

The Mystery of Christ Revealed - Part 3

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AM Service

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Text:

Ephesians 3:10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11: According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: 12: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. 13: Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Introduction

The apostle Paul opens this chapter by speaking of God's divine plan for all ages—a mystery that had been hidden but now has been revealed. In [Ephesians 3:1–13](#) Paul explains his ministry in the context of God's revealed mystery. Paul was called as a minister to the Gentiles, to reveal the mystery of the church and to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

We have been considering this section in three headings, namely, the **Revelation of the Mystery**, the **Proclamation of the Mystery**, and the **Intention of the Mystery**. We have already talked about the Revelation and the Proclamation of the Mystery, this morning, consider with me the Intention of the Mystery.

I – The Revelation of the Mystery

II – The Proclamation of the Mystery

III - The Intention of the Mystery

What is the intention of the mystery? Before we look at the purpose of the mystery, first, let's review what the mystery Paul is referring to? And what is this mystery? Paul describes it in ... [Ephesians 3:6](#) That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

It is the mystery of the church! The mystery is that the Gentiles, or non-Jews, becoming part of one body—the church. This is God's plan, “[That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel](#)” (Eph 3:6).

Gentiles and Jews are equally partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Both Gentiles and Jews enjoy the riches in Christ and the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus. The wall of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles has been broken down

through the person and work of Jesus Christ. All those who believe, Jew or Gentile are now members of the same body—the church. AMEN!

1. The Aim

Now, let's look at the purpose of the mystery. What is the aim of the mystery? What is the intention of the mystery?

Ephesians 3:10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11: According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: 12: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

The clause “to the intent” indicates purpose. God has purpose for revealing of the mystery of Christ, of redemption, and of the church. And that purpose is as our text says, **that the manifold wisdom of God might be known**. This is the grand and ultimate end-goal of redemption that is in Christ Jesus—**so that God would be glorified for His manifold wisdom**.

The word ‘**manifold**’ in the original language means to ‘**multi-colored**.’ It’s a word used in describing a beautiful painting or tapestry with many different colors and shades. That’s what the wisdom of God is. It is multi-colored. It is multi-faceted. It’s like a beautiful and well-cut diamond. When we are speaking of the wisdom of God, we are dealing with a subject of that is vast and deep. Paul describes the wisdom of God in Romans 11:33, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

The wisdom of God is very deep! You cannot reach and touch bottom of it. It is unfathomable. The psalmist declares in Psalm 147:5, “Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.” God’s wisdom and understanding are beyond measure. It’s infinite. There is no limit to His understanding. We find the same declaration by Isaiah in Isaiah 40:28, “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.”

And so, we have here in Ephesians 3:10 the apostle Paul telling us clearly that the intention of the revelation of the mystery of the church and the unsearchable riches of Christ is to make known the manifold wisdom of God. In other words, the reason why God redeems Gentiles and brings them to be part of the church is **to put on display the vast and deep wisdom of God**. And according to Paul in verse 11, **this has been the God’s plan from eternity past** and it is a plan **centered on the Lord Jesus Christ**. Both Jew and Gentile believers have boldness and access to this privilege and blessing because of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

2. The Audience

Ephesians 3:10 To the intent that now **unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places** might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

To whom is the manifold wisdom of God being made known? Paul says it’s being made known “**unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places**.” The phrase ‘principalities and

powers,' is mentioned six times in the Bible. Depending on the context, the phrase 'principalities and powers,' may refer to **heavenly beings such as fallen angels, along with false teachers or prophet** influenced and empowered by demonic forces. Such as it is used in ...

Romans 8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39: Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Colossians 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

Colossians 2:15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

It may also mean **earthly government authorities and rulers** as the apostle used it in Titus 3:1, "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work."

Now, in our text, Ephesians 3:10–11, Paul presents different principalities and powers—those of the heavenly realms: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:"

In other words, the **angelic powers** are the audience. It is the angelic beings that the manifold wisdom of God is being made known to.

Some commentators think that the "**principalities and powers in heavenly places**" in this verse refers only to the holy angels, others think it refers to the fallen angels, and some to both. I think it refers to both the good and the bad, both the loyal angels, who serve God and the fallen angels, who serve Satan. **Both the faithful and the fallen angels will see and know** the unsearchable wisdom of God in the salvation of sinners. They will see the wisdom of God in including the Gentiles and become part of the church. Steven Cole explains that "*To the fallen angels, the church, which exists because of Christ's triumph at the cross, displays God's wisdom and reminds them of their impending doom. The fallen angels thought that they had triumphed at the cross, but God displayed His wisdom by using that very means to gain ultimate and final victory (Col. 2:15).*

As for the holy angels, through the cross they “see a great and wonderful manifestation of the glory of God” (Edwards, p. 147). Edwards points out that the happiness of angels, as well as of people, consists very much in seeing the glory of God.”

By the way, this implies that angelic beings are not omniscient; they are able to learn and grow in knowledge and wisdom. The apostle Peter tells us in [1 Peter 1:12](#), that angels long to look into the plan of salvation.

[1 Peter 1:12](#) Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; **which things the angels desire to look into.**

Charles Hodge writes, “*The Bible clearly teaches not only that the angels take a deep interest in the work of redemption, but that their knowledge and blessedness are increased by the exhibition of the glory of God in the salvation of men*” (Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians).

3. The Agent

We saw the aim of the revelation of the mystery, we saw the audience or the object of the revelation of the mystery, now let's look at the agent or the instrument of the revelation of the mystery. **How is the manifold wisdom made known to the angelic beings?** Our text clearly states it, “[To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God](#)” ([Eph 3:10](#)). It's through the church! The manifold wisdom of God is being made know to the angelic beings by the church. **The church has a special and unique place in God's plan in displaying His manifold wisdom** not only to all men, but also to all the angelic beings.

The wisdom of God is seen in His creation.

[Proverbs 3:19](#) The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. [20: By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.](#)

The LORD laid the earth's foundations and set the heavens in place, by wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.

[Psalm 104:24](#) O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

How great in number are the works of the LORD! In wisdom He made them all. They are not only many in number but many in variety. His work is so manifold that it would take eternity to talked about them. Let's look at some of them. We see the great wisdom of God in the heavenly bodies He had created such as the moon, stars, planets, galaxies; mountains, valleys, plains, dessert; lakes, river, ocean, snow, rain, hail, clouds; plants and trees, flowers, fruits; animals, insects; fish and sea creatures; sounds, colors, taste, emotions, etc. God made the universe and everything in it. He exercised great wisdom when He made all. Creation is display of His wisdom.

So, in creation these angelic beings see the glory of God. [The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.](#) God has set or displayed His glory above the heavens. No wonder David as he looks at the heavens burst into wonder and praise, “[When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?](#)” (Psalm 8:3-4)

The wisdom of God is seen in His new creation.

The wisdom of God is seen in His physical creation, **but it is more clearly seen in the spiritual creation**, also known as **the new creation**. When we look at a sinner saved by grace, made new in Christ, transformed by the Spirit, we are seeing God's wisdom. The angelic beings see and learn the manifold wisdom of God as they see these sinful creatures made new creatures in Christ and then gather them together into one body—the church and becomes an ambassador for Him to bring the message of reconciliation and salvation to a lost world.

F. F. Bruce says it this way, “*While the material universe presents ample evidence of the wisdom of God, the Church of the new creation (Ephesians 2:10) is the masterpiece of His wisdom – His diversified, “many-colored” wisdom.*”

The angels do learn the multifaceted, the many sided, the infinite wisdom of our great God **in the church and through the church**. Now think of it. **What a great honor this is! What a great privilege! What a great responsibility!** An assembly of poor weak sinners saved by grace can display to the heavenly beings the manifold wisdom of God. What an amazing and remarkable truth! This teaches us an important lesson—**as believers we should never have a low view of the church of Jesus Christ**. The church is precious to Jesus Christ. He loved the church and gave Himself for it. He established the church for His glory—to display His manifold wisdom.

Then in [verse 11](#) Paul writes, “[According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.](#)” Here, Paul reminds his readers that this great and glorious truth about **the church is not a divine afterthought**. It was in the heart and mind of God from the beginning. It is part of God’s eternal purpose in Christ. And Paul goes on to write in [verse 12](#), “[In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.](#)”

Again, what a privilege it is to be a Christian and be a part of the Church, through which God displays to the world, to the heavenly beings His manifold wisdom. But then what a joy that because of Christ and our faith in Him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence. Know and understand that this privileged access into the very presence of God is for all who are true believers in Jesus Christ; all who are a part of the Church, whether Jew or Gentile.

Then Paul closes this parenthesis in [verse 13](#), where he writes, “[Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.](#)”

In context the tribulations refer to his imprisonment on their behalf. So, Paul returns to his own imprisonment and warns the Ephesians not to be disheartened at the present “**tribulation**” of his imprisonment. They should not be discouraged because his sufferings were for their gain and glory. Once again, we see Paul’s attitude and perspective in life. He understood his imprisonment as God’s good and acceptable and perfect will. Paul looks at his imprisonment as the will of God, for the glory of God, and for the good of the church. Oh, may we have the same attitude in life as Paul.

Closing Exhortations

The application for us individually and corporately is to **remember our God-given calling and purpose**. As believers in Jesus Christ and as a church, **we have a tremendous privilege** to declare the manifold wisdom of God to the world and to the heavenly realms. And how do we make known to the world around us and to the angelic beings that unsearchable wisdom and glory of God? It’s the way we Christians live our lives individually and collectively as a church here on earth.

As we live out our Christian lives in godliness and holiness, we put God’s wisdom on display. As we proclaim the message of the gospel as ambassadors for Christ, we are showing forth His unsearchable and manifold wisdom not only to the unbelieving world, but also to the angelic beings. **If you are saved today, you are saved to serve**. God desires to equip you, to use you and to make your life a blessing and to reveal the infinite glory and wisdom of God! And **that is one great purpose to live for!** Are you striving to live that way? If you are not living for Him, come before Him and ask Him to help you live for Him. **Ask Him to make your life count for Jesus Christ**. Ask Him to do in you and through you everything He has saved you for. Come to Him and yield your will to His.

If you are not saved, let me challenge you to come to Jesus Christ today. Call on the Lord while there is opportunity and while He is near!

[Isaiah 55:3 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:7: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.](#)

AMEN!