

## The Church, God's Plan for This Age: The Importance of the Church

Ephesians 3:1-13

July 26, 2020

### 1. The Importance of the Church to the Apostle Paul (1-5)

- a. "For this cause" (1a)
  - i. Paul was getting ready to pray in verse 1 (cf. 14), but as he began to refer to himself as the apostle to the Gentiles, he digressed to discuss the mystery of the Church, the Body of Christ.
- b. "I Paul, the prisoner of Christ for you Gentiles" (1b)
  - i. God chose Paul to make plain the mystery of the Body of Christ, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, which Christ alluded to in John 10:4, 16. "His own sheep" from the Jewish fold, and the "other sheep" of the Gentiles were to form "one flock" under the fostering care of the "one Shepherd."
  - ii. The revelation of the one Body was the special truth committed to Paul from the moment of his conversion as seen in Christ's response to Paul, "Why persecutes thou me?" To persecute a member of Christ's Body on earth was to persecute Christ in heaven. In this way, Christ was beginning to reveal the unity of the Body and its union with its glorified Head, Jesus Christ.
  - iii. It was because of this very doctrine that Paul was in prison at the time he wrote this letter (Acts 22:21).
  - iv. All of us Gentile believers owe much to Paul who suffered the shame and hardship of imprisonment to bring us the good news of the Gospel!
- c. "The dispensation of the grace of God" (2)
  - i. Dispensation carries the idea of a stewardship. Paul was entrusted as a steward of this special truth.
  - ii. It was a stewardship of the grace of God because Paul did not deserve this responsibility.
  - iii. It was a stewardship of the grace of God because it proclaimed the message of God's unmerited favor.
  - iv. It was a stewardship of the grace of God because the Gentiles were unworthy of such a favor.
- d. "The revelation of the mystery" (3-5)
  - i. A Biblical mystery is something made known by the revelation of God (3).
  - ii. This mystery of Christ, is God's wonderful secret concerning the glory of His Son Jesus, which Paul wrote of in chapter 1:9-13 (4).
  - iii. A biblical mystery has 3 characteristics (5):
    1. It deals with something unknown (5a; cf. Colossians 1:26a).
    2. It was revealed in the New Testament period (5b; cf. Colossians 1:26b).
    3. It can only be revealed by divine revelation (5c).

### 2. The Importance of the Church to the Gentiles (6-13)

- a. Gentiles are now fellow heirs with the same legal standing as the Jews (6a; cf. Galatians 3:29).
- b. Gentiles are now members of the same body (6b; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14).
- c. Gentiles are now partakers of God's promise in Christ by the gospel (6c)
  - i. Gentile believers share in the same spiritual promises that God gave to Israel (Romans 11:13-15).
  - ii. The promises that God made to national Israel are still intact (Romans 11:1-12).
- d. Gentiles are now partakers in the same grace available to Paul (7-9a)
  - i. Just as God gifted Paul by His grace, God gifts believers according to His power and not our worthiness (cf. 4:1, 7).
  - ii. Paul saw himself as the "most least of all saints" (8). God's grace should humble us, not puff us up.
- e. Gentiles can now enjoy the fellowship of this mystery (9).
- f. Gentiles can now take part in displaying God's manifold wisdom of God to the world and beyond (10-11)
  - i. Manifold has the idea of multifaced.
  - ii. The church shows the multifaced wisdom of God to the world and to the unseen world!
- g. Gentiles now have confident access to God through faith in Christ (12; cf. Hebrews 4:16).
- h. Gentiles should not be ashamed of Paul's tribulations on their behalf, but instead glory in his message (13).

#### Conclusion:

1. How important is the church to you? Does your relationship to the church make manifest God's wisdom?
2. Are you taking advantage of all that the church offers you? How are you making known this secret to others?