

## Colossians 2:2

My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ. (NIV)

1. This verse, although not usually considered a Trinitarian verse, is occasionally used to show that the mystery of God is Christ (*i.e.*, that Christ is both God and Man, and thus a “mystery”). The verse was a subject of hot debate early in the Christian era, and there is ample evidence from the Greek manuscripts that scribes changed the text to fit their theology. Bruce Metzger writes, “The close of Colossians 2:2 presents what is, at first, a bewildering variety of readings; the manuscripts present fifteen different conclusions of the phrase.”<sup>1</sup> In almost all 15 of them, the possibility that Christ could be God is eliminated. The *KJV* represents a good example: “That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.”

2. There is now a wide concurrence of belief among scholars that the original Greek text read “*tou musteriou tou theou Christou*,” but the exact translation of that phrase is debated. It can be translated the way the *NIV* is: “...the mystery of God, namely, Christ.” However, it can just as easily be translated “the mystery of the Christ of God.” We believe the latter is the most probable translation for reasons that will be given in points 3 and 4 below.

3. It is difficult to make “Christ” into a “mystery” in the biblical sense of the word. In Greek, the word “*musterion*” does not mean “mystery” in the sense of something that cannot be understood or comprehended by the mind of man. It just means a “secret,” something that was hidden but is then made known. This point cannot be overemphasized for the correct interpretation of the verse. *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* under “mystery,” has this to say about *musterion*: “...not the mysterious, but that which...is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God.” This is actually very clear in Colossians 1:26 and 27, which speak of the “mystery” that has now been “made known” to the believers.

Thus, a biblical “mystery” can be understood, in contrast to the Trinitarian “mystery,” which is beyond comprehension. A quick study of the other uses of “*musterion*” in the Bible will show that once a “secret” is revealed, it can be understood. But the “Trinity” and the “two natures” cannot be understood at all. Trinitarian theology speaks of the “mystery” of Christ in the sense that his incarnation and dual nature are impossible for us to understand. The Greek text, however, is implying no such thing. 1 Timothy 3:16 does refer to the “secret of godliness,” and this text is plainly discernible. Even today, although the Word openly proclaims personal godliness through the Savior, Jesus Christ, this fact remains a secret to the world and, unfortunately, even to some Churchgoers.

4. The difficulty in translating the verse, “the secret of God, namely Christ,” can be plainly seen. Although some of what Christ accomplished for us can be called a secret, and some of the things he went through were certainly hidden from the Jews, the Man

Jesus Christ is the great subject of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. We believe that it is much more accurate to translate Colossians 2:2 as, “the secret of the Christ of God.” We believe this because there is a “secret” in the New Testament that is clearly set forth in the Church Epistles. The word “*mysterion*,” *i.e.*, “secret,” is used to refer to the “administration of the God’s grace” in which we are living now. Ephesians 3:2 and 3 reads, “Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the secret [*mysterion*] made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.” Thus, when Colossians refers to “the secret of the Christ of God,” it is referring to the Grace Administration, which was a secret hidden before the foundation of the world, but revealed to Christians today (see Eph. 3:2-9; Col. 1:27 and Gal. 1:11 and 12, and keep in mind that the word translated in many versions as “mystery” should be “secret”).

5. Trinitarians are very open about the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity is a “mystery” that is beyond human comprehension. But with the correct biblical definition of “mystery” as “secret,” *i.e.*, “something that anyone can understand once it has been revealed or unveiled,” one can ask, “Where does the idea that the Trinity is mysterious and beyond comprehension come from?” That concept is found nowhere in Scripture. There is not a single verse from Genesis to Revelation that a Trinitarian can produce to show that one God exists in three persons and that this is a mystery beyond human comprehension. Yet they continue to say things like, “You can’t understand it because it is a mystery.” We maintain that the reason the Trinity is a “mystery beyond comprehension” is that it is an invention of man and not actually in the Bible at all.

Dana, pp. 167 and 168  
Farley, pp. 12-18  
Norton, p. 476

#### **Endnotes:**

1. Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (Oxford University Press, N.Y., 1992), p. 236.

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