



THE SCROLLS

Helping one another mature so we can impact our world for Christ

This week's belief: Personal God

For the week of August 15th, 2005

Beliefs
Trinity
Salvation by Grace
Authority of Bible
Personal God
Identity in Christ
Church
Humanity
Compassion
Eternity
Stewardship
Practices
Worship
Prayer
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Biblical Community
Spiritual Gifts
Giving My Time
Giving My Money
Giving My Faith
Giving My Life
Virtues
Love
Joy
Peace
Patience
Kindness/Goodness
Faithfulness
Gentleness
Self-Control
Hope
Humility
Forgiveness

The Riches of Mystery

In our post-enlightenment age there is very little mystery in everyday life. Compelling explanations exist to describe how everything works. This might be a helpful phenomenon when we visit the doctor or flip the light switch, but when it comes to matters of faith, it can leave us in a dull, mechanical existence, devoid of wonder. Brent Curtis writes: *In physics, the professor seemed to take satisfaction in explaining to us that the beauty of sunsets and rainbows was due only to the refraction of light through water and dust particles in the air. It was as if the miracle of light itself were somehow done away with by these explanations. I remember leaving those professors of the Age of Reason with a sense of loss, a sense of, "Oh so that's all it is."*

God refuses to be reduced to simple explanations and descriptions. Often instead, he reveals himself through mystery. He is not opposed to using the great conduit of wonder as he distances himself from our simplifying tendencies thereby preserving our capacity for wonder.

In this week's passage Paul cites a mystery that recurs throughout his letters: 'Christ in you.' He compares this truth to that of "glorious riches." These great riches of wonder surround the mystery of a God who chooses to make his presence known among a diverse group of people - those who align themselves with his amazing ways. Transcending conventional ideas of religious space, God overwhelmed Paul's mind by his decision to mingle among the lives of ordinary folk - people like you and me. This indeed is mystery.

mys-tery - something not understood or beyond understanding

Monday – A Mystery for the Ages

Please read Colossians 1:24-29. Then read verse 27 over a couple times.

It is God's eternal purpose ("he has chosen") that his people should know the wonder of this mystery. Paul is so exultant that he piles up words to describe the marvel of God's disclosure.

H. M. Carson – *Colossians and Philemon*

1. What are the significant words or phrases that Paul "piles up" in verse 27? As you focus on the details of 1:27, what particular words or phrases strike you?
2. Check out Romans 16:25-27. What similarities do you observe in this passage?

Text Insight – The Gentiles, including the predominately non-Jewish inhabitants of the city of Colossae, were excluded from most of the rights and privileges afforded to the people of Israel. Scholars generally recognize the 'you' in 'Christ in you' to be a reference to the Gentiles in particular.

3. In the Old Testament, what was generally thought of as the center of God's presence? Knowing this, why might this "Christ in you" mystery make the wonder of it all the more wonder-filled for Paul and others like him? What else about your faith do you find filled with wonder and mystery?

Digging Deeper - We live in a world that is uneasy with mystery. Are there aspects of your faith that you have been too hasty to figure out or explain? Perhaps instead of striving to figure it out, it is time to simply worship the one whose thoughts are well beyond ours.

Tuesday – We're Rich!!

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. Isaiah 55:8

Please read Colossians 1:27. The questions are shorter today so you might consider taking the time to write the verse out slowly; focusing on each word as you write.

1. How much money would it take to make you feel rich?
2. According to Paul what makes us rich? Are the "glorious riches" Paul refers to aimed at the present, future or both?
3. Paul seems to have found that meditating on his riches in Christ is immensely beneficial and a source of hope. What other riches do we possess in God that we could meditate on? (Biblical meditation is the practice of prolonged thinking about God and the things of God as revealed in his word).

Wednesday– Never Alone

God is not far off. In the Holy Spirit, the Triune God comes close, so close as to actually enter into each believer. He is even more intimate with us now than in the incarnation. Through the operation of the Spirit he has truly become Immanuel, 'God with us'.

Millard Erickson - *Christian Theology*

Please read Colossians 1:27-29.

1. Now that you have had two days thus far to reflect on the mystery, what do you now think it means that Christ is in you?
2. If you are a believer in Christ, he has taken up residence with you in the person of the Holy Spirit. In a very real sense God is not only always watching over us, but in the Holy Spirit the infinite, personal God goes through life very much **with** you. What are the implications of having God live intimately and perpetually in your personal space?
3. If you were to become more aware, throughout the day, of God's "nearness" how might it affect your work, behavior, or interactions with people from within or outside the church?
4. In what ways could you remind yourself of the immediate presence of Christ throughout your day?

Thursday– “I Will be With You”

Please read John 16:5-16.

“God the Holy Spirit who proceeds from God is the one who, when given to us, sets us on fire with the love of God and of our neighbor, and is himself love. There is no more excellent gift than this. It alone distinguishes...the (children) of the eternal kingdom....”

St Augustine - de Trinitate

1. It is common for us as evangelicals to invite people to ‘ask Jesus into their hearts.’ What exactly do we mean by that? Is it proper to phrase our decision for Christ in this way?
2. What benefits does Jesus promise to provide through his enduring presence with believers in this passage? Make a list. Which of these benefits are you most in need of right now?
3. As you reflect upon God’s workings in your life, what is the Holy Spirit teaching you right now?

Friday - The Hope of Glory

Please read Colossians 1:27-29.

Heaven will be a never-ending, ever increasing discovery of more and more of God’s glory with greater and ever greater joy in him.

Jonathan Edwards - *The End for Which God Created the World*

1. What are some things you are hoping will happen in the next week? In the next month? In the coming years?
2. What is glory? Why is it worth hoping for?
3. What is the relationship between the indwelling of Christ and the hope of glory? Is Paul’s reference to the “hope of glory” referring to our future in heaven or is there a present reality in this hope? (Hint: 2 Cor. 3:7-9)
4. Several statements of the Christian faith declare that the end purpose of human existence is “to glorify God and love him forever.” In what ways does your life reflect this purpose? In what ways could it reflect this purpose more?

Saturday – Proclaim Him

The mystery in a nutshell is just this: Christ is in you, therefore you can look forward to sharing in God’s glory. It’s that simple. That is the substance of our Message.

Colossians 1:27 (*The Message Paraphrase*)

Please read Colossians 1:27-29.

1. What was Paul’s response to this mystery of “Christ in you”?
2. Paul was all about Jesus Christ. Christ was his solitary passion. What can you learn from Paul about his passion?
3. Where did Paul find his strength for his work? How was he involved? How was God involved? How will you be involved?



Homegroup Discussion

This section is designed for Home Groups and Small Groups who would like to discuss the Scrolls together. Begin by reading the introduction, “The Riches of Mystery” and Col. 1:27-29.

1. When was the last time you were awestruck at something wonderful you saw or experienced? How does our culture view mystery and wonder?
2. What is the mystery that Paul calls “glorious riches”? From his words, how do you think Paul felt about this mystery? Why do you think Paul felt like he was a rich man?
3. Read the Erickson Quote under Wednesday. Do you agree that we have more intimate access to Christ than those who walked with him did?
4. What is glory? Do you hope for it? What did the ancients mean when they said that the chief end of human existence is to “glorify God and love him forever”? What does that look like?
5. What are some ways we can cultivate a frequent acknowledgement of the “glorious riches” of “Christ in you”? In other words, how do we make this real in our everyday lives?

Family Time with Kids

Families can use these kid-friendly questions to help your children learn what you studied this week. Begin by reading Colossians 1:24-29.

1. Paul tells us there is a mystery that has been hidden and now it has been revealed. What is this mystery (Colossians 1:26-27)? If you believe in Jesus, what does it feel like to have Him living in you? Does this make life easy or hard? Explain.
2. List eight things you love to do. Ask God to show you how He could use those for His purposes and His glory.
3. Has God put anything on your heart about something He wants you to do someday? Sometimes you will have a dream in your heart of something you would like to do when you grow up. Ask God to show you if that dream is from Him or not.
4. God has called you to do great things. You may not know what they are yet. But if you are sensitive to the Holy Spirit speaking to your heart when you pray to God, He will guide you on the path He has for you.
5. This week write down your prayers to God. By the Holy Spirit God will help you with what you need to do and where you need to go.

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