

“A Mystery Made Known”

Ephesians 3:1-12 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles-- ² Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. ⁴ In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ 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. ⁶ 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. ⁷ I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. ¹⁰ His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹ according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

“A Mystery Made Known”

There's just something about a good mystery novel. They play into our pride I guess. We like to think we can solve the mystery before the author in the end ties everything together to bring the truth to light. A really good mystery writer will play you to the very end making you think you've got it all figured out only to kibosh your arrogance time and again until the very end when you finally learn who done it. A good mystery is like playing chess with a chess master who has the right to reposition the players at any moment. Just when you think you've got him beat, you find yourself playing on a new board or worse, he cries "Check mate" and leaves you sitting there in awe, having never saw it coming.

A good mystery, one could say that here in the Book of Ephesians Paul's main concern is to divulge the mystery of history. Paul's point is that God has spoiled his own plot. God has manifest the Truth behind the world we live in, history, space and time, and reveals how it all ends and surprisingly we keep reading the book. The mystery is that of God's will, the manifold wisdom of God, indeed the mystery of Christ, which is being revealed, as Paul says, to rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms by the reality of the church's existence in this earthly realm. To us, this mystery is now being made known by the presence and working of the Holy Spirit in collaboration with the proclamation of the Gospel: the proclamation of the victory, of the New Creation that God has wrought in Jesus Christ and will bring to light in the end.

So, what is this mystery that God has kept hidden from the beginning? It is God's plan to gather up all things in heaven and earth in Christ (Eph. 1:10); to bring all things together, to bring all things to their created fulfillment under the Lordship of God the Son, Christ Jesus. Simply put, it has been God's purpose all along to unite his creation, all things in heaven and earth and indeed heaven and earth themselves in God's own self with his Son as the head and the Holy Spirit

“A Mystery Made Known”

as the uniting bond. It was God the Father's plan all along for God the Son to become human and in him by the presence and working of the Holy Spirit, all things would share in God. What a surprising twist. No wonder we want to keep on reading no matter that we know the end. Indeed, as the prophet Isaiah said, “the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea (11:9).” It is God's purpose to make himself fully known to everything in his Creation right down to every sub-atomic particle of matter by uniting his creation to himself in Christ Jesus by the presence and working of the Holy Spirit. This union began with the Incarnation, big-banged forth with the Resurrection, and is spreading as an infinite expansion throughout the creation through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit until the cataclysmic day when it happens that all things will be New Creation and Heaven and Earth shall be as one.

You may be saying to yourselves, “Randy, that's bizarre.” Well, I can only say to that, “It get's even weirder.” Through the Incarnation and Resurrection of Jesus Christ being applied to us and all creation by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we each to the extent of all peoples and all things are being redeemed from this old creation that is marred by sin and death to live freely in the New Creation. “Redeemed” in NT Greek is slave trade language for buying slaves back from slavery and setting them free. We who once were slaves to sin have freedom now to live in the New Creation where heaven and earth are one, where all things are united to God in Christ, and where God is making himself known to all things. Jesus Christ/God the Son, by his birth, life, death, and resurrection, has set us free to enter the end times New Creation now, indeed, to enter unimpeded into God's presence. A more accurate translation of verse twelve would be “In Christ Jesus, our Lord we have public visibility and a free right to enter in confidence through, with, and by means of his faith and faithfulness.” In Christ by the presence and working of the Holy Spirit we, here right now in this church and eventually everything in Creation, in heaven and on earth have been and will be given free and visible access to God in the New Creation.

As proof of the mystery Paul says there in verse six “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 was a devote Jew who believed that the Jewish people, the children of Abraham, had sole access to God at the Jerusalem Temple. That Temple was the only place in their beliefs where heaven and earth coincided. For Paul to see with his own eyes that Gentiles were receiving the Holy Spirit, who was supposed only to be at the Jerusalem Temple, the same Holy Spirit that he had received in consequence to his encounter with Jesus resurrected on the road to Damascus, for Paul to see that and to be a part of it meant that the end time New Creation that God had promised through prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel had begun, begun at the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah from the dead. Jew and Gentile brought together to be the Temple of God having been bonded together under the one Lord Jesus Christ through union with him in the Holy Spirit. The early Christians called this bit of New Creation in the midst of old humanity the Church. In the Church those who had once been enemies were now worshipping and

“A Mystery Made Known”

praying together and in a surprising twist God had made them, instead of the Jerusalem Temple, the place where his Holy Spirit would publicly dwell.

You and I, indeed, this congregation are a living part of this mystery. Here now in this very moment as we are gathered together the end times New Creation is being made manifest. The mystery is being solved. Because of the faith and faithfulness of Jesus Christ we in faith have public and free access to God in heaven because he has united himself to us and us together in Christ Jesus by the presence and working of the Holy Spirit. This is one ending to a mystery that I bet you never saw coming. In each of you and in us together heaven and earth are united and we are in the presence of God because God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth decided from the very beginning to unite his creation to himself by sending God the Son to become human and that union is being extended to all the creation by the presence and working of the Holy Spirit until in the end when all things are made New Creation. The proof that this is the Truth is you. Once you were strangers who would probably never have met nor called one another friends apart from this church. Yet, God has called you each here to be his people bound together in Christ by the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. The Christian love that is evident among you is the proof that this mystery has been solved. Go forth and be plot spoilers. Live as New Creation in the midst of the old. You are God's evidence that there is reason to hope. Amen.