

Insights into Fullness of Life in Christ

1..... The Mystery of the New Testament

Starting Points in scripture

- **The promise of Jesus concerning life - Matthew 6:33**

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

- **Paul's way of knowing Him – Phillipians 3:7-10**

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.."

- **Paul's commission - Colossians 1:25-27**

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

What did some old saints believe?

- **Martin Luther (1483-1546) Monk, theologian, church reformer.** He once said:

"It was God's intention to have a race of Christ's. Nothing less than this is true holiness and the Gospel in operation. Holiness stands for Christ in you, the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the baptism of the Spirit and identification with Christ in His death and resurrection."

- **C.T Studd (1850-1931) Famous Cricketer and Missionary to China and Africa**

Studd prayed, "Lord, You know as well as I do what I want. I want to see Jesus running about in thousands of black bodies and purified hearts. In the Name of Jesus. Amen. Hallelujah!"

How does what Jesus, Paul, Luther and Studd said fit together in scripture and life?

**What is this most important mystery in the New Testament of the Bible?
What is its relevance?**

No.	Thematic Pt	Developmental Point	Illustrations and linkages
	<p><i>Introduction to this teaching on a profound mystery unveiled in the NT</i></p>	<p>The Christian life either never seems easy, or does not reach the heights expected by those that profess the faith. Those who weigh up their lives against the example of scripture suspect there is something missing from their lives. Christians all realize that Christ is the answer, but do not seem to know how to take full hold of the offering of the NT. Many churches struggle or fall away and many pastors do not know why. But there is an answer to these dilemmas. It has always been there. It is found in the books of the NT and in particular in the writings and experience of Paul.</p>	<p><i>The answer is that God always intended that the life of Jesus Christ should be lived out in the life of every believer.</i></p> <p><i>The scriptural basis for this and its simplicity and importance is the subject of this study.</i></p>
1	<p><i>The word mystery in the NT</i></p>	<p><i>In the OT Daniel (2:28) tells us that there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. It is fortunate that God does reveal mysteries because in the NT there are several mysteries. How many mysteries are there in the NT? There are 8 separate mysteries mentioned, the word mystery itself being used 22 times NKJV. Of these 8 mysteries, 7 are mentioned without understanding or explanation being given, but one of these 8 is mentioned no less than 15 times and is described in many different ways.</i></p> <p><i>When something – just anything is mentioned in the Bible, it is important. When something – i.e. the same thought is mentioned 6 times, we should consider that it came from heaven for us. Such a verse is that verse which says that if we save our own life we lose it and if we lose our life to Christ, we save it. That particular thought is one of the most profound in scripture. (Matt 10:39; 16:25, Luke 9:24; 17:33, Mark 8:35, John 12:25)</i></p>	<p><i>So what would we think of a word or idea that figures 15 times directly and at least another 6 times indirectly – 21 times in all?</i></p> <p><i>What is that mystery? It is a mystery that Paul tells us that not even the OT prophets knew about. What is that mystery? Wait and see. Let's briefly outline the other 7 mysteries.</i></p>
2	<p><i>Mysteries of the NT</i></p>	<p><i>1 Mystery of the blindness of the Jews – Romans 11:25</i> <i>2 Mystery of Christ and the church – Ephesians 5:32</i> <i>3 Mystery of the rapture – 1 Corinthians 15:51</i></p> <p><i>4 Mystery of Lawlessness(or iniquity) – 2 Thessalonians 2:7</i> <i>5 Mystery of the seven stars – Revelation 1:20</i></p> <p><i>6 Mystery of Babylon – Revelation 17:5</i> <i>7 Mystery of the woman – the mother of harlots – Rev 17:7</i></p>	<p><i>One other mystery is mentioned no less than 15 times. It is the same mystery, although different words are used to describe it.</i></p>

3	Paul's 1st and 2nd challenges to the Corinthians	<p>As an example of this mystery, in his first letter to Corinth Paul challenged them with these words.</p> <p>1 Corinthians 3:16 (NKJV) <i>Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that <u>the Spirit of God dwells in you?</u></i></p> <p>1 Corinthians 6:19 (NKJV) <i>...do you not know that your body is the temple of <u>the Holy Spirit who is in you</u>, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?</i></p>	<p><i>I would refer Paul's questions to each one of us.</i></p> <p><i>Do you now know that the Spirit of God dwells in you?</i></p> <p><i>Do you know the Spirit of God lives in you?</i></p>
4	Paul's third challenges to the Corinthians	<p>In his second letter to Corinth Paul again challenged them with these words from 2 Corinthians 13:5 (NKJV)</p> <p><i>Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. <u>Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?</u>— unless indeed you are disqualified. Notice the change from Holy Spirit within you.....to Jesus Christ is in you.</i></p>	<p><i>You might ask how is He in me when He is in heaven? That question is answered in these scriptures. (By His Spirit of course)</i></p>
5	Why did Paul say these things to them?	<p>It was because he was trying to get them to see what this mystery was. Not only that, but that they were in fact a part of this mystery. The mystery was something inside of them – something they had never realized. They did not realize this one incredible fact. They knew they were saved, but did not fully know what this meant and Paul was trying to teach them.</p>	<p><i>This is what it was.</i></p> <p><i>The Spirit of God dwelt in them.</i></p> <p><i>Expressed another way, the life of Christ was in them.</i></p>
6	Background to this mystery.	<p>Before we look at the mystery itself, let us look at the background of it in the OT. I said earlier that this mystery was not known to any of the OT prophets. Let me just divert onto this mystery for a moment.</p> <p>(yes - The prophets knew that the Messiah was to come, but what they did not know was the form in which the Messiah would relate to His people – they probably imagined a King – a person outside of them) OT people were used to having a King to rule them. To have a deity live inside of them was totally new and not known until <u>revealed to Paul between AD 38-45.</u></p> <p><u>Paul did not write about it till AD 55-58.</u> So that is why Paul taught NT people WHO they were in Christ, rather than what we should do. Why he told them WHAT to do it was because they had not yet learned to find out themselves from the Spirit of God within them.</p>	<p>If we know who we are in Christ, then that is what we need to be teaching and to live out of the Spirit, so we will know what to do from the Spirit, rather than being told what to do.</p> <p>So now, let us see what the NT says about this mystery.</p>

<p>7</p>	<p>What are all these 15 scriptures that tell of this mystery? <u>These are listed in order – the most specific first, going down to the last 4-5 which are less specific, but part of THE mystery as Paul defines it.</u></p>	<p>The mystery kept secret Romans 16:25 The mystery which has been hiddenColossians 1:26 The wisdom of God in a mystery1 Corinthians 2:7 The fellowship of the mysteryEphesians 3:9 The mystery of the gospelEphesians 6:19 The mystery made known to Paul..... Ephesians 3:3 The mystery of ChristEphesians 3:4 The mystery among the gentilesColossians 1:27 The mystery of GodColossians 2:2 The mystery of Christ Colossians 4:3 The mystery of His willEphesians 1:9 The mystery of the faith 1 Timothy 3:9 The mystery of godliness1 Timothy 3:16 The mystery of GodMark 4:11 The mystery of GodRevelation 10:7 <i>(this last one may be as general as referring to Jesus return, the establishment of peace and righteousness on earth - but involving THE mystery as above.</i></p>	<p><i>Even though the prophets knew the Messiah was to come, they did not know that His life would dwell within NT believers. Daniel said that God in heaven reveals secrets, but no one knew this secret until it was revealed to Paul.</i></p> <p><i>All these verses seem to describe the one and same mystery.</i></p>
<p>8</p>	<p>More details of this mystery</p> <p>Some summary verses</p>	<p>There are two verses in the NT, which when taken together sum up the whole mystery.</p> <p>Galatians 2:20 (NKJV) - I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but <i>Christ lives in me</i>; and the <i>life</i> which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.</p> <p>Colossians 3:4 (NKJV) - When <i>Christ who is our life</i> appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.</p>	<p><i>Christ is in me</i></p> <p><i>Christ lives in me</i></p> <p><i>He is my life</i></p>
<p>9</p>	<p>Let's look in detail at these two verses.</p> <p>What do these verses really mean?</p>	<p><i>This new state is Christ in you - and Christ my life from Colossians and as explained in Gal. 2:20</i></p> <p>1- We have been crucified with Christ. This means that when you were born again, you received the benefit of having died with Christ at His crucifixion. In some incredible way God considers us to have been present in the body of Christ at His crucifixion and resurrection.</p> <p>2 - It is no longer you who live. This is profound. This means that your old Adamic life is dead and that your old sinful life is gone. In Colossians Paul says you died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. In Romans 6:6 and 6:11 he says we are dead to sin.</p> <p>3 - Christ now lives in you. This means that you now have the benefit of the life of Christ in you, because when he was resurrected he provided a new life for us. <i>So we can say that >>>></i></p>	<p>Our old man is dead</p> <p>Christ is our life</p> <p>Our new man lives by faith in Christ living His life in us.</p> <p><i>Of all the miracles that have occurred in the world, surely this is the greatest. That the God of this universe can actually share His life with us by living within us.</i></p>

<p>10</p>	<p>Why did Paul consider this the most important thing?</p> <p>The answer is – God told him. Paul reveals this when he says in 3 versions</p> <p>NKJV</p> <p>NIV</p> <p>NASB</p>	<p>(NKJV) Colossians 1:25-27 <u>I became a minister</u> according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, <u>to fulfill the word of God, the mystery</u> which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of <u>this mystery</u> among the Gentiles: <u>which is Christ in you</u>, the hope of glory.</p> <p>(NIV) (Colossians 1:25-27) <u>I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery</u> that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. ²⁷To them God has chosen <u>to make known</u> among the Gentiles the glorious riches of <u>this mystery, which is Christ in you</u>, the hope of glory.</p> <p>(NASB) Colossians 1.25-26 <u>"I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, the mystery</u> which has been hidden from past ages and generations, but has now been revealed to His saints, to whom God willed to be made known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the gentiles, <u>which is Christ in you</u>, the hope of glory..."</p>	<p>In these 3 versions of scripture we have God's task for Paul</p> <p>To bring the mystery Which had been hidden To us – <u>the mystery</u>, mentioned in verse 27 which is <u>Christ in you</u>, the hope of glory.</p> <p>Notice he is bringing the word. Who is the word? Jesus! So he was bringing Jesus to us – and still is.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Is this mystery common knowledge amongst believers or something more?</p>	<p>Is what I have said common knowledge or something more? I believe it is something more. Few believers seem to know its importance and certainly not how to apply it to their lives. We all know about receiving the Holy Spirit when we repent and believe. We know that the Holy Spirit takes up residence in us when we are born again. We all know that - it is common knowledge.</p> <p>But Paul is here referring to the depth and breadth of the full work of salvation by the Holy Spirit in us. I am not saying it is an extra to salvation – that would be heresy. <u>But Christ in you is the mystery of life.</u> It means that Christ actually lives His life in us, not just a presence but a living life - constantly revealing His Fullness.</p> <p>This new life is lived by faith. This means that everything in our lives that we receive from God is received by us - from the faith that He has given and developed in us. We get nothing by any other means than by faith.</p> <p>Faith is the connection between God and us. Our attempts through self-effort not only achieve nothing, but also negate faith. <u>Faith cannot operate if we are using self -effort! However, attempting to fulfill God's righteousness apart from divine enablement is self effort, sin and unbelief</u></p>	<p>The Christian life is what Christ lives through us, not something we try to do ourselves. In my experience, that takes some learning. I constantly wear a set of L (learner) plates. Our fleshly attributes are controlled by the Holy Spirit – but how that happens is one of the many extensions of this teaching.</p> <p>To show this is more than common knowledge tell of Galations 4:19 where Paul tells of him praying for them that Christ would be formed in them. (See later study on this subject)</p>

<p>12</p>	<p>Awareness of these things</p> <p>Somewhere along the pathway of intellectual learning and of revelation of these truths, will come awareness of the importance of this mystery in a number of respects and its influence on living the Christian life as God intended.</p> <p><i>I believe some of these are.....</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This mystery is the most important teaching in the NT – God told Paul it was his main task to preach it. • Although it is clearly important, it is not often taught by the church. It's importance does not seem to be generally acknowledged. It does not seem to be common knowledge. • It can be intellectually understood by teaching, but only fully known by the revelation of the Spirit of God. • This life is only initiated and learned under the hand of God and always involves God's sovereignty over adversity, trial, persecution or injustice in the lives of willing believers surrendered to God. • Knowledge of and usage of this mystery of Christ in you is a fundamental necessity and was and is, the prime means of living the Christian life as God intended. • Where this life is not lived as intended, self works and legalism will operate in the resulting vacuum, under the guise of true spirituality. • Intellectual teaching alone will not enable the practice of this life in the believer. God alone can bring about this life within the believer by believers being surrendered (yielded – submitted) to the Lord in every aspect of their lives. 	<p><i>This mystery needs to be studied and taught as a theme (with appropriate and relevant sub-themes) and cannot be apprehended, understood or practiced in isolation, simply by the study of books of the Bible, topics or by exposition alone.</i></p> <p><i>A knowledge of Paul's spiritual journey is a necessary basis for intellectual understanding of this life. There are stages in the Christian life that need to be known. They are revealed by John, but relatively hidden in many other books of the Bible.</i></p> <p>See http://www.goodnews.org.au/life/truthgr-03.html</p> <p><i>Fellowship with like-minded believers is a vital aspect of learning to live this life that God intended from the early councils of the trinity.</i></p>
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Finally, what did more contemporary saints believe?

- **Hannah Whithall Smith (1832-1911) Lay speaker and Author in the Holiness Movement in USA**

"All the dealings of God with the soul of the believer are in order to bring him into oneness with Himself, that the prayer of our Lord may be fulfilled: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." . . . "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me."

This soul-union was the glorious purpose in the heart of God for His people before the foundation of the world. It was the mystery hid from ages and generations. It was accomplished in the incarnation of Christ. It has been made known by the Scriptures. And it is realized as an actual experience by many of God's dear children.

But not by all. It is true of all, and God has not hidden it or made it hard, but the eyes of many are too dim and their hearts too unbelieving, and they fail to grasp it. And it is for the very purpose of bringing them into the personal and actual realization of this, that the Lord is stirring up believers everywhere at the present time to abandon themselves to Him, that He may work in them all the good pleasure of His will.

*All the previous steps in the Christian life lead up to this. The Lord has made us for it; and until we have intelligently apprehended it, and have voluntarily consented to embrace it, the travail of His soul for us is not satisfied, nor have our hearts found their destined and final rest. (pp 224-225) **This soul union of which I speak, this unspeakable glorious mystery of an indwelling God.....is not a new thing to ask for, but only to realize that which you already have.** (pp 226-227)*

- **Norman Grubb (1895-1993) Missionary to Africa, Founder of W.E. C. Writer and teacher.** Grubb includes this writing from a friend of his (Christopher Bernard) in the last chapter in his final book Yes I Am.

"So many only know the saving grace of Christ by His blood for the forgiveness of sins, and so very few know the replaced life through His resurrected and ascended body, of victory, joy, peace, overcoming, triumph and complete rest. It is now my everyday continual experience that in fact I am a new creature, where old things are passed away and all things are become new. God intended only for His life to be manifested in us." (pp 245)

"But I now understand Who he is within me. I am full. I am satisfied. My thirst is quenched, my hunger is gone." (pp250)

"Prayer has become a state of being. It is no longer an act of formality. It is continual communion and fellowship with the Father..... My spiritual life is dependent upon His total commitment to me.....I have concluded in my life that it is absolutely impossible to live the Christian life, and that God never intended us to do so. He intended the Christ within us to live it." (pp 251)

- **Claire Cloninger Christian author and singer - A contemporary of Norman Grubb**

This is the mystery we were made to contain: the very life of Jesus. He means to live out the reality of who he is right here within the reality of who we are. He means to be our lives-the breath of our lungs, the thoughts in our heads, the energy and creativity in our jobs, the love in our hearts. he means to take on the stress and unravel the inner complications so that we can move through our lives just as he did, in gentleness and simplicity and harmony.

We were never intended to be more than containers: temples to contain His glory (1 Corinthians 3:16-17), branches to contain the sap of his life (John 15:1-8), vessels to contain the new wine of His Spirit (Romans 9:20-21). We are the glove, He is the hand. We are the cup, He is the coffee. We are the lamp, He is the light. This is what we were made for. This is the intended purpose of the human person and personality; not to be gods, but to be filled with God.

So what does all this mean and what is the purpose of this teaching?

What does it all mean? It means that God's plan for mankind was to provide Jesus Christ as the Lamb to pay the price for the sin of the world via the crucifixion and resurrection. Based firmly on those events, and only on those events, came the fulfillment of God's plan to provide mankind (through the Holy Spirit) with the actual life of Jesus Christ to live within every believer. This in turn meant that each believer would be a co-redeemer with Jesus Christ, working under the direction of the Spirit to do God's work in the world. This is a concept and an amazing fact with which the mind cannot really comprehend – and can only be experienced by faith. Whatever else we might believe about what the Bible says, this one concept of us living with the life of Christ within, appears to me to be the central outcome or expression of the whole Bible, the experience from which we are to minister to the world. Believers need to know and experience this by revelation; beyond mere intellectual knowledge; and by faith and through walking in the Spirit, to be disciples that can live in fullness of life in Christ. John affirms how God knows we will be - as Christ in the world in 1 John 4:17, "*Love has been perfected among us... because **as He is, so are we in this world.***"

What is the purpose of this teaching? Look at the state of this world and its peoples! Do you not see the reason right there? The increasing expression of evil in all its forms is unmistakable. God needs disciples to be as described here! The purpose of this teaching is to assist in equipping believers to be His instruments by which His plan for the world will come to fruition. We are meant to be God's hands and feet in this world; indeed His presence, that by the power of the life of Christ within us, we might minister life to a needy world. Paul says to teach every man....to present them complete in Christ, right after he announced that we all have "Christ in you (us)" in Colossians 1:17. Apt timing to indicate God's purpose! Once we know this fact by revelation and experience, we are to teach and encourage others towards it.

Some warnings! It can never be done by believers who try to do this task in their own strength, nor by those who work from any legalism, even if right sounding and derived from scriptural source, or out of ignorance. Being regenerate alone does not fully equip believers to minister in God's power. The regenerate need to be aware of the full provisions of God through Jesus Christ (as Paul said in Phillipians 3:10) "*that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death...*" The requirement then is to lay down their lives in order that Christ may fill and fit them for this task. That is the purpose of this teaching, to assist that process. **How can we possibly do God's work by the means He gave us, if we either do not know or do not utilize this scriptural fact that the life of Christ is operating within us? It is my humble opinion that God's commission to us cannot be fulfilled unless we are able to live as these teachings from scripture prescribe.** Not to live this way is almost inexcusable because Christ died for those who could be saved through Him living in us.

This is the first in a series of articles to further outline and provide resource for believers to move towards Fullness of Life in Christ.

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Availability. This study is for use in one to one teaching or in small groups by those who know this experience for themselves, or by those open to the Spirit to learn together.