thus it would be referring to the mystery.

Either way, the fact that Christ is now in those who believe, this has become our “hope of glory.” There is an article in front of glory, and so it more accurately reads, “the glory.” Those who have received Christ have not yet obtained the full measure of the glory of Christ. Rather, it indicates a future hope which will be realized when He returns for us and we are glorified. It is a glory for which we have been destined, and nothing will thwart its coming and consummation in us. Such is the hope of the believer in Christ. It is a grounded hope in the sure promises of God.

Life application: When we stand at the graveside of a believer in Christ, we have the absolute guarantee that death cannot hold that person. There is a time for mourning because we will miss the presence of the one that we have cherished and shared in life with, but there should also be a sense of joy that the great and eternal promises of God cannot be overcome by the death which we have faced. It is but a temporary separation which will be ended with the blast of the trumpet and the gathering together of the saints of God.