

**"CHRIST IN YOU,
THE HOPE OF GLORY."**

THE MYSTERY AS SEEN IN COLOSSIANS.

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THE MYSTERY AS SEEN IN COLOSSIANS.

THE mystery in the Epistle to the Colossians is Christ in relation to the church. One aspect of the mystery, is that while Christ is personally rejected and absent *He is here in the saints*, “Christ *in you*, the hope of glory.” The church is His body. He is living here, and displaying Himself in His body. It is a great triumph for Christ that He is able to form and maintain His body here in the place where He has been personally rejected. The body is the vessel in which Christ lives and displays

Himself. A man expresses himself in his body, the body is the medium for the display of the man. This is the character which the church has—it is the body of the Christ. In the Epistle to the Ephesians it is viewed more in connection with the day of glory, and with the eternal order of things, in which God is all in all. It is the vessel in which Christ will be perfectly displayed, and in which the glory of God will be fully manifested. But in Colossians it is more for present display in a moral sense. There can be no question that all through the period since Pentecost, Christ has been expressing Himself in His body, in that sense Christ has been here under the eye of God. The apostle could address a company of saints at Colosse in whom Christ was, and of whom he could say, “Christ in you.” What could be predicated of Christ personally as the Anointed Man, could be predicated of these saints, because they were His body; Christ was

the Elect of God, He was the Holy One, and He was the beloved Son of God. The apostle addresses the saints at Colosse as "elect of God, holy, and beloved." He exhorts them, as such, to put on the character of Christ. It is meet that the body should express the character of the Head. In chapter ii. 13, we get the privilege of the church. In chapter iii. 12-15, we see what is the proper testimony of the church. The privilege of the church is to live together with Him who is its Head, to live in the sphere and in the conditions in which Christ lives; in other words, to live in association with Him. It is a life outside the natural man, and outside this world of sight and sense—it is a life hidden with Christ in God. This can only be reached through death and resurrection. It is only as we are able to take the ground of having died with Christ, and being risen with Him, that we can reach true christian privilege. Death and

resurrection and heavenly life have all been brought to pass for us in Christ ; but we have to be brought into communion with that which has been effected for us in Christ. It is no doubt made good in us by the work of the Spirit. Then the proper testimony of the church, as we have seen, is to set forth the moral traits of Christ, the grace of the Head, so that Christ may be reproduced here under the eye of God. Thus He is maintained here in testimony at the present time, till He is manifested in glory in the coming day. The word of the Christ abides in the church. As Christ lives in our affections, so will He be reproduced in our ways. “ We all, looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit ” (2 Cor. iii. 18). In order that we may answer to the mind of the Lord in regard to the church, it is important that we should consider the

relations in which Christ stands to the church. Our strength and spiritual prosperity depends upon our appreciation of what Christ is to the church. All the grace the church needs comes from the Head. Therefore, the secret of prosperity for the church is in holding fast the Head.

In chapter i. we see the greatness of the Anointed Man. Every official position and glory which He assumes, depends upon the greatness of His Person. In manhood He became the image of the invisible God, for in Him as man all the fulness of the deity was pleased to dwell. He created all things, and all things were created for Him, so that if, in becoming man, He comes into the created system, He must take the place of firstborn. He is before all things, and all things subsist by Him. Then, again, He is the Reconciler of all things. He is, therefore, entitled to the place of pre-eminence, to be the Head over all

things. After thus setting forth the greatness of the person, the apostle goes on to speak of His relation to the church. He is the Head of the body, the church. There are three thoughts connected with headship : (1) Pre-eminence (Col. i. 18) ; (2) Derivation (Col. ii. 19) ; (3) Direction (Eph. v. 23). Because of the glory of His Person, He must in all things have the pre-eminence. God has given Him this place ; and we gladly accord it to Him. He has companions, but He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His companions. He has many brethren, but He is Firstborn among them. Every one who accords to Him the place which God has given Him, gets the benefit of His headship. He has been placed in this place of supremacy that every thing which is under Him may take character from Him. He is the beginning, the Firstborn from among the dead. The word here translated “ beginning,” has the sense of cause

or origin. He is the beginning of the church, the church takes origin from Him, springs out of Him, derives its being, life, and character from Him, and in this way is qualified to be in association with Him, and to express Him here. Christ lives here in His body.

Normally, the body is subject to the Head, and moves under His direction, and in this way is maintained in unity. This is the only way in which unity can be maintained. There is grace in the Head not only to minister to the body, but also to unite it together (chap. ii. 19). Eve, though united to Adam, was placed by God in a position of subjection to him, and she fell by not abiding in that place ; she was not true to her head. The church looked at in its responsibility has failed, because she has not been true to her Head. The secret of prosperity, unity, and fruitfulness in the church, is in holding fast the Head (Col. ii. 19).

The great mass of Christians have not apprehended Christ as Head; they do not recognize Him in that character. The effect of human teaching has always been to divert souls from Christ, by bringing in that which is of man, with the object of building up man in what is of man. All supply for the body comes from the Head; if saints held fast the Head, the body would be properly nourished, and it would be united together, it would increase with the increase of God, then it would be competent to express Him, and to support the testimony. The testimony of the Christ is maintained in the church. "Let the word of the Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. iii. 16). Thus there would be fruit for God, and testimony to men. The church in its responsibility has failed in all this, because practically it has lost its Head. The full result is seen in the address to the church at Laodicea (Rev. iii.). Nevertheless, if only a few saints

come together in the faith of the Head, truly looking to Him, and in subjection to Him, they will get the benefit of His headship, they will be nourished, be built up, and united together. They will in their measure express Him, and the testimony will be maintained among them.

In chapter ii. 9, we learn further what Christ is to the church. He is the *light* of the church. In Him all the fulness of the Godhead dwells. God is fully revealed, and presented to us in Christ. There is nothing which can be known of God apart from Christ. It is impossible to add to this presentation of God in Christ. Outside this there is nothing but the imaginations of the human mind, all is darkness. It is the privilege of the church to walk in the light as God is in the light, that is in Christ. For us the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ. He is our Sun. He is the light of the church. If we are awake,

Christ will shine upon us. In Him, too, we have the light of God's purpose set forth. He is the Man of God's purpose, the One in whom God has established all His will. Moreover, as ^aman, He answers to all that God is. He is perfectly responsive to God. In Him is seen the true estate and position of man according to the purpose of God. All this has been brought to pass in Christ ; and we apprehend it in Him. What has been established in Him, is the mind of God for every saint. On the other hand, we are complete in Him ; or, in other words, we are filled up in Him, Christ is the fulness of the church. In Him we are made competent to answer to the revelation, to be with God in the light in which He has been revealed, and to answer to it. In ourselves naturally we have no competency for such a position, nor can we acquire such competency by any human means. We have it in Christ, and we derive it entirely from

Him. Christ lives in us. He is the *Life* of the church. "Christ is our life." We have been quickened together with Him. He said to the disciples, "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and *I in you.*" Thus we are made suitable to be the companions of Christ, to be in association with Him. Neither natural ability, nor human learning, can in any way help us in these things. It has already been proved that the most capable and learned of men are altogether incapable of receiving the light of God. "The Light shone in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not." Again, the apostle declares that the "natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But he can say, speaking of Christians, "We have the mind of Christ." It is only in the life of Christ that we can live to God, or

have communion with Him ; and it is only in the life of Christ that we can live with Him. It is the privilege of the church to live in the sphere and conditions in which Christ lives, for that is the sphere to which our life belongs. " Our life is hid with Christ in God." As to this world we have died, so our life cannot belong to this world. As dead and risen with Christ, we have, speaking figuratively, passed over Jordan, and our life is in the land of promise, in Canaan. This is the sphere to which the church belongs. We are left here to express Christ. The church is the vessel of testimony here. The apostle says, " Let the word of the Christ dwell in you richly." We carry the testimony in our hearts, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. If we carry His word in our hearts, we shall be formed by it ; and as we are formed by His word, we shall express Him. This will be fruit to God, and light to men. For

all this we are filled up in Him. The church is made adequate for everything in the life of the Head. Lastly, Christ is the *Hope* of the church. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Christ is our hope, to see Him, to be like Him, to be with Him, and to appear with Him in glory. Then He will be *fully* expressed in the church. He will be glorified in His saints, and wondered at in all that believe (2 Thess. i. 10). This will bring in that [great system which God is about to establish, which will embrace heaven and earth, when God will be known by every intelligent creature, when every one will respond to Him, and when everything will praise Him (Ps. cl.).

I hope that I have made it plain that the aspect of the mystery that is presented to us in Colossians is that Christ is here in the saints, that He lives here, that His life and testimony are reproduced here in the church during the

period in which He is personally absent, and until He shall be manifested in glory. It should exercise every saint that he should in his measure answer to the mind of the Lord, and so walk worthily of Him.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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