

Studies of the Scriptures  
The Plan of the Ages (series I) Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society, Allegheny, PA 1908 or 1905

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# STUDIES — IN THE — SCRIPTURES

"THE PATH OF THE JUST IS AS THE SHINING LIGHT, WHICH SHINETH MORE  
AND MORE UNTO THE PERFECT DAY."

SERIES I.

*The Plan of the Ages.*

2,441,500 Edition

A VINDICATION OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER AND GOVERNMENT: SHOWING, BY A  
RECOGNITION AND HARMONIZING OF ALL THE SCRIPTURES, THAT THE  
PERMISSION OF EVIL, PAST AND PRESENT, IS EDUCATION-  
AL AND PREPARATORY TO THE USHERING  
OF MANKIND INTO  
THE GOLDEN AGE OF PROPHECY  
IN WHICH ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH WILL BE BLESSED WITH A FULL  
KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND A FULL OPPORTUNITY FOR ATTAINING EVER-  
LASTING LIFE THROUGH THE REDEEMER, WHO THEM WILL  
BE THE GREAT RESTORER AND LIFE-GIVER.—  
ACTS 3:19-21.

WATCH TOWER  
BIBLE & TRACT SOCIETY,  
ALLEGHENY, PA., U.S.A.  
1908

which he says: "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name [a bride]. And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written, 'After this [after this people from the Gentiles has been taken out] I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David [the earthly dominion] which is fallen down, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up.'"—Acts 15: 14-16.

James began to read in God's providence, in the sending of the Gospel through Peter to the first Gentile convert and through Paul to Gentiles in general, that during this age believing Jews and Gentiles were to be alike favored. He then looked up the prophecies and found it so written; and that after the work of this Gospel age is completed, then the promises to fleshly Israel will be fulfilled. Gradually the great mystery, so long hidden, began to be understood by a few—the saints, the special "friends" of God.

Paul declares (Col. 1: 27) that this mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, now made manifest to his saints, is

"CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY."

This is the great mystery of God which has been hidden from all previous ages, and is still hidden from all except a special class—the saints, or consecrated believers. But what is meant by "Christ in you?" We have learned that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10: 38), and thus we recognize him to be the Christ—the anointed—for the word *Christ* signifies *anointed*. And the Apostle John says that *the anointing which we* (consecrated believers) *have received abideth in us.* (1 John 2: 27.) Thus the saints of this Gospel age are an anointed company—anointed to be kings and priests unto God (2 Cor. 1: 21; Peter

early teaching of "The Christ":  
Jesus, plus 144,000 anointed.

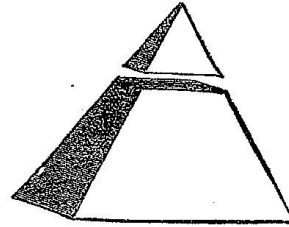
2: 9); and together with Jesus, their chief and Lord, they constitute Jehovah's Anointed—the Christ.

In harmony with this teaching of John, that we also are *anointed*, Paul assures us that this mystery which has been kept secret in ages past, but which is now made known to the saints, is that *the Christ (the Anointed)* is "not one member, but many," just as the human body is one, and has many members; but as all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Anointed—the Christ. (1 Cor. 12:12-28.) Jesus is anointed to be the Head or Lord over the Church, which is his body (or his bride, as expressed in another figure—Eph. 5: 25-30), and unitedly they constitute the *promised "Seed"*—the Great Deliverer: "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's *seed*, and *heirs* according to the promise."—Gal. 3: 29.

The Apostle carefully guards the Church against any presumptive claims, saying of Jesus that "God hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body," "that in all things he might have the *pre-eminence*." (Eph. 1: 22; Col. 1: 18.) Yet, under the figure of the human body, he beautifully and forcibly shows our *intimate relationship*. This same oneness Jesus also taught, saying, "I am the vine, ye are the branches."—John 15: 5.

Our oneness with the Lord Jesus, as members of the Christ, the anointed company, is well illustrated by the figure of the pyramid.

The top-stone is a perfect pyramid of itself. Other stones may be built up under it, and, if in harmony with all the characteristic lines of the top-stone, the whole mass will be a perfect pyramid. How beautifully this illustrates our position as members of "the Seed"—"the Christ." Joined to and perfectly in harmony with our Head, we, as living stones, are perfect; separated from him, we are nothing.



Jesus, the perfect one, has been highly exalted, and now we present ourselves to him that we may be formed and shaped according to his example, and that we may be built up as a building of God. In an ordinary building there is no *chief* corner-stone; but in our building there is one chief corner-stone, the "top-stone," as it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious"—"to whom coming as unto a living stone . . . ye also as lively [living] stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up \*sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2: 4-6.) And very soon, we trust, the union between Jesus, the "Head," and "the Church, which is his body," will be complete.

And, dearly beloved, many blows and much polishing must we endure—much transforming must we undergo, and much conforming to his example, under the direction of the great Master-builder; and in order to have the ability and ideality of the builder displayed in us, we will need to see that we have no cross-grained will of our own to oppose or thwart the accomplishment of His will in us; we must be very childlike and humble—"clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

\* Sinaitic MS. omits *spiritual* before *sacrifices*.

Let us humble ourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt us in due time (1 Peter 5: 5, 6), as he has exalted our Head and Forerunner.—Phil. 2: 8, 9.

This is indeed a wonderful message, and, as we come to the Word of God to inquire concerning our great high calling, we find the prophets all eloquent in proclaiming the grace [favor or blessing] that is come unto us (1 Peter 1: 10); while types, and parables, and hitherto dark sayings, now become luminous, shedding their light on the "narrow way" in which the anointed [Christ] company is called to run for the prize now disclosed to view. This was truly a mystery never before thought of—that God intends to raise up not only a deliverer, but a deliverer composed of many members. This is the "high calling" to which the consecrated believers of the Gospel age are privileged to attain. Jesus did not attempt to unfold it to the disciples while natural men, but waited until at Pentecost they were anointed—begotten to the new nature. From Paul's explanation we know that none but "new creatures" can now appreciate or understand this high calling. He says: "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom [plan] which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes [chief ones] of this world knew; . . . as it is written, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him;' but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."—1 Cor. 2: 6-14.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul opens up the entire mystery, and shows how the Abrahamic covenant is to be fulfilled. He shows that the Law given to Israel did not interfere with the original covenant (Gal. 3: 15-18), and that the seed of Abraham which is to bless all nations is Christ. (Verse 16.) Then, carrying out the idea already

alluded to, that the Christ includes all anointed of the Spirit, he says: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ; . . . and if ye be Christ's then are ye [together with Jesus] Abraham's seed, and heirs, according to the promise'" made to Abraham. (Verses 27, 29.) Following up the same line of reasoning, he shows (Gal. 4) that Abraham was a type of Jehovah, Sarah a type of the covenant or promise, and Isaac a type of Christ (head and body); and then adds, "We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." (Verse 28.) Thus the plan of God was hidden in types until the Gospel age began the development of the Christ.

There has existed a necessity for keeping this mystery hidden, else it would not have been so kept. It was necessary, because to have revealed the plan in full to mankind would have been to frustrate it. Had men known, they would not have crucified either the Lord of glory or the Church which is his body. (1 Cor. 2: 8.) Not only would the death of Christ, as the price of man's redemption, have been interfered with, had not the plan been kept a mystery from the world, but the trial of the faith of the Church, as sharers in the sufferings of Christ, would thereby have been prevented also; for "The world knoweth us not [as his joint-heirs] because [for the same reason that] it knew him not."—1 John 3: 1.

Not only is the plan of God, and the Christ which is the very embodiment of that plan, a great mystery to the world, but the peculiar course in which this little flock is called to walk marks its members as "peculiar people." It was a mystery to the world that a person of so much ability as Jesus of Nazareth should spend his time and talent as he did, whereas, if he had turned his attention to politics, law, merchandise or popular religion, he might have become great and respected. In the opinion of men he foolishly

wasted his life, and they said, "He hath a devil and is mad." His life and teachings were mysteries to them. They could not understand him.

The apostles and their companions were likewise mysteries in the world, in leaving their business prospects, etc., to preach forgiveness of sins through the death of the despised and crucified Jesus. Paul forsook a high station and social influence to labor with his hands, and to preach Christ, and the invisible crown for all believers who should walk in his footsteps. This was so mysterious that some said, "Paul, thou art beside thyself: much learning doth make thee mad." And all who so follow in the Master's footsteps are, like Paul, counted fools for Christ's sake.

But God's plan will not always be shrouded in mystery: the dawn of the Millennial Day brings the fuller light of God to men, and "the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth." The Sun of Righteousness, which shall arise with healing in his wings, dispelling the darkness of ignorance, is the Christ in Millennial glory—not the Head alone, but also the members of his body; for it is written: If we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear *with him in glory*;" and "Then shall the righteous shine forth *as the sun* in the kingdom of their Father."—Rom. 8: 17; 2 Tim. 2: 11, 12; Col. 3: 4; Matt. 13: 43.

Now, to all except those begotten to a new mind, by receiving "the mind of Christ," the promises which we believe, and the hopes which we cherish, seem visionary, and too improbable to be received or acted upon. In the age to come, when God shall "pour out his spirit upon all flesh," as during the present age he pours it upon his "servants and handmaids," then indeed all will understand and appreciate the promises now being grasped by the

"little flock;" and they will rejoice in the obedience and exaltation of the Church, saying, "Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honor to God, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." (Rev. 19: 7.) They will rejoice in the glorification of the Church, through which blessings will then be flowing to them; and while they will realize that the "exceeding great and precious promises" inherited by the Anointed (head and body) are not for them, but are fulfilled upon us, they will be blessed by the lesson illustrated in the Church; and while they run for the blessings *then held out to them*, they will profit by the example of the Church, and glorify God on her behalf. But this knowledge will not bring covetousness; for under the new order of things their calling to perfect human nature will fully satisfy them, and will seem more desirable to them than a change of nature.

Then the "mystery" will have ended; for the world will have come to see that it was the spirit of God in Christ, and the spirit of Christ in us—God manifested in the flesh—which they had hitherto misunderstood. Then they will see that we were not mad, nor fools; but that we chose the better part when we ran for the riches, honors and crown, unseen by them, but eternal.

In point of time, the mystery of God will be finished during the period of the sounding of the seventh [symbolic] trumpet. (Rev. 10: 7.) This applies to the mystery in both senses in which it is used: the mystery or secret features of God's *plan* will then be made known and will be clearly seen; and also the "mystery of God," the Church, the embodiment of that plan. Both will then be finished. The secret, hidden plan will have sought out the full, complete number of the members of the body of Christ, and hence it, the BODY OF CHRIST, will be finished. The plan will cease to be a mystery, because there will