

THE GREAT MYSTERIES

The N.T. also talks, however, of other mysteries. For instance, Paul warns of the Mystery of Iniquity and says **"For the MYSTERY OF INIQUITY doth already work: only he who letteth will let until he be taken out of the way"** (2 Thess. 2:7). And what was this mystery of iniquity which was already at work when Paul penned these words? Paul adds, **"Except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition: Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped: so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God showing himself that he is God."** (v.3). History describes how the 'falling away' did occur and how 'that man of sin' did emerge and did claim to be God on earth; and still does. Only one man fits that description. As well as the Mystery of Iniquity, Paul also talks of the Mystery of Godliness: as a Great Mystery, and says, **"And without controversy great is THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."** (1Tim. 3:16). Paul says, **"Without controversy"** (there is no argument: it is a mystery): yet men try to explain it. This is certainly a mystery which will ever remain fairly incomprehensible: i.e. God manifest in the flesh. And so THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY amounted to man trying to become God: whereas THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS refers to God when He became a man.

Space is fast dwindling but perhaps one other GREAT MYSTERY could be mentioned: a mystery which seemed to have originated with the union of Adam and Eve, and the two becoming one flesh (see Eph. 5:31). Paul refers to this and says, **"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is A GREAT MYSTERY: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church."** Thus the First Adam (and Eve) prefigured the binding relationship between the Second Adam and the Church.

NEW MYSTERIES

Unfortunately, in a short article, it has been possible to mention only a few of the thirty, or so, references to N.T. Mysteries, and obviously there are many new mysteries which exercise men's minds with regard to the life to come. What will heaven really be like; will we recognise loved ones; how will our 'time' be spent; and some even wonder if their beloved pet 'Rover' will be there. The N.T. gives only tantalising glimpses of heaven and Paul's visit to the Third Heaven and to Paradise, gave only a description unlawful for him to utter. Occasionally we hear the oft misquoted words of Isaiah (64:4) that **"Since the beginning of the world, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him"** as if this referred to the next life, but Paul quotes these words correctly and adds, **"But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit"** (1 Cor. 2:9). Isaiah's words were fulfilled 2,000 years ago. Nevertheless we know that the cynic is greatly mistaken in thinking that those who reach heaven will spend eternity twanging on harps, and we also know that heaven will be blissfully pleasant and celestially happy, for **"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away"** (Rev. 21:4).

"Behold I show you a mystery . . . we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. 15).

EDITOR.

IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

That anyone could after reading Romans chapter 4 deny the fact of imputed righteousness seems incredible. Certainly there may be disagreements as to the

implications of the term, but to deny its reality hardly seems possible. Yet one continues to see articles and hear sermons that do indeed deny that righteousness can be imputed. For example one writer commenting on 1 John 3:7 says, "Of a certain type of character it is affirmed that he is righteous. Who is he? He that doeth righteousness. No other is." He further says, ". . . but God approves of those only who do right (keep His commandments); therefore, to possess the approval of God and the righteousness which He requires one must do right by keeping His commandments." This quotation is not to provoke dispute with its writer but simply to demonstrate the reality of the position. It is not a straw man that is being addressed.

Paul's statements from Romans 4 which are pertinent to this discussion are: 1. "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness" (vs. 3) 2. "His faith is counted for righteousness" (vs. 5) 3. "Even as David also described the blessedness of the man, unto who God imputeth righteousness without works" (vs. 6) 4. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (vs. 8) 5. ". . . faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness" (vs. 9) 6. ". . . that righteousness might be imputed unto them also" (vs. 11) 7. "And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness" (vs. 22) 8. "Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him; but for us also to whom it be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (vvs. 23-24).

Undeniably these verses declare that righteousness has been or may be "imputed," "counted unto," or "counted for." The question, of course is, what does this mean? The Greek word is *logizomai*. It is used 41 times in the New Testament with 34 of these being by Paul. Repeatedly the translators have rendered the word "imputed" or "counted." Wuest says it is an accounting term used in secular Greek in regard to the crediting to one's account a deposit that was made. This is clearly the way it is used at Gal. 3:6 when Paul says, "Even as Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Other representative uses of the term outside Romans 4 are Phil. 3:13; 2 Tim 4:16 and Heb. 11:9.

Perhaps, however the real problem does not lie with an understanding of *logizomai* (impute), but with the meaning of *dikaiosisune* (righteousness). The quoting of Psa. 119:172, ". . . for all Thy commandments are righteousness," followed by the assumption that nothing else is righteousness would indicate this to be true.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

In the Old Testament the Hebrew words *tsedeq* and *tsedaqah* are regularly translated "righteousness." The word in Psa. 119:172 is *tsedeq*. Originally these words signified that which conforms to the norm. For the Hebrews, of course, this norm was the character and will of God. That these words referred to the ethical conduct is undeniable. The normal usage of the word "righteous" in the Old Testament had reference to the man who "did right."

"Righteousness" in the New Testament is regularly from *dikaiosisune*. The corresponding verb (*dikaioo*), is with two exceptions (Rom. 6:7; Rev. 22:11), translated "justify." Does this word always mean "righteousness" in the ethical sense, or does it sometimes have a wider meaning that includes salvation by "justification?" Can it refer to one who is "righteous" because he has been justified (pronounced "not guilty" by God), or does it refer only to the one who "does right?" That is the heart of the question and the key to what is meant by "imputed righteousness."

When Paul writes of the law of righteousness (Rom. 9:31), he is referring to the ethical demands of the Mosaic Law, but when he uses the same expression in Rom. 3:21 he is making reference to "salvation" accomplished by God through Christ. In Rom. 6:16 sin that brings death is contrasted with obedience that brings righteousness. In the remainder of chapter 6 the meaning of "righteousness" is the standard of

Christian ethics or conduct that is the result of having been set free of serving sin.

It is then seen that in the Roman letter alone Paul uses the word "righteousness" in *three different ways*. **First**, it is used in the sense of ethical conduct demanded by the Law of Moses; **secondly**, of the salvation which is the gift of God through Christ; and **finally**, of the ethical conduct which is demanded of the Christian.

Care should be taken to keep in mind the relationship between "righteousness" and "justification." Both are used to translate the same word. Moses E. Lard has a good discussion of the alternative usage of these words in translating *dikaiousune* in his Commentary on Romans. A failure to recognise the fact of the connection between "righteousness" and "justification" and the failure to recognise that "righteousness" is used in different ways in the New Testament leads to misunderstanding where none should exist. All the commandments of God are righteousness, but that is not all that is righteousness.

RIGHTEOUS BY IMPUTATION

Should it be true that only righteousness available to man is that righteousness which comes from doing right, there would have been no point in Christ coming into the world. The Law of Moses was holy and the commandment holy, just and good (Rom. 7:12). If man could have kept the law, he could have been righteous. However, Paul said that even though the law was spiritual, he was carnal and sold under sin (Rom. 7:14). The inability of man to be righteous under law was the fault not of the law, but the weakness of the flesh (Rom. 8:3).

Man is no more righteous under Christ than under the law if it be true that he is righteous only to the extent he does right. Man could not then keep every detail of the law all the time. Neither can he do that in the Christian age.

Therefore, if man is to be righteous (justified) he must be pronounced "not guilty" because his sins are forgiven. It is in this way that man is made righteous by Christ. The good works or positive righteousness of Christ are not transferred to man. One does not become more ethical by having righteousness imputed. One does become "justified" or comes to occupy a right relationship with God, thus can he be said to be righteous because by faith (that includes an obedient will) the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him. Remember that imputed simply means "counted." God does not impute or count sin against the one who is walking in the light with Christ (1 John 1:7), thus he is righteous by imputation, not because he faultlessly keeps the law.