

THE MYSTERY REVEALED BY PAUL

Ephesians 3



Why were V1-13 written?

- Paul anticipated the opposition of the Judaizers who would say.... *The unity of Jews and gentiles in Christ is an **invention** of Paul to **elevate** himself among the gentiles. Paul is **self appointed**, and his interpretation of scripture was **not taught in past generations**.*
- In view of the above, Paul defends his stewardship:
 - **V1,8,13** he was the **least** of all the saints and a **prisoner** as a result of his preaching (he was not elevating himself)
 - **V3** he received the secret **by revelation** (it was not his invention)
 - **V7** he was **made a minister by God** (he was not self appointed)
 - **V5, 9** he revealed what had been **hidden by God** (he had not contrived it)

Ch. 3 – The mystery revealed by Paul

- **V1-13** Paul's defence of his stewardship
- **V14-21** A prayer for Christ's work to be fulfilled in us

Key verse: V10 "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the ecclesia the multi-faceted wisdom of God"

The “mystery” of Christ (V3,4,9)

- Mystery = to shut the mouth, a **secret** (something which could be understood but had been hidden).
- What was the secret?
 - **Eph. 3:6** “That the **Gentiles should be** fellowheirs, and of the **same body**, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel”
 - **Col. 1:27** “Christ in you (gentiles), the hope of glory”
 - Put simply – that the gentiles could be in the Truth.



Paul's defence of his stewardship

1. He was made a minister by God (he was not self appointed)

3:2 If ye have heard of the **dispensation of the grace of God** which is given me to you-ward:

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

3:4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand (the authenticity of) my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.

3:5 Which 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;

3:6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

3:7 Whereof **I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God** given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

3:8 **Unto 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;

3:9 And 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:

Paul - a *chosen* vessel



- "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace" **Gal. 1:15**
- "he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" **Acts 9:15**
- "I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth" **Acts 13:47 (Cp Isa. 49:6)**
- "I ... fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his (Christ's) body's sake" **Col. 1:24**

The preparation for Paul's preaching

1

Venues and a ready audience

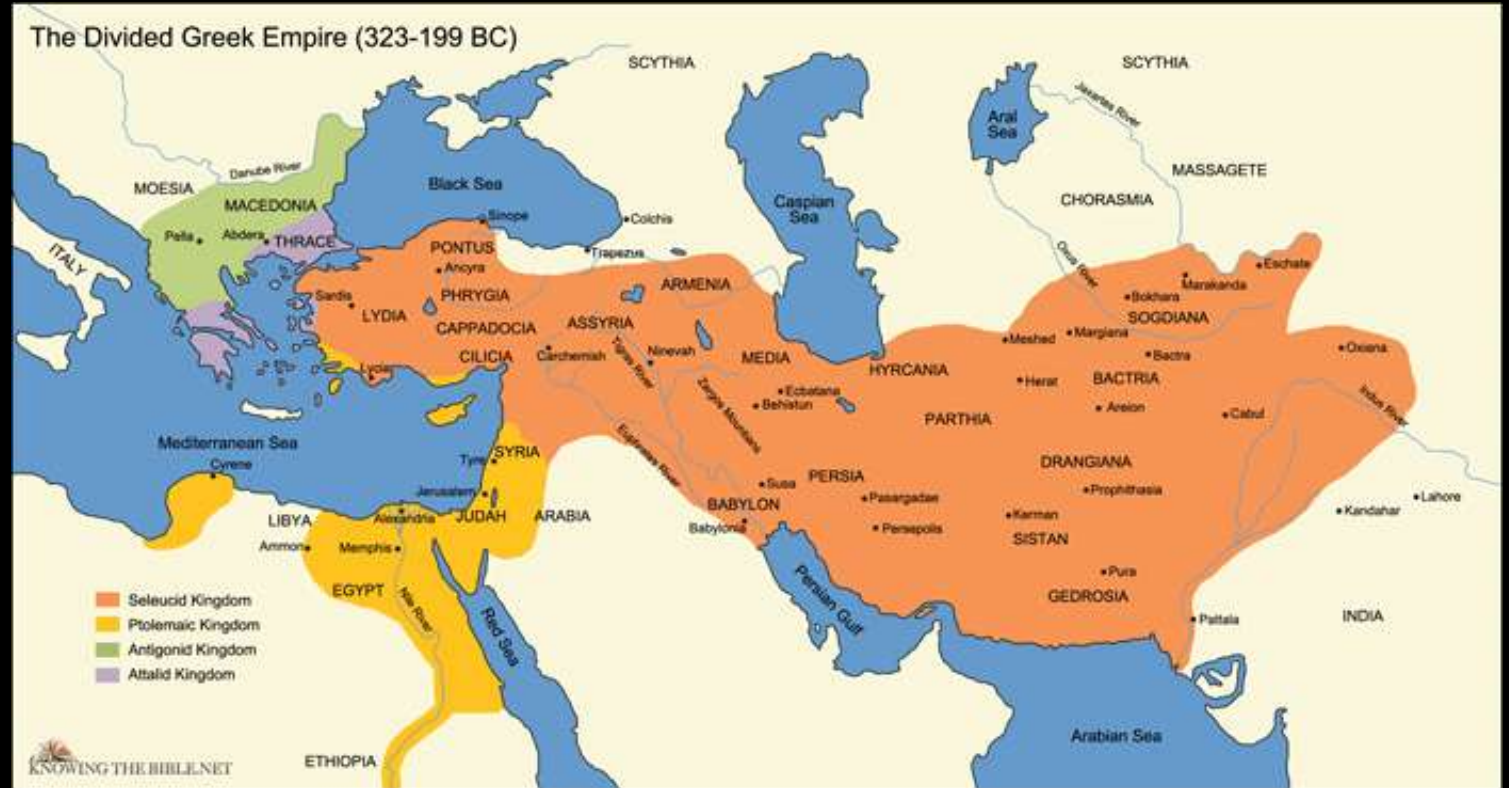
The Jews had been scattered. In the places where they settled, synagogues were built that created a ready audience.



The preparation for Paul's preaching

2

Common language
Everywhere from Rome in the west to Persia in the east, people spoke Greek in the first century. This was due primarily to the conquests of Alexander the Great.



Even after the rise of the Republic of Rome and then the Roman Empire, Greek language, attitudes, philosophy, understanding and overall culture spread from the civilizations conquered by Alexander the Great and his Generals to others in the East and then north to Europe through trade and, further, by Roman conquest, thereby Hellenizing the entire world of antiquity and influencing virtually every culture of the earth today. **Joshua J. Mark**

The preparation for Paul's preaching

3

Ease of travel

Piracy was suppressed and order was established throughout the Roman Empire. Travel without passports was made possible on the network of good roads.



Paul's defence of his stewardship

2. He received the secret by revelation (it was not his invention)

3:2 If ye have heard of the **dispensation** of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

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

3:4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand **(the authenticity of) my knowledge** in the mystery of Christ.

3:5 Which 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;

3:6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

3:7 Whereof **I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God** given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

3:8 Unto 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;

3:9 And 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:

Paul's defence of his stewardship

3. He was the least of all the saints (he was not elevating himself)

3:2 If ye have heard of the **dispensation** of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

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

3:4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand **(the authenticity of) my knowledge** in the mystery of Christ.

3:5 Which 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;

3:6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

3:7 Whereof **I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God** given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

3:8 Unto 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;

3:9 And 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:

Paul's defence of his stewardship

4. He revealed what had been hidden by God (he had not contrived it)

3:2 If ye have heard of the **dispensation** of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

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

3:4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand **(the authenticity of) my knowledge** in the mystery of Christ.

3:5 Which **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;

3:6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

3:7 Whereof **I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God** given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

3:8 Unto 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;

3:9 And 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:

The inclusion of the gentiles



The heirship of the gentiles was spoken of by the prophets but not fully understood by them **Gen 12:3; Isa 65:1; Hos 1:10; 2:23; Joel 2:32; Amos 9:11-12; Rom 16:26**

The revealing of the secret

- During Jesus' ministry he told his apostles "Go not into the way of the Gentiles ... but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" **Mat 10:5-6**
- After his death and resurrection the secret was revealed "unto his holy apostles and (NT) prophets by the spirit" **Eph 3:5**. In the case of Peter and Paul this involved direct revelation from God or Christ **Acts 10:10-16; Gal 1:12**
- But when the Jews rejected the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ, Paul was commanded to preach the secret openly to the gentiles. **Acts 13:46-47; 28:25-28**

Why did God wait until the rejection of Christ to reveal and publish the secret?



"we were **reconciled** to God
by the **death** of his son"



"much more we shall be
saved by his **life**"

ANSWER:

That the Jews might become an unwitting national testimony of the very thing they disbelieved - the death & resurrection of Christ.

Their rejection of the risen Christ precipitated their political death, and the gospel of reconciliation going to the gentiles. Their acceptance of Christ will coincide with the resurrection to life of the believing gentiles.



"if the **casting away** of them (Jews) be the **reconciling** of the world (Gentiles)"



"what shall the **receiving of them** be but
life from the dead (for the Gentiles)"

Making known the wisdom of God

- To this “one body” energized by the “one spirit” and “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”, and styled “the bride”— is committed the work of making known the manifold wisdom of God, as contained in the word; and of inviting the world to be reconciled to God. **No member of this body is exempt from the obligation** of co-operating in this work. It is the duty and privilege of every one in his own sphere to endeavour to turn men to righteousness; for there is no distinction of “clergy” and “laity” in the family of God. **Elpis Israel p170 (15th Edition)**
- In apostolic times, it was the privilege of the church to make known to the world-rulers “the manifold wisdom of God.” This mission brought the disciples of Christ into contact with them, as is related in the Acts. When they stood before these men of sin, in whom the thinking of sinful flesh worked strongly, **the truth of God proclaimed to them brought out the evil of the flesh in all its malignity.** They imprisoned the disciples of Christ ; threatened them with death ; tempted them with rewards ; and when they could not shake their fidelity to the truth, tormented them with the crudest tortures they could invent. **Elpis Israel p104 (15th Edition)**

Eph. 3:16-19 A prayer for Christ's work to be fulfilled in us

We must manifest the love of Christ ...

3:16 that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his **Spirit** in the inner man, **3:17** that **Christ** may dwell in **your hearts** by **faith**; **3:17** that ye, being rooted and grounded in **love**,

to appreciate and value his work ..

3:18 may be able **to comprehend** with ALL saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; **3:19** and **to know the love of Christ**, which passeth knowledge,

that we may be the fulfilment of it.

3:19 that ye might be filled with all the **FULNESS OF GOD**

We must love Christ's household if we are to be part of it

THE THEME

