

“The Mystery Revealed”

June 23, 2024

Ephesians 3:1-13

I. Introduction

When children are growing up, they are full of questions. One favorite is, “*Why?*” Another favorite question is, “*What happens if . . . ?*” Since most of us learn better by making our own discoveries, sometimes we let them experiment and see “*what happens if . . . ?*” But sometimes, if the answer is very important or the result could be dangerous, we answer the question. “*You don’t put your hand into a fire because . . .*”

In a similar way, God hasn’t told us everything about the universe or, for that matter, about His Word. He has kept some things to Himself. He allows His children—mankind—to make discoveries. **Romans 1:19-20** says, “**What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to men. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities— his eternal power and divine nature— have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.**” God never told anyone about the atom or that diamonds are buried deep in the earth. He hasn’t revealed exactly when He will be coming back to the earth for His followers. But there are some things too important to leave to discovery—things like: “*Where did the universe come from?*”—in **Genesis 1:1** He said, “**In the beginning God created.**” “*How can you have eternal life?*”—**Acts 16:31** says, “**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.**” Another thing too important to leave to discovery is the mystery of the church.

In earlier generations, this mystery was not made known to men. Before the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, no person, not even the greatest of God’s prophets, had anything but a hint of the truth that Paul and the other Apostles would teach. **Turn to 1 Peter 1:10-12.** **Colossians 1:26** says, “**The mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, (but) is now disclosed to the saints.**” This mystery is so important and so significant that, although Paul had already written about it earlier, he

repeated himself in [verse 6](#): “This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”

As we reviewed last week, the explanation or the revealing of this mystery was so important to Paul that he was willing to be a prisoner and a minister and a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Unlike the secrets in a secret lodge organization, this mystery—the Gospel and the unity of all believers—must not be kept secret. It is good news to be shouted from the housetops. It wasn’t important only to Paul; it was important to the Gentiles.

II. The Mystery Was Important to the Gentiles

Christ’s life, death, and resurrection didn’t just make a way of salvation for sinners. It reconciled Jews and Gentiles together and to God. Each person who makes Jesus his Lord and Savior—whether Jew or Gentile—will have a wonderful new relationship with and through Jesus Christ. In today’s key verse—verse 6—Paul got specific as he revealed or explained the mystery.

A. Gentiles are heirs with the Jews. First, he wrote, “[Through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel.](#)” Those who once were excluded from the nation of Israel and the covenants of promise now through the Lordship of Jesus Christ share in the spiritual riches God gave the Jews through His covenant with Abraham. [Galatians 3:29](#) says, “[If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.](#)” The believing Gentiles are sons and daughters of God, having the same legal status as all Jewish believers and as [Romans 8:17](#) says, they are “[co-heirs—joint heirs with Jesus Christ.](#)”

B. Gentiles are members together of the body of Christ, the church. Paul then wrote that believers are “[members together of one body.](#)” Later, [Ephesians 4:4](#) says, “[There is one body.](#)” Our human birth determines our distinguishing human characteristics; things that set us apart from one another. Our spiritual birth unites us as members of the same body. There are no 2nd class children or distant relatives. Every believer is indistinguishable in God’s eyes from any other member. Christ is the head of the body

and each individual member shares equally in the ministry. Turn to 1 Cor. 12:12-13. Verse 26 adds that “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”

C. Paul then wrote that Gentile believers “share together in the promise in Christ Jesus.” This is really a summary of the first two statements. All Christians, regardless of their status or position before being saved, are now fellow partakers of everything that concerns our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Now, in Christ, Gentiles share the promises of God with the believing Jews. The church today shares in the *spiritual* riches of Israel. But God has a special place in His heart for His chosen people, the Jews, according to Romans 11:1-12, one day God will restore His people and fulfill His promises concerning their land and their kingdom. There will be *physical* riches for the *physical* seed of Abraham.

D. Gentiles have a new power available to them. Back in Ephesians 1:19 Paul wrote of the “incomparably great power for us who believe.” Gentiles have a new power available to them. As we saw last week, this power is seen in the life of Paul. In Ephesians 3:7 Paul wrote that God saved him by grace and called him to be a servant or minister to spread the Gospel through God’s awesome power. The power of Christ that is seen in Paul’s life and ministry, is available to every Christian for daily life and service to God. This power is inexhaustible.

E. Finally, Gentiles have new riches—Ephesians 3:8 called them “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” These riches include all God’s truths and all His blessings, all that He is and has. Among the “unsearchable riches of Christ” are “His kindness, tolerance, and patience” (Rom. 2:4), His “wisdom and knowledge” (Rom. 11:33), His “great love and mercy” (Eph. 2:4), His “providing us with everything for our enjoyment” (1 Tim. 6:17c)—even the Word of God, the Bible. Because of all God has given us Colossians 2:10 says, “You have been given fullness—or completeness—in Christ.” Every Christian has everything he or she needs to live the life God has called them to live, including preaching His Word.

An obedient, productive, and happy Christian life cannot be lived without understanding all that we have. Before we can do what the Lord wants us to do for Him, we must understand what He already

has done for us. We have riches beyond measure in the One of whom it was said in [Colossians 2:3](#), “[In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.](#)” [Turn to 2 Peter 1:3-4.](#)

III. The Mystery Is Important to the Angels

Back in [Ephesians 3:10](#) Paul wrote that “[the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms](#)” are also involved in this mystery. God’s mystery is important to the angels. Since angels are created beings and are not omniscient, i.e., all knowing, God is educating the angels through the church. As we read earlier from [1 Peter 1:12](#), “[Even angels long to look into these things.](#)” In [1 Corinthians 4:9](#) Paul wrote that “[We, the Apostles, are made a spectacle to the whole world and to angels.](#)”

The angels can see the power of God in creation, the love of God at Calvary, and in the church, they see “[the manifold wisdom of God,](#)” i.e., the many-sided, infinite, abundant wisdom of God. They see Him taking Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female—those who together murdered the Messiah and were worthy only of hell—and making them, through the blood of the cross, one spiritual Body in Jesus Christ. They see Him breaking down all kinds of barriers and walls and making all believers one in an indivisible, intimate, and eternal union with God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and every other believer.

In the classroom of God’s universe, God is the Teacher, the angels are the students, the church is the illustration, and the subject is “[The Manifold Wisdom of God.](#)”

IV. The Mystery Should Be Important to Christians Today

God hid His great plan “[from the beginning of the world](#)” but now He wants “[the mystery](#)” to be known and taught by His church. This is why God made Paul a steward or administrator of this mystery. And now, all believers, all Christians are to be faithful stewards of this great truth. This mystery, which was so important to Paul and to the Gentiles and to the angels, is now in our hands. God’s mystery should be important to Christians today. We have the responsibility to care for it, to study it, to share it, to hand it on to the next generation, to protect it from slander and redefinition, and to live it. We need to share God’s mystery beginning with the Gospel that without Jesus Christ, every unbeliever is bound for an

eternity in hell. It is up to us to go tell others about how they “must be saved” (Acts 4:12). This must include teaching the Lordship of Jesus Christ as well.

In Judaism only the high priest could enter the presence of God in the Holy of Holies, and only for a short time once a year on the Day of Atonement. For anyone else to come into God’s presence meant instant death. But now, Paul wrote, “We can approach God with freedom and confidence.” That is a privilege; this is part of the mystery of the church. Turn to Hebrews 4:15-16. As children of God, we can come personally before Him.

We can come freely to God. But we aren’t to come with a flippant attitude or irreverently, but we are to come with an honest, open heart—in freedom of speech and freedom of spirit. We can come before Him in confidence, in trust not fearing rejection because we belong to Him. In Acts 10:35 Peter said that God “accepts men from every nation who fear Him and do what is right.” In Matthew 11:28 Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Understanding God’s program—His mystery—doesn’t just give the believer confidence towards God, it also gives him courage in the difficult circumstances of life. Paul closed this section by writing, “Do not be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.” In Philippians 1:12 he wrote, “Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.” Paul and his life made it clear that physical, material blessings are not always part of the experience of the dedicated Christian—it’s heavenly riches that are important. Trusting God and His mystery, Paul wrote to the Roman Christians in Romans 8:18: “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”

We can have courage in difficult times; Romans 8:28 says, “We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.” Any suffering that we go through as Christians will bring glory to God, will advance the Gospel, and will help us grow—James wrote that “you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance” (James 1:3). God’s mystery was and is important to Paul, to the Gentiles, to the angels and to us today.

V. Conclusion

God really does have a purpose for His creation--mankind. It is no longer a mystery. Through Jesus Christ, He has revealed Himself as a loving, saving God. In [Revelation 3:20](#) Jesus said, “**Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.**” When a person accepts God’s mercy and grace and receives eternal life, God extends His grace so that person is joined to Him as family. He can be confident he belongs, confident of God’s faithfulness, and confident of the final outcome. God has given us what we need to face the difficulties and joys of life. He has given us Himself and His Good News.

But simply knowing **about** the riches of Christ is not enough. *Knowing that there is a God is not enough.* [James 2:19](#) says, “**You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-- and shudder.**” We need to accept by faith the eternal life God offers us and the spiritual blessings He lavishes on us. As [Romans 10:9](#) says, “**Jesus must become our Lord and Savior.**” Then, as [Ephesians 2:10](#) says, we need “**to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**”

The value we place on something determines the hardship we are willing to endure for it. We will spend an enormous amount of energy and resources to care for a person or a prized possession we value a great deal. Paul valued the gospel enough to go to prison for it; even to die for it. In [2 Timothy 1:8](#) he asked Timothy not to be ashamed of him, but to “**join with me in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.**” Do you value the gospel enough to endure hardship for it? Would you go to prison for it? Most of us will probably not face prison, but are we willing to suffer the hardship of being belittled, of suffering financial loss or suffering personal risk because of the gospel? Are we willing to die and rise with Christ in service? Are you willing to lose your life in order to find it? Can you say along with Paul in [Galatians 2:20](#), “**I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me**”? How much do you value your salvation and the opportunity to share it with others?