**The Letter to the Colossians**

**The Gospel in Heathen and Multi-Religious Society - #6**

**The Fullness of God in Jesus Christ**

**Colossians 2:9**

**Colossians 2:9 -** *“Because in him all the fullness of divinity dwells in bodily fashion”.*

**Notes and Studies**

God's fullness came for the first time to be Christ Jesus. What does the term Godhead mean?

1. The word “Godhead” occurs in the King James Version only 3 times (it is not found in the NIC or NASB, Acts 17:29; Rom 1:20; Col. 2:9, and it translates slightly different each time, though closely related in Greek- ***theion***, ***theiotes***, ***theotes***). Theion means “that which is Divine.” Paul uses this word in Acts 17:29 in an address made to a heathen audience. The Greeks used it in the sense of “the Divine Being,” as a general term to designate “the Deity” apart from reference to a particular god.

In Col.2:9 and one other are the most explicit statements of Christ’s deity in the New Testament. Col.2:9 *“For in him dwells (lives) the fullness of the Godhead bodily*” (bodily form). “*God was in Christ*” (2 Cor.5: 19).

Christ Jesus is God. This does not exclude that the Father is also fully God or the Holy Spirit (the Helper) is fully God. This should not be confused to a similar word in Romans 1:20, ***theiotes***, expressing the quality of God, or divinity. It is not that certain aspects dwell in Jesus Christ in bodily form, but He by His very nature is God, the Supreme Being, our creator.

2. “Godhead” is from two Greek words theos and deitas combined in one Greek word, ***theioteôs***. The scriptural term Godhead (KJV) is rendered “divine nature” or “deity”; it means the very essence of God. The meaning of the term “fullness of the godhead” is that Jesus was fully God on earth just as His Father. Jesus was and is God in the flesh. The “fullness” of God is shared among the Three. This deity has a permanent home or dwelling in Christ in bodily fashion (Col 2: 9), all the divine life all that makes God who he is in the body of Jesus.

3. For in him “*dwells*” (lives) is a present tense verb, which means a continuing life and state of being. The deity now permanently resides in his *body*, in Greek ***katoikeo***, meaning to house permanently. This means that the Son continues to exist in a body. Yet there are those who say the Son had a beginning and will have an ending. As man He did have a beginning but as God He is eternal. (Micah.5: 2)

4. In Colossians 1:19 and again in 2:9 we see, “*For It pleased the Father that in Him should dwell all the fullness*” (Greek- ***pleroma***). ‘Fullness’ meaning the totality of the Divine powers and attributes are in Jesus. The God of the OT who revealed himself in fire and earthquakes is now the same God now reveals himself fully in human life. Paul expressed the Eternity of the Son in Colossians 1:15-17, and in 1:3 the distinction of Lord Jesus Christ from the Father became clearer. Since Jesus was the “*Image of the invisible God*” just like the One Who was *“with” God at the creation of all things and was God* (John 1:1,18; Phil 2:6).

5. The fullness of the Godhead was in Christ as He took our flesh. When it says “*all the fullness should dwell*,” this means the totality of the Divine life and powers and all divine attributes.” This means that God now makes an abode or home in human flesh. All and the same divine attributes that are in the Father are also at home in Jesus’ body. Therefore this is a proclamation of God becoming man and living on earth, or in the very words of Paul “*God was in Christ*” (2 Cor 5:19).

6. This was proclaimed when Jesus was baptized, coming up from the water: the heavens were opened, and they saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and resting upon him. A voice came out of the heavens, saying, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” (Matthew 3:13-17). So we have God the Father in heaven speaking, God the Son on earth proclaimed, and God the Spirit in the form of a dove descended upon God the Incarnate Son. Here the three distinct Persons are revealed as having the same Godhead.

**Did God continue to dwell in Jesus? Always?**

How do we explain, “*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”* (Psalm 22:1)

(Or possibly, “Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?”)

1. The mystery of Christ cannot be explored by using Old Testament texts alone. If the OT is used alone, we miss the very heart of the New Testament. Christ, our Lord, is quoting the text of the psalm to the Jews to let them understand His affliction; that He, the mighty, powerful Messiah, came to suffer, to establish a road of freedom, not like that of the ancient judges of Israel, who died with their hands stained with the blood of their enemies, but He died with His body “*stained with His own blood,*” according to Isaiah 63:1-7. By asking this question, which was asked before Him, Christ, points to two things. First of all, let’s examine the Jewish understanding of His forsakenness. He came in order not to be forsaken by God the Father, but to put an end to every forsakenness. To use the words of the Apostle Paul, “*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.*” (Eph. 2:13-14)

2. He proves to us that He is the peace of God that allowed the good thief to enter into Paradise: “*Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.*” As He gave up His spirit, He did not die as a separated, forsaken person, but told God the Father, “*Into your hands, I commend my spirit,*” and when He said that, He gave up the spirit. We have to consider the immense power of peace that reconciled us with God that has been expressed in the most over-sweeping statement of Paul: “*For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”(Romans 8:38-39)

3. The Jews thought that God forsook him because he did not die like the ancient fighters of Israel, victorious over His enemies. For God, who promised in the Old Testament to subdue the nations with the power of the sword of Israel did not intervene to save His Son from the cross but, on the contrary, He allowed him to die in this horrible, frightening way. From an Old Testament point of view you could consider him as forsaken, because He did not Himself walk like King David who saw the fallen bodies of his dead enemies and said in Psalm 68, “*Let God rise up, let his enemies be scattered; let those who hate him flee before him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away; as wax melts before the fire, let the wicked perish before God. But let the righteous be joyful; let them exult before god; let them be jubilant with joy,*” and later on: “*So that you may bathe your feet in blood, so that the tongues of your dogs may have their share from the foe.*” But on the cross the feet of Christ were covered with the blood of righteousness, the blood of peace, the blood of love, the blood that put an end to the enmity between God and man, for we were enemies in the evil thoughts of our inner life. But Christ came to cleanse that enmity, to remove that obstacle that separated us from God, for God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. II Corinthians 5:18 “*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.*”

4. This new aspect of the ministry of Jesus has some roots in the Old Testament, but its fullness is in the New Testament. That is why He quoted the text of the psalm in order to point to enmity’s glorious end when the psalmist will live again and when the Lord will bring many nations to declare the righteousness of God. This happy end of the suffering is the heart of the New Testament.

5. “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* was also the question that Adam did not ask openly in Genesis when he accused the woman, whom God created out of his rib, and was the same question that David in his trouble posed to the Lord in Psalm 13:1-6: “*How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and answer me, O Lord my God! Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death, and my enemy will say, ‘I have prevailed’; my foes will rejoice because I am forsaken. But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.*” Those who were chosen by God to lead the nation of Israel were always leaning on the divine support and help. You can see this in many Psalms, and even in the prophecies. So, there was also the triumphant end of people like David and some of the judges. But these were the heroes who came to settle disputes between human beings, especially in the battlefield. All were with God who appointed them to bring Israel to repentance. The account of these resonate with the account of the Cross, but not fully. This is because Christ did not come to be a king and a judge as in the Old Testament, but to become the King and the Judge of the whole creation. That is why in the New Testament the account of the crucifixion, Christ did not speak of enemies, but He said, “*Father, forgive them because they do not know what they are doing.*” (Luke 23:34) A forsaken person in the prayers of the Old Testament is someone who cannot ask forgiveness for those who have injured him because the law stands on their side to recompense evil for evil, wound for wound, eye for an eye. Also, a forsaken person could not have had the power to let someone like the good thief enter paradise with him. Neither would Christ have been able to enter paradise himself if he were forsaken.

6. In Christ Jesus a new relationship between God and humanity and between human beings has been established on the firm foundation of eternal love that does not experience separation or forsakenness: “ *. . .nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (Romans 8:39)

7. Christ came as an ambassador for God, apostle, and the one that represents God the Father who bestowed on him the name that is above every name (Philippians 2:6-7). Therefore, God the Father could not have punished him on our behalf to show us mercy and kindness, but put in Christ Jesus the ministry of reconciliation to put an end to the alienation between God and humanity, even when we hear the apostle Paul saying in II Corinthians 5:21, “*he made him who knew no sin, sin for us that we may become the righteousness of God in him.*” Commentators made a big mistake by thinking that the only Son of God became sin, while in all ancient commentaries, the fathers of the Church, always quoted that text, with an additional word. “*He made him who knew no sin a sacrifice for sin*.” It is impossible for us to imagine that the one who came to redeem us, He himself will be tarnished for iniquities. It is equally impossible to believe that for Christ Jesus to remove sin as the obstacle between God and humanity, He himself becomes that very sin, which he came to undo. He offered Himself freely because no one can remove the obstacle of sin, death and condemnation and establish eternal peace except the ambassador of God the Father.

From what we have said above, we have to establish the firm difference between Jesus and the Old Testament figures. In the eyes of the Jews, he was forsaken; in the eyes of the Father he was not.

**What did we gain from the fullness of the divinity dwelling in Jesus?**

**The Fullness of Christ**

**A Dialogue with Philemon.**

**George:** The word “fullness” in the original Greek means abundance, plenitude, exuberance, and completion; and the word in Colossians means that now Christ is True God and is our Mediator who has all the fullness of the new covenant blessings of righteousness, grace, comfort, and glory, lodged in him by the Father, from which the saints receive all needful spiritual good. Bbut why are we so poor?

**Philemon:** We are poor because we are like someone who has a mountain of gold but was seen walking begging. Did you ever read John 3:34? Ephesians 3:19?

**George:** I must have but…

**Philemon:** Your love is weak and so also is your faith. In Christ we have the fullness of the Godhead. (Col 2:9) All our needs are found in him such as eternity and the knowledge of the True God as Your Father. Tell me the truth, do you know God as your Father and as revealed in Jesus or as you read about him or hear about him?

**George:** I need to examine my heart before I answer you.

**Philemon:** You have answered my question early when you expressed our poverty. I am not poor but very rich, so how is that if I have not even second garment? My faith is focused on the new: I am God the Father’s beloved Child; I am alive with my Older Brother Jesus My Lord; I am waiting to inherit the kingdom; and I am the temple of the Holy Spirit. All these are the divine gifts that God my Father gave and continues to give me. Listen my brother: do you know your Brother Jesus personally or do you know Him from books? Don’t tell me you need time to search your heart. What is your attitude to money? If you have money you are happy or if you have less you are not? Suppose you have no money. Does this make you less important than other people? Or you have a car now, but before that were you more happy or less happy, more occupied with appointments or less? Brother, ask yourself who has the upper hand in your life, Jesus or the demands of the society?

I was silent for it is not easy to answer immediately

**A Letter to Philemon**

Abuna (our father),

 I have completed my written assignment and here it is (when you asked me), “How do you understand the fullness of the Godhead in Jesus our Lord?”

1. Christ’s role as the new head of every human (Col 1:15-19). He is the "*head of every man;*" "*head over all things to his Church;*" "*heir of all things*;" everything in the cosmos is under the authority of Jesus for the benefit of his members, the church.

2. He is full of Grace and is the source of Grace and the One who gives Grace to the unworthy (John 1:16); hence Christ is represented as a fountain of grace (Zech 13:1; John 4:13, 14; 7:37).

3. He is the new covenant (Heb 8:12; Matt 26:28; Eph 1:7) where our acceptance is secure all the time (Rom 3:24-26). He is our everlasting righteousness (Dan 9:24); with Him God is well pleased (Isa 42:21); and He who delivered us from all condemnation (Rom 8:1).

4. In Him we have the fullness of adopting grace (1 John 3:1; Gal 4:6).

5. Because He is our Meditator, we have received the fullness of the Spirit of grace (Rom 8:15, 16); the Spirit is the author of spiritual gifts (Acts 2:4), of light, of comfort, of joy and above all love (Rom 5:5).

6. Also sanctifying grace, (1 Cor 1:30): *"My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in Christ!"*

7. The Gift of eternal life and glory (John 17:24; 10:28; Col 3:34).

**A Reply from Philemon**

Brother George,

Peace and eternal joy in Christ

You know that I see the plan of our salvation as God’s design before we were created even before the world itself came to exist (1 Pet 1:20). Jesus was the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Thus my sins are not at the center, but (the center is) the grace of God the Father who planed my salvation before I was created and you may remember how many times we read together Ephesians 1:3-5. The grace of God our Father according to II Corinthians 8:9, is the unsearchable riches of Christ to the extent that "*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined — what God has prepared for those who love him!*" (1 Cor 2:9). His grace will never end for his fullness is inexhaustible. "*Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever*” (Heb13:8). All earthly sources of wealth, etc., will come to end but the unceasing love of God our Father who will gather us into his kingdom will give us throughout eternity all that is eternal life which is His life. We shall dwell in Christ united to him because God the Father is pleased the Father with such union; Paul called it " "*His good pleasure*" and the Father's good will to Christ (John 3:35; Col 1:18). It is the same good will of the Father will to the Body of His Son.

Let us rest on this solid foundation that is the good will and the pleasure of God the Father.

Philemon

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