

Message Two
The Central Vision

Scripture Reading: Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4; Rom. 9:21, 23; Phil. 2:13; Col. 1:12; Rom. 12:5

I. The central vision of Paul's completing ministry concerns Christ as the mystery of God (Col. 1:25-27; 2:2) and the church as the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:4); this is the great mystery of Christ and the church (5:32):

- A. God is a mystery, and Christ, as the embodiment of God to express Him (Col. 2:9), is the mystery of God.
- B. Christ also is a mystery, and the church, as the Body of Christ to express Him, is the mystery of Christ.
- C. This mystery is God's economy, which is to dispense Christ, as the embodiment of God, into God's chosen people in order to produce a Body to be the increase of God's embodiment in Christ, that God may have a corporate expression—1 Tim. 1:4; Eph. 3:8-9.

II. The central vision of Paul's completing ministry is God in us as our contents, Christ as the mystery of God, and the church as the mystery of Christ:

- A. Man is a vessel to contain God—Gen. 2:7-9; Acts 9:15; Rom. 9:21-24; 2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:20-21:
 - 1. We must learn to turn away from all considerations of our behavior and care only to be filled with God.
 - 2. God is illustrated in the Bible as food, water, and breath; we must take Him in and be filled with Him, just as we take in the food we eat, the water we drink, and the air we breathe—John 6:35, 57; 4:10, 14; 7:37-39; 20:22; Lam. 3:55-56.
 - 3. Ephesians 4:6 reveals that the Father is not only over us and through us but also in us; God is housing Himself in us.
 - 4. Ephesians 3:19 says, "That you may be filled unto all the fullness of God":
 - a. To be filled unto all God's fullness means to be filled unto all that God is; the fullness of God implies that the riches of what He is become His expression.
 - b. All that God is should be our contents; we should be so filled with Him that we become His fullness, His expression—vv. 14-19.
 - 5. Philippians 2:13 says, "It is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure":
 - a. The thought in this verse is that God is moving, acting, and working within us.
 - b. The God who operates (energizes) in us is the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—the very God who is Christ in us (2 Cor. 13:3a, 5) and the Spirit in us (Rom. 8:11); the three—the Spirit, God, and Christ—are one.
 - 6. Hebrews 13:20-21 says, "Now the God of peace, He who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant, perfect you in every good work for the doing of His will, doing in us that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen":
 - a. The new covenant is not only a better covenant (7:22; 8:6) but also an eternal covenant; it is eternally efficacious because of the eternal efficacy of Christ's blood, with which it was enacted (Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20).

- b. God is doing in us that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ that we may be able to do His will; it is through the indwelling Christ that God works in us so that we can do His will—Gal. 1:15a, 16a; 2:20; 4:19.
 - 7. First Timothy 3:16 says, “Great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, / Justified in the Spirit, / Seen by angels, / Preached among the nations, / Believed on in the world, / Taken up in glory”:
 - a. Christ is the individual manifestation of God in the flesh, and the church as the Body of Christ to express Him is the corporate manifestation of God in the flesh.
 - b. Godliness refers to the living of God in the church, that is, to God as life lived out in the church.
 - 8. We must see that God in resurrection through Christ has entered into us as the Spirit, is now indwelling us, is one with us, and has made us one spirit with Himself; as His vessels, we should be filled with Him, and whatever we do must be an expression of Him—1 Cor. 15:45b; 6:17; Rom. 8:2, 4, 6, 9-11; John 14:23, 16-17; 2 Cor. 4:7.
- B. The mystery of God is Christ as the embodiment and manifestation of God, making God so real and enjoyable to us—Col. 2:2, 9; Rom. 9:5:
1. Christ is everything to the believers—1 Cor. 1:9; 15:45b; Eph. 3:8; 2 Cor. 4:6-7; John 8:58:
 - a. Christ is the God-allotted portion to the saints—Col. 1:12; 2:6; 1 Cor. 1:2.
 - b. Christ is our life—John 14:6a; Col. 3:4; Rom. 8:2, 4, 6.
 - c. Christ is the hope of glory—Col. 1:27; Eph. 1:18b; 4:4b; Rom. 8:19, 23-25.
 - d. Christ is our necessities and our enjoyment—John 8:12; 6:51, 57b; 1 Cor. 10:4; John 20:22; Gal. 3:27; John 15:7a; Col. 2:16-17; Matt. 11:28.
 - e. Christ is God’s power and God’s wisdom to us—1 Cor. 1:24, 30.
 2. Christ is everything to the church:
 - a. Christ is the Head of the Body—Col. 1:18.
 - b. Christ is the Body of the Head—1 Cor. 12:12.
 - c. Christ is the foundation stone—Isa. 28:16; 1 Cor. 3:11.
 - d. Christ is the living stone, the cornerstone, and the topstone—1 Pet. 2:4, 6-7; Eph. 2:20; Zech. 3:9; 4:7.
 - e. Christ is all the members of the new man—Col. 3:10-11.
 3. God wants us to realize that in Christ the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—has passed through a process involving incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension:
 - a. By incarnation Christ brought the infinite God into the finite man—John 1:14.
 - b. In His human living the Lord Jesus expressed divinity in humanity—14:9-11.
 - c. By crucifixion Jesus Christ terminated the old creation—Col. 1:15.
 - d. By resurrection He germinated us as the new creation—1 Pet. 1:3.
 - e. By ascension He was glorified, exalted, enthroned, appointed Lord, and commissioned with the divine government—Acts 2:33, 36.
 - f. Following this He came down upon the church as the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit—1:8; 2:4.
 4. As the life-giving Spirit, the Lord is waiting for people to receive Him by believing into Him—1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17; John 1:12-13; 3:15:

- a. As soon as a person calls on the name of the Lord Jesus, Christ will immediately come into him, regenerate his spirit, indwell his spirit, and mingle Himself with his regenerated spirit to cause him to become truly one with Him—v. 6; 1 Cor. 6:17.
 - b. A new believer must come to know the two spirits—his regenerated spirit and the life-giving Spirit—so that he may be transformed and built up with others to be the Body, the organism to express the Triune God for the fulfillment of His purpose—2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 2:21-22; 4:16.
- C. The mystery of Christ is that the Triune God through death and in resurrection is mingling Himself with us, making us the living members of His organic Body:
1. The central vision is the vision that Christ, the expression of God, has become the life-giving Spirit so that He may impart Himself into us as our life to make us the living members of His Body to express Him organically—1 Cor. 15:45b; Rom. 12:5.
 2. The Lord is recovering Christ as life and everything to us and the church as His Body, His fullness—Col. 3:4, 11, 16; 2:19.
 3. The Lord wants a church composed of believers who are infused, filled, and saturated with Himself to be His Body for His expression; eventually, this living Body will become Christ's loving bride, who will prepare the way for His coming back—Eph. 1:22-23; Rev. 19:7-9.
 4. We should not care for insignificant things or be distracted by doctrines or practices; instead, we should care to become a living testimony by having the Triune God dispensed into us to make us members of His organic Body to express Him—Eph. 3:6, 19b, 21.
 5. We need to see the church as the mystery of Christ in the following aspects:
 - a. The church was mysteriously chosen and predestinated in Christ by God the Father before the foundation of the world—1:3-5.
 - b. The church was mysteriously redeemed in the Beloved after the foundation of the world—vv. 6-12.
 - c. The church was mysteriously sealed with the Holy Spirit and received the Holy Spirit as the pledge at the time of its redemption—vv. 13-14.
 - d. The church mysteriously participates in the resurrection power of Christ and in everything that He has attained and obtained in ascension, thereby becoming the Body of Christ—vv. 19-23.
 - e. The church mysteriously becomes the universal new man, as God's kingdom and God's house, and is being built up as the habitation of God—2:15, 19-22.
 - f. The church is mysteriously enjoying the unsearchable riches of Christ—3:2, 7-11.
 - g. The church is strengthened into the inner man with power by God through His Spirit, that Christ may mysteriously make home in the believers' hearts, that the church may be filled with the breadth, the length, the height, and the depth of what Christ is, to become all the fullness of God—vv. 15-19.
 - h. The mysterious life union of Christ and the church is the great mystery in the universe—5:32.
 - i. The church, which is joined to and mingled mysteriously with the Triune God today, is a miniature of the New Jerusalem and needs to take the holy city as its highest standard and matchless hope in everything—Rev. 21:2.