

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

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A Wilderness Book. Colossians is a wilderness epistle like Philippians and Hebrews. Contrast with Ephesians where everything we have is "in heavenly places"... typified by Canaan. This is why we read of "ifs" and "whens" in Colossians. The danger of apostasy is taken up in Colossians, but never in Ephesians.

Ephesians vs. Colossians. In Colossians we are incomplete without Christ (Col. 2:10), but in Ephesians Christ is incomplete without us (Eph. 1:23)! One is what Christ is to the Church, the other is what the Church is to Christ.

"In Christ" and "Christ in you". Two expressions that are often confused:

- “*In Christ*” is our individual position before God.
- “*Christ in you*” is Christ seen in the saints collectively because of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

You get the “in Christ” side of the Mystery in Ephesians, and the “Christ in you” side in Colossians (Col. 1:28). You get both expressions in Romans; “in Christ” (Rom. 8:1) and “Christ in you” (Rom. 8:10). “Christ in your hearts” (Eph. 3:17) is an expression that refers to holding Christ in our affections.

Lines of truth in various epistles.¹

-	-	-	Seated
-	-	Raised	Raised
-	-	Quickened	Quickened
-	Buried	Buried	-
Dead	Dead	Dead	-
Crucified	Crucified	-	-
Galatians	Romans	Colossians	Ephesians

In Romans you get “in Christ” (Rom. 8:1) but it is only in the negative sense - what the position saves you from. But in Ephesians it is the positive side (Eph. 1:3) - what the position brings us into. In Romans you get “dead” in the aspect of “dead to sin” or separated from sin as to be no longer affected by its action. But in Colossians it is “dead with Christ” in a personal way.

“The Mystery”. Often we think of a “mystery” as something that is difficult to discover or decipher. Paul does not use the word in this way. Rather, it refers to a secret counsel of God that was previously unknown in the Old Testament, but now revealed and made plain. It could not be known by anything but divine revelation; in fact, it is one of [four special revelations](#) given to the Apostle Paul. The teaching of “*the Mystery*” is found in Ephesians and Colossians.

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Paul’s teaching of the Mystery. In Rom. 16:25 Paul says that his desire is to establish the saints in “*my gospel*” and in the “*revelation of the Mystery*”. We get the teaching of Paul’s gospel in the Epistle to the Romans. The teaching of “the Mystery” we get in *Ephesians* and *Colossians*, but it is also mentioned in *Romans* and *1 Corinthians*. We need

both to be established! Col. 2:3 says that understanding the Mystery is the key to all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Peter perhaps acknowledged the importance of it in his second epistle, when he spoke of the "wisdom" given to Paul, and that his epistles contained "*some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures...*" (2 Pet. 3:15-16). This is the truth that Paul suffered for. Primarily, the persecution came from the Jewish leaders who said "If you teach that these Gentile dogs are going to have a higher place of blessing than Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob... we'll kill you."

Footnotes

1. Anstey, Bruce. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Christian Truth Publishing. 2018