

# Understanding God's Eternal Purposes: Ephesians

The Mystery of the Church  
Ephesians 3:1—12

# A positive perspective

*For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—(verse 1)*

*For this reason I kneel before the Father...  
(verse 14)*

For **what** reason?

*And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (2:22)*

Paul does not regard himself as a victim either of Jewish hatred or Roman law.

Being in prison was viewed by Paul as a mark of his apostleship.



# The revelation of a mystery, verses 2—6

Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Paul refers to his ministry as “an administration of God’s grace.”

Paul did what God had called him to do through God’s grace.

He was also given some kind of “mystery” by “revelation.”

Definition of “mystery”–

*Something that had not been revealed previously revealed.*

*I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. (Colossians 1:25, 26)*

The “mystery” is not salvation, as some teach.

The “mystery,” the thing that had been hidden even from the holy men of the OT was that Gentiles could be knit together with Jews in one body (one group).

*In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ. (verse 4)*

*But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. (John 16:13)*

# The ministry of the mystery, verses 7—10

Paul claimed no superiority in knowing and understanding the great “mystery” of the Church.

Play on words in verse 8.

The truth of Jesus Christ and His work are described as “riches” not because of scarcity, but because of their preciousness.

Even though the “mystery” was new to Paul, and newer to the Gentiles, it is as old as eternity for the idea of the Church was “hidden in God.”

*...and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. (verse 9)*

Even though the “mystery” was new to Paul, and newer to the Gentiles, it is as old as eternity for the idea of the Church was “hidden in God.”

# The function of the Church, verses 10—12

The Church, does not exist for itself.

The Church exists for one overriding purpose:  
for God and for His glory.

*It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things. (1 Peter 1:12)*

*“The Church becomes a mirror through which the bright ones of heaven see the glory of God.”*

Truth from God

→ Prophets

→ Apostles

→ Church

→ the World

The function of the Church is to glorify God by manifesting the wisdom and work of God.

*Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens—what can you do? They are deeper than the depths of the grave —what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea. (Job 11:7—9)*

*“Frankly, I stand amazed at the unfathomable complexity of God’s wisdom and God’s knowledge. How could man ever understand his reasons for action, or explain His methods of working?” (Romans 11:33, JBP)*

God's plans are as perfect as He is holy, yet at the same time they are employed respecting sinful man's capacities and the basic needs of his soul.

We may not grasp the theology behind the work, but we can see the results!

We have all experienced the miracle of redemption through faith in Christ.

We owe to those who haven't an explanation of what has changed in our lives.

**That is the work of the Church that  
brings glory to God.**