

There is glory to God in the church when the church honours His word. There is glory to God in the church when Jews and Gentiles attain peace.

*“In the church.”* Are you in His church? If you are not, you are not in position to give glory to God. No matter how often you say “Prais God,” you are not giving glory to God unless you obey Him and become part of His church. If you are in His church, you can only give glory to Him by listening to that revelation which was given through the apostles and prophets. Then, by walking in that truth, you show the wisdom of Him who planned these things before the foundation of the earth. You give glory to God in the church and in Christ Jesus.

### QUESTIONS

51. T F There is glory to God in the church when the church honours His word.
52. T F The one who is not in the church can give glory to God.

**If you have any questions, write them below.**

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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## THE CHURCH IN EPHESIANS

a Correspondence Course – Nine Lessons by Paul K. Williams

### Lesson 4: God's Revelation for His Church

**Note to Student:** Please read Ephesians 3 carefully before studying this lesson. Think about what you have read. Pray to God.

### EPHESIANS 3 – GOD'S REVELATION FOR HIS CHURCH

- I. God's message to His church was given through chosen messengers. (1-5)
  - A. Paul was given a stewardship of God's grace – the apostleship.
  - B. In order to carry out the stewardship, the mystery concerning salvation was revealed to Him by God.
  - C. This message was not given to all men, but to “His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit.” (5)
- II. The revelation was written so we can understand (4)
  - A. It furnishes us to every good work (2 Tim.3:16-17).
  - B. It gives us everything pertaining to life and godliness (2 peter 1:3).
  - C. It is complete (Jude 3).
- III. When this revelation is followed, the manifold wisdom of God is made known through the church (10).
  - A. This was according to God's eternal purpose (11), which shows that the church is not an accident.
- IV. The saints are to grow in the strength of Christ (14-19)
- V. To God there is to be glory in the church (21)

## I. God's message to His church was given through chosen messengers. (1-5)

In Ephesians 4:11 Paul lists the “gifts” Jesus gave to the church. The gifts are men to do certain work. The first two offices are apostles and prophets. When studying Ephesians 2:20 we found that the apostles and prophets are the foundation of the church. In the passage we are now studying we find what this foundation work was. Their work was to reveal the “mystery” of the New Testament and to write it so that we can understand it. This is how God gives knowledge to His church. This is the foundation.

Paul talks first about himself: *“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles – if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already)”* (3:1-3). Paul was chosen to be the apostle to the Gentiles. In order for Paul to do his work God “revealed” the “mystery” to him.

### Mystery

The word “*mystery*” means something which has been hidden. In this case it is the mystery of how the Jew and Gentile could both be reconciled to God. This mystery has now been “*revealed*” because God has given us the solution in Jesus Christ. Paul wrote in Chapter 2 that Jew and Gentile are reconciled to God in one body through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. What was a mystery in Old Testament times has now been revealed.

### By Revelation

Paul says, *“that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery”* (v.3). Paul did not discover it, nor did he work out the mystery by his own wisdom. The way God made the mystery known was *“by revelation.”*

The revelation was given by the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised the apostles: *“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come”* (John 16:13).

There is enough in these verses to keep us busy the rest of our lives. We must not be content with a superficial knowledge of the Bible. We must be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man. The power which comes through the Holy Spirit comes through letting His word control our lives. Peter writes: *“Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation”* (1 Peter 2:2). The word of the Holy Spirit will give us power in the inner man *“so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.”* (Eph.3:17). **The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit dwell in the heart of the Christian. They do so “by faith.”** Faith comes from hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). As we let that word change our lives, they dwell in our hearts.

The final result of listening to the word, continuing in that word, living by that word, is that we may know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge. Living with Christ leads to a level of understanding which is greater than mere knowledge. This is what Paul wanted for the Ephesians, and what God wants for us. This is what is provided for us by our loving Heavenly Father. All praise to Him!

### QUESTIONS

43. T F We must be strengthened in the inner man.
44. T F Christ does not dwell in the hearts of Christians.
45. T F Christ lives in our hearts by faith.
46. T F We are rooted and grounded in love.
47. T F The love of Christ surpasses knowledge.
48. T F We cannot know the love of Christ.
49. T F We can be filled up to the fulness of God.
50. T F The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit dwell in the heart of the Christian.

## V. To God there is to be glory in the church (21)

How else could Paul conclude this section of the book? After showing what he wants for the Ephesians and telling us that God is able to do more than we can as or think (20), this verse is the only conclusion: *“To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”* (21)

### **The truth is that the kingdom of God and the church of God are the same.**

All those who have been saved from their sins have been “*transferred to the kingdom of His beloved Son*” (Colossians 1:13). When Jesus announced that the *kingdom* was at hand, He was announcing that the *church* was about to be established. Those who are in the church are in the kingdom. Christ is king NOW. When He comes again, He will deliver the kingdom up to God (1 Corinthians 15:24).

Don't let people downgrade the church into something which was an afterthought. The church was in the eternal purpose of God.

### **QUESTIONS**

31. T F “The rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” are angels.
32. T F Angels long to look into the things the Old Testament prophets wrote.
33. T F The angels see God's wisdom through the church.
34. T F The church is not important.
35. T F Salvation for Jew and Gentile is provided through the church.
36. T F God planned the church before the world began.
37. T F Jesus did not come to establish His church.
38. T F The kingdom of God and the church of God are the same.
39. T F Jesus failed to set up His kingdom.
40. T F Jesus will set up the kingdom when the Jews accept Him as king.
41. T F The saved ones have been transferred to the kingdom of Jesus.
42. T F When Jesus comes again he will deliver the kingdom up to God.

### **IV. The saints are to grow in the strength of Christ (14-9)**

In these verses Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is found. It is a prayer for Christians. It is a prayer for us.

Listen to it: “*that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God*” (16-19).

This is why the apostles could speak with such authority. The message which they revealed was first given to them by the Holy Spirit. To them the Holy Spirit taught “*all things, all truth.*” They did not guess as to what they should speak because they spoke as the Holy Spirit moved them.

### **To the Apostles and Prophets**

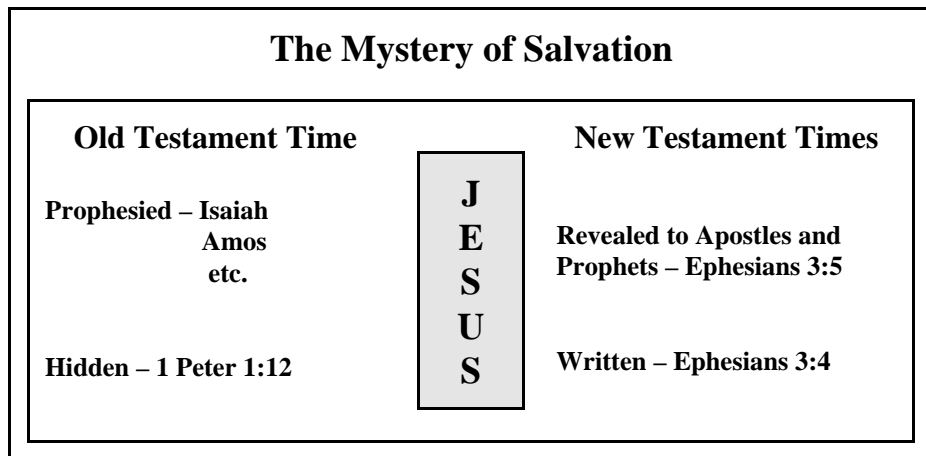
In 5:3 “*which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.*”

Here is an important thing to remember. The mystery was not revealed to all Christians by the Holy Spirit – it was revealed “*to His holy apostles and prophets.*” Sometimes people say that the Holy Spirit guides all Christians into the truth. By that they mean that when a person becomes a Christian the Holy Spirit comes into his heart and continuously guides him, revealing to the Christian the truth found in the Bible and elsewhere. Those who believe they have this guidance are absolutely sure they understand the truth, and I have found that they will not reason carefully about the Scriptures even when the Bible clearly teaches the opposite of what they believe. They have confidence in their feelings, which they say are the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and cannot be convinced of their errors even by clear Scripture.

This passage shows that the Holy Spirit is not given to personally guide each Christian into the truth. He was given to guide *the apostles and prophets* into all the truth. Jn 14:26 and 16:13 were promises to the apostles, not to all Christians.

Peter wrote about this same thing in 1 Peter 1:12: “*To them it was revealed (the prophets of the Old Testament) that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things which angels desire to look into.*” Those who “*preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit*” announced the things of the gospel to those who were saved.

This is how God has always brought His message to mankind; He has always revealed it to His chosen messengers who then have announced it to the people who needed to know it. God's messengers under the New Testament dispensation are Christ's apostles and prophets. The message was revealed to them through the Holy Spirit. They preached it so that all men can understand and be saved.



**The Holy Spirit did not guide each Christian through a personal revelation. Each Christian was guided by what the apostles and prophets revealed. Those who think they are personally guided by the Holy Spirit today are deceived and are only following their own feelings and desires. T**

### QUESTIONS

1. T F I read Ephesians 3 before studying this lesson.
2. T F The first two offices listed in Ephesians 4:11 are pastors and teachers.
3. T F The apostles and prophets are the foundation of the church.
4. T F Paul discovered the mystery by his own wisdom.
5. T F Because salvation is a mystery, we cannot understand what we must do to be saved.
6. T F The mystery revealed to Paul is how the Jew and Gentile could both be reconciled to God.
7. T F When Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to “guide you into all the truth,” (John 16:13). He was speaking only to His apostles.
8. T F We cannot be sure that what the apostles taught was the truth from God.
9. T F The Holy Spirit reveals the mystery of salvation directly to each Christian.
10. T F The Holy Spirit reveals the mystery of salvation through the message

now being made known “*through the church.*” this does not mean that the mystery is made known by the preaching of the church. The church does preach the gospel, but that is not what Paul is saying. He is saying that the *wisdom* of God is being made known through the church – “*to the rulers, and the authorities in the heavenly places.*” These rulers are angels. They are seeing the wisdom of God being revealed “*through the church.*”

Peter wrote concerning the Old Testament prophets: “*To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things which angels desire to look into*” (1 Peter 1:12). The angels have been interested in how God’s wisdom would bring about salvation for all men. Now they see that wisdom demonstrated through the church, for it is through the church that salvation is provided for both Jew and Gentile.

**Remember this:** The church is the demonstration of God’s wisdom. Don’t let anyone tell you that the church is not important! Don’t let anyone tell you that you can be saved outside of the church. It is “through the church” that salvation for Jew and Gentile is provided; it is “through the church” that God’s wisdom can be seen.

### **The church was according to God’s eternal purpose (11)**

Verse 11 says something which should be remembered always. “*This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” God always intended to bring about salvation through the church. He always intended to bring this about in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There are some who teach that Jesus did not come to bring the church but that He came to bring His kingdom. They say that the Jews refused to accept Him as king and therefore Jesus had to change His plans. According to these people Jesus decided to set up the church until some day the Jews change and accept Him as king. Then, they say, He will come again and set up His kingdom.

But these people are false teachers. If what they say is true, the church was not in the eternal purpose of god. Their doctrine cannot be true, because the church WAS in the eternal purpose of God – and still is.

## JUDE 3

### 1. The faith 2. Delivered 3. Once for all

We can have the assurance that God did not leave out anything when He revealed the faith. It has been once for all delivered to the saints. Our job is to study it and follow it. We will then be everything God wants us to be and heaven will be our home.

### QUESTIONS

22. T F Paul's letters are part of the Scriptures.
23. T F What Paul wrote was from his own mind and not from God.
24. T F The Scriptures make the man of God to be adequate (complete).
25. T F There are some good works which the Scriptures do not equip us for.
26. T F Everything God wants us to do is found in the Scriptures.
27. T F We need inspired men like Paul living today in order to know what to do to please God.
28. T F We do not have everything pertaining to life and godliness.
29. T F According to Jude 3 there are many faiths.
30. T F The faith has not been completely given.

### III. When this revelation is followed, the manifold (many) wisdom of God is made known through the church (10).

Verse 10 tells us a wonderful thing. Paul says in verses 8 and 9 that he was made a minister to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable (never ending) riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things, *in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places*" (Eph.3:10).

As the mystery was revealed and preached – the mystery that the Gentiles and Jews are saved alike by the blood of Christ through faith in the one body – the manifold wisdom of God was being made known. The great wisdom of God is

He gave to the apostles and prophets.

11. T F Those today who think they are personally guided into all truth by the Holy Spirit are right.

### II. The revelation was written so we can understand (4)

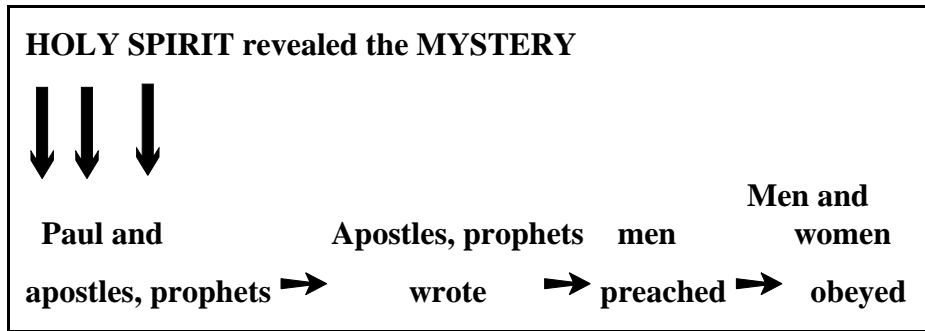
One reason people teach that Christians need the personal guidance of the Holy Spirit is the wide-spread belief that the Bible cannot be understood unless a person has the Holy Spirit. Many teach that the Bible is dead and unable to produce belief until the Holy Spirit comes into the heart of the person and produces belief and understanding. I saw a preacher hold up his Bible before a large audience and heard him say, "This book is dead." My reply to him before that same audience was, "The Bible is not dead!" *"The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword."*

The truth is that disrespect for the written word of God is disrespect for the Holy Spirit! He is the one who revealed that word in order that we can understand. When a person says we cannot understand it, he is saying the Holy Spirit did not do His work properly!

Let Paul explain the purpose of the Bible – *"how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)"* (Eph.3:3-4).

**Here is the sequence: 1) The mystery was revealed to Paul and the apostles, and prophets, 2) Paul (and the other apostles and prophets) wrote the revelation, 3) the Ephesians (and others) read what was revealed and written down, 4) when they read they understood what Paul (and the other apostles and prophets) understood.**

Yes, we CAN understand the Bible! That is why it was written. In Ephesians 5:17 Paul says, *"Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is."* When the man with a good and honest heart reads what the apostles have written (Luke 8:15) and when he walks in it he will know the truth which will make him free (John 8:31-32). The word of God brings about the new birth. *"Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever"* (1 Peter 1:23). When we let the word of God do its work in us, we have everything we need.



## QUESTIONS

12. T F The Bible cannot be understood unless a person has the personal guidance of the Holy Spirit.
13. T F The Bible is dead.
14. T F Faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Romans 10:17).
15. T F The word of God is living and Active (Heb.4:12).
16. T F If I do not respect the written word of God I do not respect the Holy Spirit.
17. T F The Holy Spirit caused the apostles to write so we can understand.
18. T F Luke 8:15 shows that we must have good and honest hearts.
19. T F John 8:31-32 teaches that we must walk in the truth we know.
20. T F 1 Peter 1:23 says that we are born again by the direct action of the Holy Spirit on our hearts.
21. T F We must long for the pure milk of the word.

## God's Word furnishes us to every good work

*"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).*

Paul knew he was writing Scripture when he wrote his letters. Peter called Paul's writings "Scripture" when he wrote: *"and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation--as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of*

*these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:15-16). The underlined words show that the writings of Paul are part of the Scriptures.*

Therefore the writings of Paul, the rest of the apostles, and of all the other inspired writers of the Bible make the man of God "adequate," and equip him for every good work. The reason God revealed the mystery to Paul and the reason Paul wrote it was that we who read may have everything we need in order to do everything God wants us to do. We do not need to be inspired like Paul. We need to read what he wrote. Then we will have everything we need.

## The Scriptures give us everything pertaining to life and godliness.

*"As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). Paul told us (2 Tim.3:16-17) that the Scriptures furnish us with everything we need to do every good work. Peter writes (2 Peter 1:3) that we have been granted everything having to do with life and godliness "through the true knowledge of Him who called us." We receive this knowledge through the Scriptures. With that knowledge we have EVERYTHING – everything we need – everything which has to do with true life and godliness. Don't look for it elsewhere. God has revealed His word to the apostles and prophets, they have written it down, and if we let it do its work in us we will have everything that pertains to life and godliness.*

## The Scriptures are complete (Jude 3)

Jude wrote toward the end of the time when God was revealing the New Testament. He wrote, *"contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). From this statement we learn several things: 1) There is "the faith." There is only one faith (Eph.4:4-6). It is the truth we must believe. 2) It was "delivered." We know that it was delivered by means of revelation from God to the apostles and prophets. 3) It was delivered "once for all." It is not going to come again or be added to. We have the whole thing.*