

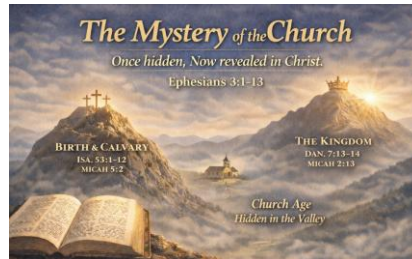
Expositional Preaching from the Authorized Version of the Holy Bible

Current Book: Ephesians – verse by verse

Scriptures for Today: Ephesians 3:1-13 – Hidden in other ages; now revealed in Jesus Christ!

Today's Message:

"The Mystery of the Church"



INTRODUCTION

Last week, we learned that Jesus Christ has broken down the wall between Jews and Gentiles and created one new man by the cross for an habitation of God. Amen! Today, we turn to chapter 3 where Paul will take the time to define and explain this great mystery. As the Bible says, the Holy Spirit will teach us as we compare Scriptures with Scriptures to see His incredible revelation of the mystery of the Church in the New Testament. As should always be the case when we learn from the word of God, we should depart a humbler people. The mystery of the Church should not make us proud that we understand it; it should make us grateful that God included us in it. This is God's message to you...

LEARNING TOGETHER

❖ The Text Ephesians 3:1-13

A. Old Testament Expectation – a mystery that was once hidden in God.

1. God promised Gentile blessing, but did not **REVEAL** the full truth about the Church.

1 Peter 1:10-11
Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

- **Ephesians 3:1** – For *this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ FOR YOU GENTILES,*
- **Ephesians 3:2** – ... of *the dispensation of the grace of God... given me TO YOU-WARD:*
- **Ephesians 3:3** – How that *by revelation he made known unto me THE MYSTERY...*
- **Ephesians 3:4** – ... *ye may understand my knowledge in THE MYSTERY of Christ)*
- **Ephesians 3:5** – ... *in other ages was not made known... is now REVEALED...by the Spirit;*

"The prisoner... for you Gentiles" – his preaching this to Jews led to his arrest! **Acts 22:22**
"Dispensation of the grace of God" – Church Age dispensation; steward of God's truth
"By revelation... my knowledge in the mystery" – Paul got this from Jesus Christ directly
"In other ages was not made known... now revealed" – once hidden, now revealed!

Old Testament Prophecies

- Gentiles would be **BLESSED**. **Gen 12:3** God extends blessing: not 1 spiritual body!
- Gentiles come to God's **LIGHT**. **Isa 49:6** They come to God: not united in 1 body!
- Gentiles **DESIRE** Israel's God. **Zech 8:23** They come to worship: not equal identity!
- Gentiles in God's **KINGDOM**. **Amos 9:11-12; Acts 15:15-18** James, "It's **BIBLE** truth!"

Humbling Thought
What prophets longed to understand, believers now read plainly.

"Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men..."

What a thought! How blessed we are as God's sons and daughters... and His Church! God has done something majestic which we often view as average truth – not today!

B. New Testament Revelation – the mystery fully explained by God.

2. The Holy Spirit of God has now revealed the **MYSTERY** of the Church in full detail!

W1828 “Mystery”

Not mysterious like in modern use. It means truth once hidden, now revealed by God.

7 NT Mysteries

1. Godliness
2. Christ in you
3. The Church
4. Restoration of Israel
5. The Rapture
6. Iniquity
7. Babylon the Great

- **Ephesians 3:5** – ... it is **now** REVEALED unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:
- **Ephesians 3:6** – That **the Gentiles** should **be** FELLOWHEIRS, and **of** THE SAME BODY, and PARTAKERS OF HIS PROMISE **in Christ** by the gospel:
- **Ephesians 3:7** – ...**a minister**, according to THE GIFT of the grace of God given unto me...

“That the Gentiles should be FELLOWHEIRS” – equal inheritance – no lesser standing!

“Of the SAME body” – one living organism; not two spiritual people groups side by side!

“PARTAKERS of his promise in Christ by the gospel” – same promise; both fully shared!

“The gift of the grace of God given unto me” – it was Paul’s privilege to reveal the truth!

Comparing Scriptures

- **Acts 10** – Peter struggled with Gentiles being included which **PROVES** this truth!
- **Acts 15** – Jerusalem church struggled with this; must Gentiles become Jewish? **NO!**

Why hidden until now?

- The **CROSS** had to happen first – Jesus Christ had to make the way possible! Amen.
- God reveals truth progressively... prophets saw peaks of truth, not valleys.

Practical Application

- God often explains His work **after** we begin to obey Him or sometimes even later.
- We often want God to explain **before** we obey Him completely.

C. The Humble Servant – Paul’s response to this great truth.

3. Paul was greatly **HUMBLED** by the gift of grace given to reveal this mystery!

“Unsearchable Riches of Christ”

Endless treasure which can never be exhausted, measured, or traced to its limit. No believer ever outgrows Christ.

Important Note

If doctrine ever makes us proud, we are handling it incorrectly.

- **Ephesians 3:8** – Unto **me**, who am LESS THAN THE LEAST of **all saints**...
- **Ephesians 3:9** – And to **make all men SEE** what is **the fellowship of the mystery**...
- **Ephesians 3:10** – To the intent that **now** unto **the principalities and powers**...
- **Ephesians 3:11** – According to **the eternal purpose** which **he purposed in Christ Jesus**...
- **Ephesians 3:12** – **In whom** WE HAVE **boldness and access with confidence** by **the faith**...
- **Ephesians 3:13** – Wherefore I desire that YE FAINT NOT at **my tribulations** for you...

“Less than the least of all saints” – he lowers himself to the lowest rank; once an enemy!

“Principalities and powers... manifold wisdom of God” – angels learning from us? Wow!

“In whom we have boldness and access” – such unsearchable blessing! How can it be!

1 Pet 1:12

... which things the angels desire to look into.

Comparing Scriptures

- **1 Corinth 15:9** – For I am THE LEAST of **the apostles**... not meet to be called...
- **1 Timothy 1:13, 15** – Who was **before** a **blasphemer**... persecutor... injurious...
- **John 13:3** – He must increase, but I must decrease.

“...the unsearchable riches of Christ...”

Paul looked at this truth and said he was less than the least of all saints...

Our response must be to not simply learn more, but to lower ourselves before our gracious Lord. Do not admire the mystery and miss the Saviour who made it possible. There is room for 1 more!