

# Ephesians 3:1-13

## “Partakers”

### Pastor Bruce Zachary

**Subject: The mystery of Jesus**  
**Object: Partake of Christ together**

#### 1. The revelation of Christ’s Church [1-6]

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles— <sup>2</sup> if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, <sup>4</sup> by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), <sup>5</sup> which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,

**The Church is redeemed divergent people partaking of Christ together**

The reason(s) Paul is referring to [1] is the gospel message of salvation by grace and the unity of Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) in the Church [2:8-22]. God’s plan to bring Jew and Gentile together in the Church by His grace was revealed to Paul for the benefit of Gentiles (non-Jews, and those outside of a relationship with God). Grace is receiving something that you don’t deserve. Our salvation is available to us because of what Jesus did, not our efforts.

Paul was called by grace [7, 1Tim. 1:12-17] to minister grace [8, 2:8-9].

A “mystery” [3,4,9] is a truth that is veiled in Old Testament, but clearly revealed in the New Testament. Paul had briefly written already [3] about this mystery in chapter two regarding the unity of Jew and Gentile being fit together to form the house of God [2:11-22].

**The mystery of Christ is Jew and Gentile united in the Church through faith in Christ.**

God’s plan regarding His Church was not made known [5] until the time of Jesus. But then it was revealed [5]. The Greek term means to uncover, and the aorist tense indicates that that it is revealed once and for all. The church is not improved Judaism, but a new creation. The Church was revealed by the Holy Spirit to the apostles and New Testament writers [5].

Prior to Jesus, Jews could not imagine Gentiles having the same standing before God as Jews. The understanding was that in order to be part of the family of God, and share in the inherited blessings of being part of God’s covenant people, a Gentile needed to convert to Judaism. But through the grace of God, and the gift of God through the gospel, all people can become part of the Church through faith in Christ.

The promise [6] or New Covenant speaks of God’s promised blessings of forgiveness of sin, spiritual life, relationship with God, and a community of faith. The term “same body” [6] is the Greek *syssoma* and it was a word coined by Paul to meet the unique situation created by the gospel. This is the only place the word is used in the New Testament, and was later used exclusively by Christian writers. No other society is comparable to the Church since Jesus is the head, foundation, the one who holds it together, and the only one who can build-it. And Jews and Gentiles, former enemies and separated people, partake of Christ and the blessings of life with God as part of the same body or community of faith. Followers of Christ are part of the most amazing entity ever imagined - The Church, and are to experience Jesus together. When that position is experienced in practice, the love displayed by God’s people for God, other believers, and neighbors generally is incredibly attractive.

#### 2. The proclamation of Christ’s Church [7-9]

<sup>7</sup> of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. <sup>8</sup> To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;

### Those who partake of Christ yearn for others to experience Jesus

Paul became a minister of the gospel [6-7]. The term translated minister is *diakonos* which is often translated as servant or deacon. Paul recognized the gift of God's grace in his life [7], and that God had empowered him to proclaim Christ to others. The term effective working [7] is *energia* which yields our English energy, and the term power [7] is *dunamis* which yields our English dynamite. Paul did not see himself as qualified for the task, but realized it was God's grace and power [7-8]. Paul humbly calls himself the least of all the saints or followers of Christ [8]. Paul realized that the same Spirit that reveals Christ empowers us to proclaim Christ. Paul wants the Gentiles, those who had been far from God, to get to know the unsearchable riches or limitless treasure that is Jesus [8]. He wanted all to see understand and experience unity with God and others through Jesus [9]. In essence, he wanted unbelievers to partake of Christ and experience the blessings of life with God together with a body or community of faith of divergent people united in Christ.

### 3. The purpose of Christ's Church [10-13]

#### The Church glorifies God by displaying His manifold wisdom together [10].

<sup>10</sup> to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*,

The term manifold [10] refers to multi-faceted or sufficient for any need. God's wisdom is sufficient for all of man's needs. God's glory and wisdom are displayed by the Church among the angelic beings of heaven [10]. God doesn't use angels to reveal the gospel to man, but man to reveal God's glory to angels.

#### The Church glorifies God by displaying His redemption together [11-13]

<sup>11</sup> according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, <sup>12</sup> in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. <sup>13</sup> Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Through the gospel, mankind is redeemed, restored, reconciled, and reunited with God. Fallen man can be restored through Jesus. Fallen angels never get to experience the hope of restoration. God's plan of redemption for Jew and Gentile was His eternal purpose [11]. God has always had a plan to redeem man. He was not surprised by Adam's fall in the Garden [Gen. 3]. But it was not until Christ's ministry, death and resurrection that the mystery of the Church could be fully revealed. That through faith in Christ all can experience access to God, and can approach Him with confidence and boldness [12, Heb. 4:12-16]. Paul concludes by exhorting the Ephesians not to lose heart at his tribulation. Paul's imprisonment was for their glory, because it revealed how important they were to God and to Paul.

Conc. When we partake of Christ together in true unity forged by His Spirit it glorifies God, reveals Christ and His gospel, and motivates us to share Jesus with those who haven't experienced His limitless wonder. Are you regularly partaking together with others who are different than you? Here are some practical ideas: Gather regularly as a community to worship on weekends, and create time to befriend and build relationships. And scattering as small groups to develop authentic relationships during the week.

#### Study Guide Qs

Q1. What is attractive about followers of Christ, who are different from one another, partaking of Christ together?

Q2. Why does partaking of Christ together with people who you would naturally not be drawn to, or even repelled by, reflect the love and grace of God?

Q3. In what ways do you think that the Church, when it partakes of Christ together, glorifies God?

Q4. In what ways has partaking together with others in a NG helped you to realize, accept and grow through some of your pride, prejudice, selfishness, and fear?

#### Digging Deeper

1. Search the mystery of Christ and God's progressive revelation regarding salvation <https://www.gotquestions.org/progressive-revelation.html>. What did you discover and what questions arose?

2. Why might people who have discovered the limitless treasure of Jesus be very motivated to share Jesus with others who don't know Him?

