

The Book of Ephesians – Part 4

Introduction: First Slide

OK. Let's hold on because this week we're going to continue our Fantastic Journey through the Book of Ephesians.

We took a break for Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday but it's time to get back to it. So let's jump right in.

When we last left off, we had covered all of Chapter 1 and all of Chapter 2.

The last half of Chapter 3; verses 13-21, were discussed in Part 2 of our series and were part of what we call "The Prayers of Paul."

But the first half of chapter 3 deals with the mystery of the Church.

And that's what we're going to cover today. So, when we're done, we will have covered the first three chapters of Ephesians.

And let me remind you that all my notes are being posted as I preach them on our website, www.gofaithlife.com.

As we're going to see, the revelation of the Church Age was hidden from the Old Testament prophets and was not revealed until it was personally given to the Apostle Paul by Jesus himself.

He, in turn, revealed it to the Church through his epistles.

A Look at the Mystery (Ephesians 3:1-12)

¹For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

- First of all, the phrase “for this cause” refers to the end of Chapter 2 which talks about the building up of the Church to be a dwelling place for God.
- Because of the Church and Paul’s place in it, he’s now writing as a prisoner of the Lord.
- It’s interesting to note that Paul, even though he was a prisoner of Rome, refers to himself as “the prisoner of Jesus Christ”.
- Even though he was in prison, the work of the Lord was still being accomplished. The Gospel was being preached to the Gentile nations.

²If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

- The Bible is divided into time periods which are referred to as dispensations.
- The age or the dispensation we now live is most often called the Church Age.
- Paul referred to it as the dispensation of the grace of God.
- Paul uses the phrase “which is given me to you-ward” to tell us that the understanding of the dispensation of grace was given to him so that he could give it to us.
- There is one thing I want to mention before we leave verse 2.
- There are some who do not believe in “dispensational theology” but I do, with one important caveat however.

- Although, during these different dispensations, God spoke to man and dealt with man in different ways, man has always had to approach God the same way, through faith.
- Bottom line, all the dispensations before the cross had to look forward to the cross and put their faith in the coming redeemer, and all the dispensations after the cross must look back to the cross and trust in the finished work of our redeemer, Jesus Christ our Lord.

³How that by revelation he (Jesus) made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

⁴Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

- The Greek word (apokalupsis) in verse 3 translated as revelation is the same word used by the Apostle John which is titled "The Revelation of Jesus Christ."
- It means "the coming" or "the manifestation" or "the revealing."
- And if you put it in context with verse 1, Paul was saying that "the coming, the revealing, the manifestation of Jesus Christ himself made known unto me this great mystery.
- Some translations say Paul received this understanding of the mystery by "direct revelation."
- Which make it clear that, Paul, most likely, received this great revelation from Jesus Christ in person, face to face.
- In first Corinthians 15:8 Paul declares plainly that he had seen the Lord Jesus after his resurrection.

This is also reiterated in Paul's other epistles.

Galatians 1

¹¹But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. ¹²For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1

²⁵Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

- The word mystery (mysterion) which is used in verse 3 and 4 is a word applied to fraternal organizations which have secrets and teachings known only to the members.
- To understand the teachings, you had to become a member.
- It works the same way with the mystery of the Church. The world does not understand because they are not members, but born again, spirit filled Christians understand, or have the ability to understand, because they are members of the Church.
- We are partakers of the mystery which is the Body of Christ.

⁵Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

- This verse tells us that, in ages past, this revelation was withheld from mankind, but now it is revealed to us through his holy apostles and prophets.
- The dispensation that preceded the dispensation of grace was the dispensation of the law.

Galatians 3

²³But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

⁶That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

Colossians 1

²⁶Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: ²⁷To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

- These verses explain that part of the mystery was that both Jew and Gentile would be united together in one body by the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.
- And that just like the prophets foretold, a time had arrived when God would put his Spirit inside of man and give him a new nature that wanted to follow after God from the heart.
- Christ in you, the hope of glory, is about as simple as you can make it if you want to understand the mystery of the Gospel.
- It was a radical concept at the time that Paul started sharing this revelation.
- And one that landed him in prison in Rome.

⁷Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. ⁸Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

- Remember the phrase “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ” from the opening salutation of Ephesians Chapter 1.
- The word Paul means *small* but the word *apostle* means the one of highest rank.
- Here again Paul makes it clear that he is humbled by the awesome responsibility of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- He considered himself to be the least of all saints though he was acutely aware that he was given a revelation that no other man had received, “the unsearchable riches of Christ”.

⁹And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

- Here again, the point is driven home that the revelation of the fellowship (dispensation) of the mystery (the Church) was hidden in God from the very beginning, even before the world was made.
- Paul wanted to “make all men see” not only the mystery of the Church but the importance of the age in which we live.
- The Church Age is like no other age and is the most exciting time to be alive on planet earth.
- The Church will see things that no other age has seen before.

¹⁰To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

- After the fall of Lucifer when evil was loosed on the earth, God launched a plan, which he had kept secret from before the foundations of the universe.

- This plan would demonstrate to these fallen “principalities and powers” “the manifold wisdom of God.”
- In this plan, the “manifold wisdom of God” would be revealed through every believer by the indwelling Spirit of God.
- On the day of Pentecost, when the Church began, the Holy Spirit came down and dwelt in the hearts and empowered the lives of Jesus’ followers.
- Ever since that day, God has been humiliating Satan and his kingdom by operating through the lives of born again, spirit filled believers.
- Remember that man, in the natural is inferior to angelic or spirit beings (Psalm 8:5, Hebrews 2:7).
- But we have been endued with power and authority (Luke 24:49, Luke 10:19) from on high and with this power and authority we can destroy the works of the devil (I John 3:8).
- We may be inferior in the natural, but in Christ, even Satan himself has to bow to the name of Jesus on the lips of a born again, spirit filled believer.

¹¹According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

¹²In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

- Again the point is made that the purpose or the plan of the Church was eternal or planned beforehand in the heart of God and hidden until it began to be revealed on the day of Pentecost.

- Because of this plan, the mystery of the Church has been revealed to us.
- Because of this plan, we now have access by faith into the “unsearchable riches of Christ.”
- We have access by faith into his grace and we have access by faith to the very throne of God.

Romans 5

¹Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: ²By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Hebrews 4

¹⁶Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Summary: The mystery of the Church Age was hidden in God before the foundations of the universe, before the world began.

This mystery was revealed to us so that we would know the wonderful things that have been given to us in Christ Jesus and that we would know the importance of the age in which we live.

It is a privilege to live in the Church Age and an exciting time to be alive.

Matthew 13

¹⁷For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. LAST SLIDE