**The Mystery Revealed**

**Ephesians 3:1-13**

Session 6

What we read in the first two chapters had a lot to do with how God calls His people out of darkness and death into light and life. In this chapter Paul addresses the issue of how God has called the Gentiles (non-Jews) into His kingdom. In the Old Testament a Gentile could believe in God and become one of His people but they had to be circumcised and obey the law. In the New Testament those dividing lines are being removed as Christ has died for all mankind. This created some confusion for early Christians and Paul is trying to help straighten things out.

* Read the passage on your own
* If you’re in a group read it out loud
* Have several summarize this portion of the Ephesians letter.



**Observation** – **Make a list**! What do you see that stands out to you in Ephesians 3:1-13 of this letter? Look for key words, phrases, comparisons or contrasts. You are asking the questions – Who? What? Where? When? How? Why? What is clear? What might be confusing?

* What does Paul mean when he says he is a “prisoner” of Christ.
* Paul starts out by telling us that he isn’t just making all this up. Where does Paul say this information is coming from? (vs. 3:3) (See also Galatians 1:12-17)
* Paul uses the term “Mystery” four times in this passage. How would you define the term mystery?

**QUESTION:**

In Ephesians 3:6 Paul plainly explains the mystery of what God is doing with the Gentiles. What three things does Paul say make up the mystery of what God is doing with the Gentiles?

The Gentiles are fellow \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. What does this mean?

The Gentiles are members of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. What does this mean?

The Gentiles share in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. What does this mean?

***Helpful Notes:***

Before Jesus came, the Gentiles would not have been allowed to be any of these three things without following many of the Jewish rules including the males being circumcised. But now Christ has removed any and all obstacles from the Gentiles being part of God’s people. This is not hard for us to understand as most of us who are Christians are Gentiles. But for first generation Christians this would have been more difficult to understand because it was all new to them.

John 10:16 is a beautiful verse where Jesus, during his earthy ministry, speaks of having other sheep that are not of this fold. What is Jesus referring to?

*And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So, there will be one flock, one shepherd.* John 10:16

**Paul’s challenge to the Gentile believers concerning the mystery of Christ. vs. 10-13**

* The phrase in verse 10, *rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms* refers to angels, who did not know God’s mystery until He made it known through the church.
* Fulfill your eternal purpose

With boldness and confidence (vs. 12)

We have access to Christ. (See Hebrews 4:16)

We cannot physically walk up to God’s throne. So, what does Paul mean when he writes, “*approach God with boldness and confidence*”?

*Our confidence is not that God will do everything we say or ask for. Our confidence is that because God cares and hears our prayers, he is going to do the right thing.*

* Stay encouraged – Do not lose heart. (See 2 Corinthians 4:16-17)

**Talking it over -Group Study:**

If we could sum up the “mystery” which Paul has been speaking of, it would be that in Christ, Gentiles are one with and spiritually equal to Jews. We must never forget we are one in Christ and, therefore should always promote unity in our churches. (See Galatians 3:28) Jesus Christ has made it possible for those who are in Christ to become one through the universal and local church.

* Explain the universal church as you understand it?
* How is the universal church different from the local church?

I know some incredible followers of Christ all over the world. I see them as believers of the universal church even though they do not attend my local church. Share in your group those you know who are of the universal church and why, then take a moment and pray for them.

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**Interpretation – What does it mean?** What’s the author’s main intent or purpose in sharing these truths with the Ephesian believers?



**APPLICATION – Put into practice**

* Is my faith a mystery to those around me? How can I reveal the mystery of Christ in my life, family, church, friends?
* If the supreme eternal purpose of Christ’s church is to bring God glory how does this motivate me in how I should think and live?

**Here is a good working sermon outline on this chapter:**

1. God can empower us to love our enemies vs. 1
2. God can empower us to understand His word vs. 2-6
3. God can empower us to serve as ministers of the gospel vs. 7-9
4. God can empower us to communicate with Him vs. 11-12



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