

The Mystery of Christ and the Church as Revealed in Matthew and Revelation

by Ron Kangas

In his Epistles the apostle Paul uses a word that is central to his portion of the unique New Testament ministry; the word is *mystery*. The first use of this word in his writings is in Romans 11:25, where Paul speaks of not wanting the brothers to be “ignorant of this mystery.” In Romans 16:25 Paul declares, “Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel, that is, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which has been kept in silence in the times of the ages.” This mystery had been hidden from the time of the beginning of the world until it was “revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit” (Eph. 3:5). In 1 Corinthians Paul speaks about announcing the mystery of God (2:1), speaking God’s wisdom in a mystery (v. 7), and telling a mystery concerning the transfiguration of our body into an incorruptible one (15:51-52). In Ephesians 1:9 Paul testifies that God has made known to us “the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself.” In 3:9 Paul goes on to say that he was given grace “to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things.” Toward the end of Ephesians Paul refers to genuine prayer that utterance be given to him, “to make known in boldness the mystery of the gospel,” a mystery related to Christ and the church (6:19). In Colossians 1:26 Paul speaks to the new believers in Colossae of “the mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from the generations but now has been manifested to His saints.” Immediately after, in verse 27, he speaks once again of mystery: “To whom 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.” His last recorded speaking concerning “mystery” is in 1 Timothy 3. There he says that deacons must hold “the mystery of the faith” (v. 9), the mystery concerning the objective faith—the things that all believers in Christ and children of God must believe in. The first part of verse 16 says, “Confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness,” that is, the mystery regarding God manifested in the flesh, personally in Christ and corporately in the church.

In the New Testament there are mainly two outstanding mysteries—the mystery of God and the mystery of Christ. The first mystery is revealed in Colossians 2:2, which speaks of “the mystery of God, Christ.” As the mystery of God, Christ is the Word of God (John 1:1; Rev. 19:13); Christ is the definition of God, the explanation of God, and the expression of God. Furthermore, “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). *All the fullness* refers to the entire Godhead, to the complete God. Since the Godhead comprises the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, the fullness of the Godhead must be the fullness of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The fact that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily means that the Triune God is embodied in Him.