

WIERWILLE, V.P.-THE CHURCH-THE MYSTERY REVEALED

by Wierwille vp

V.P. Wierwille's exploration of the Church as the body of Christ, examining how this divine mystery reveals God's spiritual blessings and purposes through faith.

14 Chapters

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00.1 The Church

The Church (The Great Mystery Revealed) Victor Paul Wierwille This book is in the public domain. For more teachings by V. P. Wierwille, E. W. Bullinger and others, go to: www.eternallyblessed.org The Scripture used throughout this study is quoted from the King James Version unless otherwise noted. Any explanatory insertions by the author within a Scripture verse are enclosed in brackets [].

00.2 Preface

Preface To be born again of God's Spirit makes us members of the faith which is the body of Christ. The essence of the faith is the great secret revealed. (I Timothy 3:9). In Ephesians 1 we have God's secret and purpose declared. Christ is the Head of His body which is the Church and all the members of that body are filled with all spiritual blessings by God. According to Ephesians 4 it was Paul's gospel, for it was he to whom God gave the revelation of the great mystery. In II Corinthians 4 the great secret is called "the gospel of Christ's glory." In Colossians 2 it was "God's secret" until revealed. So the great mystery can not be hidden in the Scriptures but "hid in God" Himself. The understanding of the "great mystery" then and even now is spiritually invigorating and exciting. I invite you to enjoy the enthusiasm of the quest.

I submit this research for your prayerful consideration that you too may rejoice in the abundance of Christ Jesus.

00.3 Introduction

Introduction When the great mystery of the wonderful good news of the body of Christ was first declared at Ephesus, the record in Acts chapter 19 states "so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed" to the end that "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks [Gentiles]." Some years later before the close of the life and ministry of the apostle Paul, he declares in his last letter to Timothy, "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me." II Timothy 1:15.

Comparing Acts 19:10 and II Timothy 1:15 we note with clarity that before the end of the first century and before the end of the apostle Paul's lifetime, the purity of the revelation of the greatness of the mystery had been almost forgotten. The failure to adhere to the gospel of the good news of the great mystery was not a personal dislike for the apostle Paul, but it was a turning away from the teaching of the great mystery revelation. In II Timothy chapter 2, verse 18 Paul speaks of those "who concerning the truth have erred." In chapter 3, verse 8 he speaks of those who "resist the truth." In chapter 4, verse 4 he speaks of those who "turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." When the first century believers failed to continue to act in the light of the great mystery as unfolded so magnanimously in the epistle to the Ephesians, they lost the true teaching concerning the mystery which is the center of all true Christian faith, the one body of Christ. The immediate consequence of the loss of this truth of the great mystery produced glowing errors. It initiated the different so-called "bodies" with all the subsequent division and schism in the church body. Instead of rightly dividing the word of truth and recognizing the "one body" which God made (Ephesians 4:4), men set about making their own ecclesiastical bodies and sects. The truth as to the believer's perfect standing before God in Christ was the next major loss. The truth as to what God made every believer to be in Christ, how every believer is justified by the faith of Jesus Christ and saved by God's grace was all basically lost. Failing to adhere to the truth the teachers began to propagate error regarding the Lord's promised return from heaven, the gathering together and the resurrection. Preparation for death and judgment replaced the great hope of the blessed return of Christ. Spiritual darkness engulfed the Christian world, and religion (man-made forms of worship) became the norm of Christianity. This all-pervading spiritual sterility is yet around us, upon us and in us. We have not recaptured the truths of the revelation of the, great mystery. The first truth to be lost is always the last to be recovered.

Before the Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven He made the solemn declaration given in John 16:12-15, I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

Every sincere believer must ask himself the question as to when, where and how this promise of the Lord Jesus Christ was fulfilled. What is meant by "all truth" or, as the Revised Version has it, "all the truth," into which the Holy Spirit was to guide? It certainly could not mean that the Holy Spirit would show one truth to one person and another truth to another person, and that these truths would be so different they would proceed to quarrel about them. The words of Christ's promise "he shall guide ... he shall speak ... he will show you" are definite. We have only one place to look for the answer, the epistles which are addressed to the Church by the Holy Spirit. In these seven epistles we have the perfect "truth" into which the Spirit was to guide and lead. These seven epistles contain all the truth Christ could not speak while on earth, for the time had not yet come for that revelation. These seven Church epistles contain "the things to come" which the Spirit was to give by revelation, which would "glorify" Christ. The remainder of the epistles in the New Testament are either general or they are specifically addressed to the Hebrews, the twelve tribes, the dispersion, or to individuals.

01 To or For Whom

To or For Whom Our modern-day confusion is for the most part due to the Church epistles addressed to the Christian being substituted by sections of the Bible written for the believer's learning. There are seven epistles addressed directly to the Church: Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians. The Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments are considered by the organized church body as sufficient testimony for a Christian profession. The four Gospels, and especially the Sermon on the Mount, are frequently given as the essence of Christianity instead of those epistles specifically and directly addressed to the Church. Thus, today there is a flamboyant ignorance among all Christians concerning all that God has made Christ to be unto His people and all that He has made them to be in Him. The believers, not knowing their standing in Christ, their completeness and perfection in Him, are blown about with every wind of doctrine. Many Christians declare and know that they are justified by the grace of God, and yet their actions indicate that they seek to be justified by works.

Only the understanding and acceptance of the great revelation given in the Church epistles will ever deliver a believer from all the new sects, doctrines, theories and schools of thought which have caused deleterious effects in our Christian midst. The seven Church epistles are set in the perfection of their spiritual truth, when we accept them in the order in which we have them in the Bible. In all the manuscripts of the New Testament the order of these seven Church epistles never varies, although the order of the other books of the New Testament varies. This should speak loudly to our spiritual ears.

Three of the Church epistles, Romans, Ephesians and Thessalonians, are distinctively not epistles in content but treatises. These three contain the basic doctrinal teaching to the Church as compared with the other four epistles which are specifically epistolary. The order of these revelations in the Word of God is the treatise of Romans, then the epistles of Corinthians and Galatians. Romans sets forth the great doctrine and teaching to the Church as to how to believe rightly, Corinthians gives reproof to the Church because of wrong believing, and Galatians establishes the correction as to how to get back to right believing. This description of the first three revelations to the Church is equally true of the treatise of Ephesians and the epistles of Philippians and Colossians. The first step of all degradation, when the Word of God is wrongly divided, is practical error. After practicing and developing error sufficiently we make a doctrine of it; finally doctrinal errors manifest themselves in creeds, rules and commandments of men. The Thessalonian treatise stands alone in its teaching of doctrine or right believing. Later we shall describe why Thessalonians stands last even though it may have been written first, and why it has no companion epistles of reproof and correction.

Putting the three Church treatises and four Church epistles together we not only have the "all truth" Jesus Christ said would be given, but we have all the truth concerning the "mystery of God and of Christ," to manifest a life more than abundant, and to be more than a conqueror in every

situation.

02 The Three Treatises

The Three Treatises

We will now view the perfect order and divine reason for the three formal treatises, Romans, Ephesians and Thessalonians.

Romans is first because it is the foundation, the beginning, the starting point, for the "all truth" knowledge which Christ proclaimed He would send after His ascension.

Paul was a son of God by the new birth in a perpendicular relationship, but to his fellowmen he was a servant of Jesus Christ as verse 1 of Romans declares. He was called an apostle, "separated" to give "the gospel of God" which reveals God's grace regarding the great mystery. In Romans man is shown to be in utter depravity and totally helpless, but by God's grace through Jesus Christ the believer is justified from sin and sins. Romans indicates that the believer died with Christ, was buried with Christ, arose with Christ, and is made a son and heir of God in Christ Jesus. Romans sets forth God's purpose, will and desire in making every believer what he is and has in Christ. Where the magnificent eighth chapter of Romans terminates its doctrinal (right believing) teaching regarding the believer, the revelation given in the treatise of the book of Ephesians begins. Ephesians does not start with man's depravity, as does Romans, but with God's purpose and will for every believer. Ephesians specifically shows what God in Christ makes available unto the believer. Ephesians is presented from God's point of view, whereas Romans starts with man's need.

Ephesians declares, in no uncertain terms, what Christ has made every believer to be in Him.

Note that the first chapter of Ephesians declares, "God ... who hath blessed [past tense] us with all spiritual blessings" (verse 3). God has chosen us in Christ (verse 4). He has made us lovely and acceptable (verse 6). In Christ we have redemption and remission from sin according to the riches of His grace (verse 7). All of Christ's work is to the end that we should be to the praise of His glory (verse 12). All believers are to be enlightened so as to know the riches of His glory in the saints (verse 18). All believers are to know what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe (verse 19). In Romans the believers receive the good news of what the sinner obtained by grace. In Ephesians the believers receive the revelation of the abundance of God's goodness in the unfoldment of the great mystery, and "the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe." In Romans the sinner is dealt with individually, while in Ephesians it is the saved sinners, as one body, "one new man" collectively. In Romans the believer is dead with Christ (6:8) and risen with Him (6:11). In Ephesians the believer is seated in the heavenlies with Christ (2:6). In Thessalonians the believer is gathered together (II Thess. 2:1) forever in glory. The revelation in the treatise of Thessalonians stands last. It follows Romans and Ephesians because there is no more of the "all truth" available to the Church when the believers are gathered together unto Him. The consummation is reached in Thessalonians, for in this treatise is given the revelation that the believer shall be caught up to be with the Lord, and be as He is in glory. This is the final end of the

revelation of the "all truth" the Spirit was to lead believers into, according to Christ's promise in the Gospel of John before Christ's ascension. The Word of God declares in II Timothy 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God [God-breathed], and is profitable for doctrine [right believing, Romans, Ephesians, Thessalonians], for reproof [where we are not believing rightly, Corinthians, Philippians], for correction [to get us back to right believing, Galatians, Colossians], for [which is] instruction in righteousness."

03 The Word "Mystery"

The Word "Mystery" The word "mystery" is a transliteration of the Greek word *mustērion*. The Hebrew word *ratz* is *mustērion* in the Septuagint. The Aramaic word is *araza*. The earliest Latin Version of Ephesians 5:32 translated *mustērion* as *sacramentum*. The word "mystery" originally meant that which is concealed, hidden or secret. This was also the meaning of the word *sacramentum* in its earliest usage. Etymologically and semantically the usage of the word "mystery" has degraded through the years and does not carry the significance of its original biblical usage. The word "mystery" (*mustērion*) in the Bible means something kept secret, yet it can be understood when revealed. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever" (Deuteronomy 29:29). The word *mustērion* is used twenty-eight times in the New Testament. Three usages are in the Gospels, four in the book of Revelation, and twenty-one in the Pauline epistles. The "great mystery" is only one of its usages. *mustērion* may be used of a scripture that has a deeper meaning than that which we note upon first reading. Not every *mustērion* need have a religious connotation, but may be a natural phenomena or even actions of men which are done in secrecy.

However, to the Church of God, the born-again believers, the body of Christ, there is no subject of such significant importance as the great mystery. The time of the great mystery begins with the day of Pentecost and terminates with the gathering together of the believers. This period is referred to as an administration, *oikonomia*. In government circles, from local government to federal, we have different administrations. For instance, it may be a Republican administration or a Democratic administration. We speak of it as the administration of this President or that President. So in the Bible the different times under different leadership represent different administrations. The last administration preceding the day of Pentecost was the administration of Christ's presence upon earth in person. The Bible refers to this period as the Christ administration or the Kingdom of Heaven. As far as God's work was concerned the Christ administration officially ended with the Ascension. In practice, however, the Christ administration ended much later. This has caused misunderstanding and wrong dividing of The Word. If the Church of grace without the law began on the day of Pentecost, why did so many born-again believers continue their zeal for the law many, many years after Pentecost? We are told in Acts 21:20, "How many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law." What is the answer? It is very simple. The believers were born again on the day of Pentecost and as such were part of the body of Christ. Since they had not been given the revelation of what came on the day of Pentecost, they, as born-again believers, continued to be zealous for the law. For instance, we utilize electricity day-in and day-out, but we cannot explain what it is. On the day of Pentecost when the power from on high was given, believers were born again, filled with the holy spirit for the first time, but they could not explain what they had.* They utilized it, they operated it, but they could not define it nor describe it, because the revelation of what came on the day of Pentecost was given later to the apostle Paul. This revelation was the great mystery.

* Victor Paul Wierwille, *Receiving The Holy Spirit Today*, Fifth Edition (The American Christian Press of The Way, Inc., New Knoxville, Ohio 45871). The entire subject of Pentecost, including God, the Giver, and His gift, are covered in detail.

04 The Word "Church"

The Word "Church"

Before we proceed in our understanding of the great mystery, we must understand the usage of the word "church" in the Christ administration and also in the administration in which we continue to live. In the Christ administration the Church is the bride; in the great mystery or Church of grace administration the Church is the body. Confusing these two usages and not rightly dividing them as to the administration to which they belong has caused no small amount of error. The Greek word for church is *ekklesia*, literally meaning the "called out." Those of Israel who followed Jesus Christ while He was here upon earth were the "called out" of Israel and are referred to as the Church, the bride. In the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament the Greek word *ekklesia* is used 75 times, meaning to call together for an assembly, for a meeting. *Ekklesia* is used of any group called together for any specific purpose. The Greek word *ekklesia* is the Hebrew word *cahal*, transliterated into our English word "call." The word *cahal* occurs in the Old Testament 123 times and is translated "congregation" 86 times, "assembly" 17 times, and "multitude" 3 times. The first usage of the Hebrew word *cahal*, which in the Greek (Septuagint) is *ekklesia*, is given in Genesis 28:3: "That thou mayest be a multitude [*cahal*, *ekklesia*] of people," namely, they were a called-out people. This is exactly what Israel was, a people called out from among others and assembled together apart from other people. The usage of the word *ekklesia* varies depending on the situation. For instance, if you are driving down the highway and you point to a building and say, "See that big church," your usage of the word "church" is different from your usage when you say, "We are having a meeting of the church." Today we speak of the church by referring to different denominations such as the Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, the Baptist Church. These different usages of the word *ekklesia* or "church" are understood today. In the Bible also we must rightly divide its usage, and understand its significant meaning in the administration in which it is used. The word *ekklesia* simply and plainly means "called out." Any assembly, any group meeting, called out for a specific purpose is an *ekklesia*. If you were called out for a meeting, that assembly would be an *ekklesia*, a church. If a mob were called out to destroy a whole community, this mob would be called an *ekklesia*, a church. A union meeting which ended in mob-violence in the Bible is called an *ekklesia*. In Acts 19:21ff we read:

After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season. And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.

Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with

hands: [Watch this ekklesia develop. Demetrius is a real organizer.] So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth. [Look at that build-up. He's got something going here.] And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre. And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not [to enter in]. And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.

Some [of the silversmith craftsmen] therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly [ekklesia, church] was confused.

Demetrius and his fellow silversmiths were not called together to worship the true God. They were called out for a union meeting to maintain the profits in their profession as silversmiths of the statues of Diana. The meaning and usage of the word ekklesia is certainly clear from this biblical illustration. The ekklesia, the Church of the Gospels which Jesus Christ initiated, was the called out from Israel. Jesus Christ was a minister to the circumcision (Romans 15:8). Everything Jesus Christ came to do He came to do for Israel; everything Jesus Christ did He did for Israel. Jesus Christ kept and fulfilled every law addressed to Israel. Even when Jesus sent out the twelve apostles according to Matthew 10, He sent them only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. When the seventy in Luke 10 were commissioned, they were sent to Israel only. Jesus' entire ministry was to Israel, the circumcision. Jesus Christ's message was a calling out of followers from Israel. Those of Israel who believed in Him are referred to as the Church of the bride. In Matthew 16:18 we have a statement usually misconstrued, where Jesus said, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church [ekklesia]." The word "Peter" is the Greek word petros, meaning the smallest rock-like, tiny grain of stone. Every time the wind blows, the tiny grain blows. The word for "rock" is petra, meaning a solid rock no storm can blow away. This scripture does not declare that the Church of the Gospels is built on Peter. It speaks loudly to the contrary saying, "You are Peter [Petros, a tiny grain-like stone, you blow around with everything], but upon this rock [petra, a solid rock, which is Christ], I will build my Church." The Church in the Gospels was built by Jesus Christ Himself, who was the Bridegroom, and the "called out" are the bride. When we study the great mystery we see that the Church in the Epistles is not called the bride but the body, and is built by the born-again believers, who have The Word and ministry of reconciliation (II Corinthians 5:18, 19). In the Gospels we have the record of the crucifixion of the Bridegroom, Who was to build His Church and against which the gates of hell should not prevail. The Church of the bride, the called out of Israel, temporarily terminated with the death of the Bridegroom. More specifically, the Church of the bride is held in abeyance until the period or administration of the great mystery has culminated. Then beginning with the Book of Revelation administration we again have the Church as the bride, and Jesus Christ as the King of Kings and the Bridegroom, and He will build the Church of the called out of Israel against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. The Gospels terminate with the suffering Christ, the Book of Revelation with the glory of Christ. The Church as the bride of Christ was no mystery. Israel's blessings, as well as the blessings on the Gentiles through Israel and Jesus Christ, was no secret

(Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 28:14; Psalm 27:1; Isaiah 49:6; Luke 2:30-32). The sufferings and glory of Christ were no secret. The Old Testament prophets were totally conversant with the truth of "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (I Peter 1:11). But that there was to be an expanded period of time between the "sufferings and the glory" was baffling to them. Thus they searched diligently to see the time span between the "sufferings" and the "glory."

05 The Great Mystery

The Great Mystery

I Peter 1:10-12 is the great fulcrum of truth on which we can swing into the detailed study and understanding of the Great Mystery. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you. I Peter 1:10.

These were the Old Testament prophets who saw the period of grace between the "sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." They searched diligently for the duration of that period of time, but they could not find it in The Word, for that period is the Great Mystery.

Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify [The accurate literal translation is: Searching out or unto the time of the spirit which was upon them did signify of Christ], when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

Unto whom [the Old Testament prophets] it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them [the Church apostles and prophets, Ephesians 4:11] that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost [spirit] sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. I Peter 1:11, 12. The Old Testament prophets searched for the length of time of the grace period, between the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Prophecies of Christ's coming are throughout the Old Testament, as well as the details of His sufferings and glory. The prophets searched the Scriptures in detail for the duration of this period of time but could not find it, for that period is the great mystery.

Even the angels did not know the duration of the period of time between the sufferings and the glory of Christ. This period is the great **mustērion**, "hid in God" (Ephesians 3:9); "hid from ages and from generations" (Colossians 1:26); "kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25); never made known "in other ages" (Ephesians 3:5). Not a single word was written or heard of this great mystery until it was revealed in detail to the apostle Paul.

Note carefully what Ephesians chapter 3:2ff says about the great mystery:

If ye have heard of the dispensation [administration] of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery... Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body...

Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God... To make all men see what is the fellowship [oikonomia, administration] of the mystery [mustērion], which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things. The Epistle to the Colossians,

chapter 1, verses 24b–27, has this to say of the mystery: For his body's sake, which is the church: Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation [administration] of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery [mystery], among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Romans 16:25, 26 has this illuminating truth regarding the mystery:

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery [mystery], which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. In all the scriptures in Ephesians, Colossians and Romans, we note one great truth: the mystery regarding the Church, the body of Christ, had never before been made known until it was made known to the apostle Paul. The mystery "in other ages was not made known"; "hid from ages and from generations"; "kept secret since the world began"; "hid in God" from the beginning. Therefore, that mystery cannot be revealed in the Old Testament or in the Gospels, for then it would not have been a mystery. Once a truth is revealed it is no longer a mystery.

06 The Great Mystery—What It Is

The Great Mystery—What It Is The great mystery was that the "Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body" (Ephesians 3:6), and that it is "Christ in you" which is "the riches of the glory of this mystery" (Colossians 1:27). This is the Church, the called out from both Jew and Gentile, making one new man, a new body in Him. (Ephesians 2:10-18). The Church as the bride in the Gospels has the Bridegroom, Christ, Who will build His Church (Matthew 16:18). The Church as the body is not composed of two, like the bride and Bridegroom, but is one new man, one body, of which Christ is the Head. In this Church of the body the work of reconciling men and women to God is not the work of Christ, but the work of the believers who have been given The Word and the ministry of reconciliation.

II Corinthians 5:18-20 reads, And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. The Church of the bride is built by the Bridegroom; the Church of the body of Christ is built by the born-again believers.

07 The Great Mystery Hid

The Great Mystery Hid Why was the great mystery kept such a deep secret and for so long a period of time? And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony [mystery, must \blacksquare rion] of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. I Corinthians 2:1, 2.

Why could Paul tell them only about Jesus Christ and Him crucified? Because the majority of believers could assimilate no more truth. They could not receive the mystery. This is a tremendous truth. The Church of the body is not alive in Jesus Christ's crucifixion; we are alive because of His resurrection, and the new birth that became available on the day of Pentecost. Most people today do not spiritually go beyond Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The center or focal point of almost every church today is the cross. "Howbeit [however] we speak wisdom among them that are perfect" (Verse 6). The word "perfect" (teleioi) is the key. Among the Christian believers was a small handful of mature (teleioi) spiritually grown-up believers as opposed to babes in Christ or carnal Christians, and to those few, the teleioi, "initiated ones," Paul could speak the wisdom of God regarding the great mystery (must \blacksquare rion) "even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory" (Verse 7). This was the great mystery, "which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (Verse 8). The prince of this world is Satan. Had he and his chief devil spirits known the great mystery they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Satan would have preferred a living Jesus Christ rather than Christ Jesus living in every born-again believer. Every born-again believer has Christ in him and is capable of doing the works Christ did, plus leading believers into the new birth which Christ could not do while on earth for the new birth was not available until Pentecost. Jesus Christ's ministry on earth was necessary in preparing the way for the new birth to be made available. In addition, God's resurrection of Christ from the grave was required, plus Christ's ministry for forty days after the resurrection, and the ten days after the ascension, to bring to pass the reality of the new birth and the great mystery (John 14:12). The great must \blacksquare rion was "hid in God from before the foundations of the world" and did not become a reality in any believer's life until the day of Pentecost because God did not want Satan to know His plan.

While Jesus Christ was personally present upon the earth He could be at only one place at one time. Since the day of Pentecost Christ is present wherever there is a born-again believer. The early Church was cognizant of this great reality and they did signs, miracles and wonders. Since the day of Pentecost the Church is the body, with Christ in each believer. The bride and Bridegroom are two, but Christ in you makes every believer a member of the one body.

Christ, who is in heaven, is the Head of the Church, the body. Christ's people on earth are members of His body. The unity of this body is in the Head, Christ, who is in heaven. The born-again believers are "all members of that body," not on earth but in Christ, the head, who is in heaven. The unity and oneness of the body of the Church springs not from the "eye or hand" members but from the source, the Head, Christ Jesus. "But now hath God set the members...in

the body [in Christ in heaven], as it hath pleased him [God]" (1 Corinthians 12:18), not as it seems to have pleased men. The members of the body of Christ are those who have been born again by confessing with their mouth, not their sins, but the Saviour from sin, the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in their heart that God raised Him from the dead (Romans 10:9). This great salvation is in Christ Jesus the Saviour, in whom the members of the body were circumcised when He was circumcised; baptized when He was baptized; fulfilled all the law when He fulfilled it and said "it is finished"; died when He died; were buried when He was buried; rose again when He arose, ascended when He ascended and (as members of the body, the Church, the called out) are "seated in the heavenlies"; "complete in him": rejoicing in the truth that the members shall "never more come into condemnation"; having escaped the "wrath of God"; having "passed from death unto life," and are looking forward to that day when the earthly part of that body will be "received up into glory." The growth of this body, the Church, comes from the Head, Christ Jesus, who is in heaven. God exalted Jesus Christ by the resurrection from the dead and "gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22, 23). The Head, Christ Jesus, is the one who fills all the members of His body with all that God gives in the new birth, which is Christ in you the hope of glory. As the head of the natural body is physiologically the source of guidance for the whole natural body, so the Head of the spiritual body is spiritually the source of guidance for the whole spiritual body which is the Church. The building up of the body of Christ unto a perfect man that all the members upon earth "may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by every sensation from the supply, according to a working corresponding to the measure of each individual part, brings about the growth of the body with a view to the building up of itself in love." (Literal translation – Ephesians 4:15, 16). This is the work of the gift ministries listed in Ephesians 4:11, where we read: And he [Christ] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers. The specific purpose for which these ministries are given we note in verses 12 and 13: For the perfecting of the saints, for [with a view to] the work of the ministry, for [with a further view to] the edifying of the body of Christ:

Till [until] we all come in the unity [oneness] of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The outcome of the gift ministries being: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:14–16. The growth of the Church is God downward, not man upward. It is from heaven to earth and not a reaching up from earth to heaven (Colossians 2:19). The origin of the body, the Church, is God who hath given Christ to be Head over all things to this wondrous body. Christ, the Head, is the source of all guidance and operation of the body. The members of this body of Christ are to work in the body in the relationship that God has set, and not according to what men have set. Natural, earthly, carnal rules, regulations and ordinances do not enter into the growth of this body of Christ at all, for this body is totally spiritual, heavenly and eternal.

Paul's instruction to Timothy, his "own son in the faith," regarding the continuation of the ministry in Ephesus after Paul has moved on to Macedonia, is filled with spiritual enlightenment regarding the teaching of the great mystery.

Paul informs Timothy to "charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (I Timothy 1:3). Timothy is to give orders that there is no other way of right believing than the truth of the great mystery. Furthermore, Timothy is not to allow them to "give heed to fables," that is, just talk, "I think this," or "I think that." Also Timothy is not to give heed to "endless genealogies," where one group like a family, would say, "We are much older than you – we know more," or "We have been conducting this family fellowship a long time; we may teach for right believing what we want to." Paul specifically instructs Timothy not to permit this to occur. All this talk and family philosophy will engender nothing but questions and doubts. This foolishness will not promote "godly edifying (oikonomia)" which is the "administration of God," the mystery, which is by "the faith of Jesus Christ." In I Timothy 1:11 the great mystery is referred to as "the glorious gospel of the blessed God," or more accurately as "the gospel of the glory of God." In I Timothy 3:9 the great secret is called "the mystery of the faith" which is to be held in a sound mind. No believer has a "sound mind" if he is unsound in his knowledge and understanding of the great mystery. From the new birth to, and including, the gathering together of the body of Christ is totally summarized in I Timothy 3:16. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

"Without controversy" means by the agreement of all, with one mind, regarding the "great mystery of godliness," the true faith, right believing.

"Godliness (eusebeia)" is the opposite of *thraskia*, religion. Religion deals with outward form; "godliness" deals with the real, the true, the genuine. The word translated "God" in the King James, according to the best texts and authorities, is the Greek word, *ho*, meaning which. A literal translation of I Timothy 3:16 is as follows: By the agreement of all, with one mind regarding the great mystery of the genuine and true faith, which was 1. "manifested in the flesh" – brought to light in natural man by way of the new birth on the day of Pentecost, 2. "justified in the spirit" – spiritually justified before God in the here and now. "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Romans 8:30.

3. "seen of angels" – manifested to spiritual powers, the believer's greatness in Christ Jesus. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6:12.

4. "preached unto the Gentiles (nations)" – witnessed not only to the Jews first, but to the Gentiles. "But ye shall receive power, after that Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1:8.

5. "believed on in the world" –

Some who hear the true Word of faith will respond to believe accordingly. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not

heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? Romans 10:14. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. Romans 10:9.

6."received up into glory" – This is the "gathering together" unto Him. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." II Thessalonians 2:1. This summary of the whole mystery given by Paul to Timothy is as revolutionary in our times as it was then. The growth of the Church is dependent upon rightly dividing the Word of truth as to that which is addressed to us the body of Christ.

08 Church of the Body Terminates

Church of the Body Terminates The administration of the "great mystery," the period of grace, the Church as the body of Christ, will be concluded when I Thessalonians 4:13-18 comes to pass. But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up [away] together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so [in this manner] shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Christ's return for the Church, the body of Christ, is not a resurrection. To have a resurrection according to biblical usage, all must be dead. But, in this Church age, the period of the "great mystery" and of grace, not all will have died at His return. Therefore the scripture declares that the dead in Christ shall rise and the alive believers at His return shall be changed. This is not a resurrection. The dead in Christ are referred to as "corruptible," and alive believers as "mortals." Note I Corinthians 15:51-54.

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

After the Church as the body is gathered together unto Christ,

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him. II Thessalonians 2:1.

After this "gathering together unto him" the period or the administration of the book of Revelation begins.

09 Man's Day—Present

Man's Day—Present

Confusing the body of the Church, that the dead in Christ shall rise and the alive shall be changed, with the resurrection of the Church of the bride of Christ, has caused untold difficulties. The teaching that the Church of the body goes through the tribulation is built on confusing the usage of the word "resurrection," with the "gathering together." The Church as the body has been gathered together unto Christ before the "great and notable day of the Lord comes to pass," which is the "day of wrath" also called "the Lord's day," which has in it "the first resurrection."

Today in this age of grace, the great mystery administration, it is man who does the judging and therefore it is called "man's day," as distinct from "the Lord's day." But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment. I Corinthians 4:3. The word "judgment" is the word "day." Man does the judging now because this is man's day. But, there is a day coming, the "day of Christ" which includes the Lord's day, when He will do the judging. The Lord's day is the book of Revelation period when He comes as King of kings and Lord of lords, while today is "man's day," therefore to us the body of Christ, the believers, is given The Word and the ministry of reconciliation.

"Except there come a falling away first" is a flamboyant error in the King James Version in II Thessalonians 2:3.

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, (Verse 1) That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. (Verse 2)

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. (Verse 3)

If the "day of Christ" of verse 2, which is the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and "our gathering together unto him" of verse 1, does not occur until after there has been a "falling away and that man of sin be revealed," then the tribulation spoken of in Revelation will be upon us.

If the period of "wrath" of the book of Revelation is to be endured by the born-again believers, then Christ lived, died and arose in vain and Pentecost is meaningless and Christianity is senseless. Then too, the Word of God given for our comfort (I Thessalonians 4:18) becomes our worried concern. The Geneva Bible and the Cranmer Bible, first published in 1537, and the Tyndale Bible published in 1539 preceding the King James translation, all translate "a falling away first," "a departure first."

Before the "day of the Lord," there must be a departure of the born-again believers from this world to be with Christ. After that will come to pass that the "man of sin be revealed" which will then be followed by "the day of wrath." In II Thessalonians 2:3, the Greek words are η apostasia. The word η is the article "the." The prefix apo means "away from." Having a circle, apo would be

illustrated as a line in motion from the exterior of the circle to some distant point. Stasia means "to separate," or "draw out." Hence apostasia is a separation away from, or a drawing out from among, it is the departure.

How spiritually satisfying to know that II Thessalonians 2:3 really says that the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and the born-again believers' "gathering together unto him" will have become a reality before the "day of Christ" is at hand upon the earth. For the "day of Christ" cannot come upon the earth "except there come the departure."

10 Lord's Day—Future

Lord's Day—Future

Revelation 20:5 refers to the "Lord's Day" which includes the Church of the bride and Bridegroom period, but not the Church as the body which has been "gathered together." But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. A synagogue in Nazareth was the location for Jesus' first recorded message as given in Luke 4:16–21. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. [In reverence and respect for the Word of God the priest would stand while reading from the scrolls, and be seated while teaching.] And there was delivered unto him the book [scroll] of the prophet Esaias [Isaiah]. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

Reading from the scroll of Isaiah, corresponding to our Isaiah 61:1, 2, Jesus Christ read only to the words "acceptable year of the Lord," and closing the scroll He said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

Jesus Christ did not continue to read the "day of vengeance of our God" from the scroll for then He could not have said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled." The "day of vengeance of our God" is still future, starting with the book of Revelation period. There are already almost two thousand years of the period of grace history, the great mystery administration represented by that little comma between the word "Lord" and "and" in Isaiah 61:2. Between "the acceptable year of the Lord" which was then, and "the day of vengeance of our God" which is future, is the administration of the great mystery. The Church as the body of Christ is awaiting His return to be gathered together unto Him who is the Head over all.

11 Appendix

Appendix The word **mustērion** is used in the following New Testament scriptures: three times in the Gospels, twenty-one times in the Pauline Epistles and four times in the book of Revelation.

Matthew 13:11 Ephesians 3:9 Mark 4:11 5:32 Luke 8:10 6:19 Romans 11:25 Colossians 1:26
16:25 1:27 I Corinthians 2:12:2 2:74:3 4:11 I Thessalonians 2:7 13:21 Timothy 3:9 14:23:16
15:51 Revelation 1:20 Ephesians 1:9 10:7 3:3 17:5 3:4 17:7

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