

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	Ephesians		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	5		Josh Walker
Text:	Ephesians 3:1-13		
Date:	February 4, 2018 (a.m.)		

THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL REVEALED

INTRODUCTION: Last time we saw that Paul drew out one significant implication of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is that both Jews and Gentiles can be one in Christ. In other words, all the walls that divide humans—social, political, religious, racial, and economic—are brought to nothing when we are in Christ. This morning, we will see how this was always part of God’s plan. God always wanted to bring humanity together in his Son.

This truth, as we will see, was a mystery that was hidden in times past (Eph. 3:9). It was there in types and shadows, but now, because of the work Jesus has done for his people, this mystery is made known to us. This mystery is that in Christ all humanity can be brought together.

We will look at this mystery under two points this morning: first, *The Revelation of the Mystery*, and second, *The Safekeeping of the Mystery*.

I. *The Revelation of the Mystery* (3:1-7)

3:1: Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. “Paul’s conversion on the Damascus Road also represented his calling to serve as a missionary to the nations. The Lord made it clear when Paul was converted that he was ‘a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel’ (Acts 9:15). Paul’s role as a missionary is captured by the words Jesus spoke to him on the Damascus Road according to Acts 26:18: ‘...to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’ Paul was God’s chosen instrument to bring God’s saving message to the ends of the earth.

“Paul was uniquely called of God in the fullness of time. He understood the significance of the Gospel in the light of the Old Testament. Paul was no ivory tower theologian. He was a risk-taking missionary, who suffered to bring the good news revealed to him on the Damascus Road to the ends of the earth.”¹

3:3: “Paul now explains the source and nature of this stewardship that God has entrusted to him. It is clearly not an insight or a plan that Paul himself has conceived. It has come directly to him by revelation from God.”²

3:6: “Paul develops the idea that Gentiles are partakers in the promise along with all the saints from the fact that they were formerly ‘strangers from the covenants of promise’ (2:12), but through Christ’s work they are now full (new) covenant members as ‘co-heirs,’ etc.,

along with believing Israelites (2:19). This great moment in redemptive history in v. 6 is stated as being ‘the mystery of Christ,’ which was not disclosed to prior generations (vv. 4–5). However, it was disclosed that the Gentiles would stream into Zion to worship the true God of Israel, bringing their treasures (e.g., Gen 9:27; Psa 86:6; Isa 2:2; 60:3; 66:18–23; Mic 4:1–3)... Yet Paul says the Gentiles do not come in as enslaved captives or subjects but as ‘co-heirs’ and sharers in the OT covenant promises.”³

II. *The Safekeeping of the Mystery* (3:8-13)

3:9: “The grace of God given to Paul consists not only in his *preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentiles* (v. 8), but also to his revealing to all how God’s ‘hidden purpose was to be put into effect.’”⁴

3:13: “The mention of the apostle’s afflictions has recalled the opening words of the chapter, ‘the prisoner of Christ Jesus,’ and have prepared the way for his petitionary activity of v. 14. The one who kneels before the Father and offers the following intercession is the same person who has been appointed to declare the mystery to them and who, as a result, undergoes affliction on their behalf. Paul is a prisoner who serves Christ, and what he does is for the benefit of them as Gentiles; indeed, it is for their final glory.”⁵

CONCLUSION: “Jesus Christ is the apex of God’s plan. Christ himself is the mystery. He is the basis, means, goal, and incorporational center of all that the one true God has set out to accomplish. For people living in a religiously pluralistic environment, this is extraordinarily significant. Jesus simply cannot be ignored. The claim that he is the center point of God’s plan for history is enormous and, indeed, scandalous. The claim of Christ entails that the claims of the other deities are false.”⁶

ENDNOTES

¹ Schreiner, Thomas, *Apostle to the Gentiles* (Tabletalk Magazine, 2006).

² Arnold, Clint E., *Ephesians: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2010), 187.

³ Baugh, S. M., *Ephesians: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Lexham Press, 2016), 235. Emphasis original.

⁴ O’Brien, Peter T., *The Letter to the Ephesians: The Pillar New Testament Commentary*, (Eerdmans, 1999), 243.

⁵ O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 252.

⁶ Arnold, Clint E., *Ephesians: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2010), 202.