

THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

“The Mystery Dispensation”

Colossians 1:25-27

Catch up on Context

1. The introduction to this book (letter) includes 1:1-8. This is followed by an incredible prayer (1:9-14).
2. The Holy Spirit prompted Paul, in writing about the “Son” (v. 13) to extrapolate on His person and work (1:15-22).
3. Proofs that a person believed the facts about Christ are provided (v. 13). From this, Paul, by inspiration gives a view of suffering peculiar to this Age of Grace in which we live (v. 24).
4. With the mention of the “body” and “church,” the Holy Spirit instructs the apostle to explain. The focus is on “church” and this leads to the “mystery dispensation.” What is recorded about this?

1. The MINISTER of it v. 25

a. His identification

The emphatic personal pronoun “I” denotes that Paul is the one involved. The verb “made” means “to become.” The call of God is obviously involved. He is termed a “minister” which in the original text is the root for deacon (cf. v. 23; 2 Cor. 6:4; 11:23).

b. His standard

The preposition “according to” denotes the terms of Paul’s call. It is conditioned by the “dispensation of God.” For those who find dispensations awkward, here is help. The word comes from two Greek words: οικος, home and διοικω, manage, hence to administer in God’s house. A formal definition of dispensations is this: it is a distinguishable stewardship in the outworking of the single plan of God for the universe.

c. His revelation

The truth of the “dispensation of God” was “given” to the apostle. This admits of direct revelation, something which is no longer possible since the close of the canon of Scripture.

d. His object

There is nothing perfunctory here. Paul put his full heart to it. The aorist infinitive notes the purpose of fill full or fully discharge his office so that the divine intent is fully carried out. Note it is all “to you” i.e. the Colossians Gentiles.

2. The MEANING of it v. 26

a. Named

A dispensation is synonymous with the word “mystery” in the text. This is not something “mysterious,” but rather, held in wraps, but now revealed.

b. Concealed

The perfect passive articular participle affirms that the “mystery” stayed hidden and that by an act of God outside of the mystery itself! This concealing was from two points: “from the ages” and “from the generations.” These phrases denote when the concealment properly began.

c. Revealed

The big change from concealment to revelation is indicated by “but now.” At this logical and chronological point in history, something changed! The sudden change (anacoluthin) is also noted by the move from a participle (hidden) to a finite verb (revealed). See also Eph. 3:2, 9. Here “the saints” are given the revelation which in Ephesus Paul and the apostles get it, principally Paul (cf. v. 25 here). For those who do not recognize the dispensational movement, a second look is absolutely imperative.

3. The MATTER of it v. 27.

Here is the crux of the issue. Prayerfully look at the text:

a. God’s will

The verb “would” is the Greek “will” (θελησεν). God Himself wanted to unseal the mystery and “make it known” (γνωστοποιησεν). The aorist infinitive suggests this as a once for all event.

b. God’s glory

“The riches of the glory of this mystery” are involved here. This is not child’s play. Rather, the bounty of “the glory” which has been concealed. Where is it? “IN the Gentiles” not “among” them. Hence, to include the Gentiles is (in fact) the riches of the mystery (cf. Eph. 3:6).

c. God’s presence

Ah, this is the essence of the matter. Christ is God’s Shekinah glory in the believer. He is the pledge of eternal glory (cf. Ex. 40:35).

Think it over.

This dramatic portion of the Bible shows unequivocally that there is a difference between Israel and the Church. They are distinct entities which will prevail for all eternity. Today both Jew and Gentile are called upon to believe and be saved -- then to be put into the church.