

Article of the Month
July, 2018

The “Mystery” of the “Body of Christ”

MYSTERIES IN GENERAL

Before beginning this month’s topic, it is important to realize something about “mysteries” in the Bible. In the confusion of the dark ages, it was not uncommon for priestcraft to avoid explaining things to parishioners in the church. Rather than attempting to explain complicated or irrational things to churchgoers, priests would often say something like, “It’s a mystery. Just take it on faith.” This is still done when errors have no logical explanation. The “trinity” concept — a long-held error — cannot be explained either by logic or by consistent use of Scripture. Thus it is often passed off as one of those “mysteries of faith” that we are told we must just accept even if we don’t comprehend it. The fact is, even the ministers and priests don’t understand it. Passing it off as a “mystery” is merely their way of avoiding admitting that they, too, “don’t get it.”

But “mystery” in the Bible does not mean that something cannot be understood. The true meaning of the word “mystery” is something that can be understood only by the initiated. Therefore, “mysteries” of Scripture can be understood. But they can be understood only by those to whom God reveals them.

God purposely uses “mysteries” (secrets) because during this age He is secretly carrying on a work which cannot be general knowledge at this time. It will all be revealed in due time. But much like wonderful surprises, His work now relies on its not being understood by the masses.

The “mystery” of Christ (and even the mystery of antichrist) is one of those subjects that can, indeed, be understood by those who sincerely seek the answers in the Bible.

THE MYSTERY OF THE “BODY”

One of the great mysteries of the Bible has to do with “The Body of Christ.” We must understand the OBJECTIVE of Christ before we can understand the “mystery.”

It is not uncommon knowledge among Christian adherents that Jesus is the Savior of the world. Exactly what that means seems not to be so clear for many! But, in short, the **objective** of having a Messiah, an Anointed One, a Savior, is to rescue the entire race — all of the descendants of Adam and Eve — from death, dying, and imperfection. This

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rescue is not to take them all to some other realm (heaven), or, conversely, not to rescue them at all, but to consign them to some horrible torment. It is to rescue them in the sense of restoring them to the **human perfection** which they enjoyed in the Garden of Eden. We can see the lesson in the words of Peter as he states it in Acts 3:20-21: Peter tells us that God will SEND Jesus as the Messiah appointed for us — appointed to do something for us. Heaven retains Jesus until IT IS TIME for this appointed work to begin. And, what IS this work? It is the RESTORATION or the RESTITUTION of all things that were lost when mankind disobeyed in Eden. And this restoration work is SO IMPORTANT that ALL of God’s holy prophets spoke of it!

Even that much seems to be a mystery for many! But there is a mystery of “The Body of Christ” hidden in this basic Gospel message. The mystery is this:

Christ is not going to be Jesus ONLY. God is developing a GROUP of people — disciples of Jesus — who will be privileged to PARTICIPATE WITH JESUS in saving the human race. This GROUP will go to heaven — they will be changed into spirit beings just like Jesus. This is the mystery: The Christ (the savior of mankind) is not ONE but MANY.

The word “corporate” means a group or body of people. This is the sense of the Biblical term “The Body of Christ.” The Body of Christ is a GROUP of people ultimately changed into spirit beings who will WITH JESUS resurrect the world — restore it to human perfection — to live on a completed and perfected earth in peace and joy forever.

This “body” of people is even hinted at in the Old Testament. In Obadiah 21, it is stated that “Saviours (PLURAL) shall come up on Mount Zion...and the Kingdom shall be the Lord’s.” The same group of “saviors” on Mount Zion is found in Revelation 14:1 where they are numbered (144,000), and they are with “The Lamb” — Jesus.

This group who will constitute “The Christ” — the anointed savior of the world — is also known by other names in Scripture. Notable among these names is “The Bride of Christ” — so-called because Jesus and his “bride” will constitute, in effect, the new or second Adam and Eve, the new Father and Mother for the restored race.

The group is also called the “Church.” This word is from the Greek word “ekklesia” which means “called out.” This might seem a strange word; but those who will constitute “The Body of Christ” are “called out” of humanity; they are TESTED in the midst of the conditions of this evil world. They are eventually TAKEN OUT of it to be spirit beings with their Lord in order to have the necessary power and resources for their assignment as “saviors.”

CHRIST AS A "MYSTERY" IN SCRIPTURE

In four of the epistles of the Apostle Paul we have specific references to the body of Christ as a mystery. We can learn from these references.

IN ROMANS:

16:25

Here we have only a passing reference to show that the whole concept of the "The Christ" (as a head and body) was basically unknown until the first advent.

IN I CORINTHIANS:

2:7

Paul here shows that God's WISDOM provided for keeping the identity of The Christ SECRET (a mystery). But Paul shows that it was all planned before the world's creation. If it were not a mystery, the rulers never would have crucified Jesus and, thus, would have frustrated God's plan for our redemption.

IN EPHESIANS:

3:3-9

In these verses Paul shows that there was no understanding of the mystery of Christ before the First Advent. He clearly states that a part of the mystery is that the Gentiles were to be a part of the body. (Up until this time, God had dealt only with Jews.)

5:29-32

Paul here compares Christ to the marriage arrangement in order to show the concept of the body of Christ's being the "Bride of Christ."

IN COLOSSIANS:

1:26-27

Here Paul shows that the "anointing" (Christ) in his disciples is a hope of "glory" — a hope of attaining a nature and an inheritance greater than will be had by mankind in their resurrection.

4:3

In this verse we see that Paul doesn't HIDE the "mystery." On the contrary, he wants the prayers of the brethren to open ways for him to PREACH it — to help to find other members for the "Body of Christ." In other words, it is NOT a mystery to those who understand it.

OTHER SCRIPTURAL LESSONS ABOUT THE BODY

Below is a list of Scriptures which deal with "The Body of Christ," Taking the time to consider each will help to establish the concept of the REASON for or the OBJECTIVE in being a Christian. We are not Christians so that we can be saved while others are lost. We are Christians (the prospective members of the Body of Christ) so that we can save the rest of the world. Understanding this perspective makes traditional Christianity so empty and selfish. The true perspective makes it look so God-like!

- Romans 8:23 "Our body" is our brotherhood in Christ.
- 12:4, 5 We are individual parts (members) of Christ's body — each having different functions, but, since we have the same OBJECTIVE, we are members of each other.
- I Corinthians 10:17 We are ONE body because we all partake of the ONE "bread" — we "feed" on life from Jesus.
- 12:12-27 These verses deal extensively with the concepts of being part of the one fellowship (body) of Christ. Our varying opportunities are shown; our needs for one another are shown; the fleshly nature of divisions is shown. The "corporate" nature of the "Body of Christ" is made abundantly clear. We have a commission to edify that body.
- Ephesians 3:6 Gentiles as well as believing Jews are all welcome members of this body.
- 4:4, 5 The ONE body is motivated by the ONE mind of God's spirit. The entire group has only ONE calling (objective) and ONE hope (being part of The Christ). It has only ONE Lord (Jesus), ONE faith (from Scripture), ONE baptism (into Christ's death), ONE God (the Father of Jesus and of all the body members.)
- 4:12 Our current work is to edify the body members.
- 4:16 The whole body works to build the character of each of its members.
- 5:23 Jesus is the head of the body as well as its savior.

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5:30	Clear statement: We are members of his body.
Colossians 1:18	Jesus is head and has pre-eminence in everything.
1:24	The "suffering" of the body members is considered a part of the "sufferings" of Christ.
2:19	We have no right or liberty to depart from our Lord's teachings.
3:15	Christ's peace in our hearts is a part of our calling. It is reliant on our acknowledgement of being part of the body and our being thankful in the arrangement.
Hebrews 13:3	Our being a part of the body requires our sympathies with the experiences of all others in that body.

SUMMARY

The most noble, the most wonderful, the most important work in the history of mankind has been progressing secretly (as a "mystery") for the last two thousand years. God has been selecting and testing a "body" of people who will function as The Christ, The Messiah, The Anointed, The Mediator, The Saviors of the human race. Once their secret selection is accomplished, the Peaceable Kingdom of God through Christ ON EARTH will begin for the blessing of all the families of the earth.

Meanwhile that group, that body, (not a denomination, but individuals walking in the appointed way of Christ) is working with its fellow members, and working within themselves, to meet the standards the Lord has prescribed.
