

# The Mystery of Christ

Ephesians 3.1–7

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • March 15, In the year of our Lord Christ, 2020

## **Prelude:**

### **I. Here is the thing:**

- A. Jesus opened the doors for Gentiles to experience the blessing of inclusion.
- B. However, they did not know about it
  - 1. until the Lord sent out apostles
  - 2. to let the world know.

### **II. That process of letting the world know has not stopped.**

- A. Not only do the Scriptures proclaim it, but
- B. the church does,
  - 1. as Paul will show in the Ephesians 3, because
  - 2. the Scriptures do not proclaim themselves.

## **Persuasion:**

### **I. Ephesians 3.1–5 • The Revelation of the Mystery**

**1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles— 2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, 3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 5 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:**

A. For what reason?

- 1. What had Paul just written?
- 2. Think of everything that Paul has written since 1.3.
  - a) Starting at 1.3, Paul began to expound
  - b) on every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

B. What did Paul mean that he was a prisoner of Christ for the Gentiles?

1. In 6.20, he referred to his chains.
  - a) The message is worth going to prison for,
  - b) it is worth being chained for, and
  - c) it is worth dying for.
2. What about the message that Paul preached would get him into prison?
  - a) He was preaching that Jews and Gentiles, and
    - (1) for that matter all people,
  - b) can be one in Christ, and
  - c) that they are all the same.
    - (1) Did Jews want to hear that message?
    - (2) Did Jew-hating Gentiles want to hear that message?
    - (3) Did warring peoples among the nations want to hear that message?
    - (4) Do different people groups today want to hear that message?
      - (a) Is there a group or a place for which you have no love?
      - (b) Is the grace of God for them too?
        - i) If it is, do you need to change the way you think about that place or group of people?
        - ii) What if all the Jewish apostles had not gone to the Gentiles?
          - (1) Would you know the grace of God?
          - (2) Why can you experience it but not the people you despise?

C. God gave Paul a dispensation of grace for the sake of the Gentiles.

1. They had heard about it
  - a) either from what he had already written, or
  - b) from when he spent three years there, preaching and teaching.

2. It could also be that they heard from others about his work.
3. Are or were there different dispensations?
  - a) We might call our present age the Christian dispensation, but
  - b) Paul called it the dispensation of grace.
    - (1) There was the dispensation of law.
    - (2) See John 1.17.

D. How did Paul come to know the mystery?

1. God made it known to the apostle by revelation.
2. We can easily put together the Old Testament prophecies because
  - a) we have the benefit of hindsight.
  - b) The New Testament has put it all together for us.
    - (1) However, could we have figured out on our own that God would sacrifice His Son to save humanity?
    - (2) First Peter 1.10–12

E. Can we read and understand Paul's knowledge in the mystery?

1. Can we read and understand the rest of Scripture?
2. Yes, we have the ability that is why God gave us His Book.
  - a) However, we have to put forth the effort to read because
  - b) reading leads to understanding, and
    - (1) understanding does not happen automatically.
    - (2) Reading trains the mind.
3. Here is what a friend on Facebook said:

**“Mom, when you read a book you get to use your imagination. But when you watch TV, it's like watching someone else's imagination. It's like you're a king and the TV is your servant and is doing all the work. It's not as good. That's why I like reading better.”**

**-Benjamin**

**Well, there you have it, folks.  
Don't be lazy; use your own imaginations."**

**– Sara Word Sisemore**

- F. Verse 5 identifies who revealed these things to Paul and the other apostles and prophets.
1. Who was it?
  2. It was the Spirit.
    - a) That is the only way we could know what we know.
    - b) Somethings we can learn on our own, but
      - (1) for other things we need revelation.
      - (2) That is what the Bible is, a revelation from God.

## **II. Ephesians 3.6 • What the Gentiles Have**

**6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,**

- A. The Lord had given hints
1. that He would bless the Gentiles, but
  2. the details and how and in what, He would do it were not as clear.
- B. What things did Paul say comprised this mystery?
1. That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs,
  2. That the Gentiles should be of the same body, and
  3. That the Gentiles should partake of God's promise in Christ through the gospel.
    - a) When we read the Bible before the New Testament,
    - b) we read primarily of God's dealings with Israel,
      - (1) although that was not the exclusive message because

- (2) He dealt with the Gentiles all along,
  - (a) showing that He had not forsaken the rest of the world, but
  - (b) He was using Israel to use them to reveal His message.
  - (c) Romans 3.1–2

C. From Genesis 12.3, the Lord had been speaking these things.

D. Do we fully understand the blessing of these three things?

- 1. Romans 11 shows
  - a) that the Gentiles are not natural branches, but
  - b) that God has grafted us into His tree.
- 2. It is not so much that we get to be with the Jews,
  - a) which is a blessing when you consider all the people that we admire from the Bible, but
  - b) it is that we get to partake of the same things of which they partake.

### **III. Ephesians 3.7 • Ministering the Mystery**

**7 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.**

A. Paul became a minister of the mystery of Christ.

- 1. He lived to serve the mystery,
- 2. revealing it to others.

B. God made Paul a minister by grace.

- 1. See Romans 12.3.
- 2. What he was able to do,
  - a) he could do it by the grace of God.
  - b) Is that not true of all of us?
    - (1) That is what Romans 12.3 teaches and
    - (2) what Paul continued to say in verses 4 and following.

C. It happened according to the effective working of God's power.

1. God can do whatever He wants to do.
2. Therefore, He could enable someone like Paul to reveal the amazing message to the world.

**Exhortation:**

**I. What does this make you want to do?**

- A. We should want to give God thanks and
- B. we should want to glorify Him.

**II. We should see the Jews of the Old Testament as our brethren.**