

The Mystery Revealed

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 June 2019

Preacher: Donald Macleod

[0 : 0 0] Let's now turn back to the reading we had in Ephesians chapter 3. Ephesians 3, we'll be focusing on the whole section today of verses 1 down to verse 13, and as I'm carrying on the series we've been looking at getting through hopefully Ephesians chapter 1 to 3.

We're finishing up chapter 3, God willing, next Sunday, and that's us giving a very, very broad and brief overview of these chapters.

This morning, this afternoon, now we arrive at chapter 3 verses 1 down to verse 13. If you're here last week at the Family Service, you remember we considered in the morning the end of chapter 2, where we see the wonderful reality and truth where Paul reminds the Christians in Ephesus that they are one in Jesus.

But in Jesus alone, although they are Jews and Gentiles, those who are not Jews, they're different backgrounds, different cultures, different histories, that they are one in Jesus.

But because he is their cornerstone, because we have placed our trust in him and in him alone, because we are built in the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, then they are one, we're united together in Jesus.

[1 : 3 5] Here we are now in chapter 3 and Paul is continuing on this thought. He's saying, for this reason, in this few short verses, 1 down to 13, we see something incredible being revealed to us.

I wonder if you've ever, if you have read a book or watched a film where it's so clear what's going to take place. You're thinking at the start, the book of the film, am I bothering watching this? It's so clear that what's going to happen.

It's so clear that that character is going to be the hero or be killed or whatever it's going to be in the film or movie. It's so clear, it's a waste of two hours or a waste of a week's worth of reading.

Then very quickly you think, ah, this book is not going the way I thought it was. The character is not the person I thought they were. This new situation is arisen in the book and all of a sudden it's not quite going how I thought it was going to go.

There's something more, there's a twist to who like in the story. Of course, in our verses here, we're not dealing with a work of fiction, we're dealing instead, we're seeing something much more incredible, something much more wonderful, we're seeing the unfolding of a plan of God, the plan that God has had forever.

[3 : 0 5] God's eternal plan is here being revealed to us, part of that plan that is being shown to us by Paul.

The unfolding reality that God is going to save a people for himself. In these few short verses, we don't only see the mystery as it were being revealed that in Jesus we see it, but also we see that in Jesus the mystery is that he's not only here for the Jewish people, but Jesus has also come for the Gentiles, for those of us here who are not of Jewish heritage, those outside the campus at war that Jesus has come for them to, we'll cover that later on, we'll see just how incredible that fact was for the people in the day.

We'll look at Micah and we'll see later on also just how wonderful the reality is that Jesus wasn't just there for the Jews, he was coming for the Gentiles to the mind blown reality of that situation.

This morning, if you're here today and not yet a Christian, if you're here today and as of yet, you don't know Jesus. My simple question or thought I want you to have in your mind as we go through this chapter of these verses is, is Jesus still a mystery to you?

Are you here this day and you still don't understand clearly who he is or why you shouldn't even care at all about him? Then please listen carefully as Paul shows us some of just a small part of the greater wonder of who Jesus is and what he has done.

[5 : 03] As Paul explains, it's a very mystery in these verses. So we can look at it roughly in three sections. Some overlap as always, but three sections roughly.

Firstly, verses one down to verse six, where we see the clarity, the mystery being revealed, we see clarity. Then in verses seven to eleven, we see who the mystery has been revealed for, we see the community.

So clarity and community. And then verses twelve and thirteen, we see what all this means for the Christian. What does it mean for us?

Clarity, community, and then confidence. Verses one down to verse eleven, give us confidence as we see in verses twelve and thirteen.

So clarity, community, and confidence. First of all, let's start looking at verses one down to verse six. That first section, we see the clarity, we see this mystery being revealed to us.

[6 : 14] For us this morning, of course, we have printed Bibles on the screen in front of us. Actually, it's even better on the screen. I didn't think of that. So our Bibles were so accustomed to seeing chapters and verses.

We have to remember that when the church nephesis got this letter, it was a letter they got from Paul. There's no chapters, no verses. They got a letter, one big letter, pages long, and they heard it as one letter.

The one block of text. Almost like we're seeing here, there's verses there, but we can always imagine that as one big block of text. Chapter one, chapter two, is the one all flowing together into one big letter from Paul to the church.

And we see here that all that's being said in chapter three relies on chapter two. First few words in chapter three for this reason. Because of what I've said just now, because of what we looked at already, because of chapter two, then this.

Because we're one in Jesus. Now I'm going to say this to you also.

[7 : 28] Because Jesus is the cornerstone of all who believe in Him. Jews and Gentiles alike. Then chapter three can happen.

Chapter three then makes sense for this reason. Because you believe all of that. Well then, listen to this also.

It's funny here in verse one, Paul, we could say almost he reintroduces himself for this reason. I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles.

See, in chapter one we saw Paul giving us an introduction as to who he was. But here in chapter three, this reintroduction, we see it's very specific.

I, Paul, on behalf of you Gentiles. Well, like I said, Ephesus was a church of a mixed congregation of Jewish heritage and Gentile heritage.

[8 : 29] Probably mostly Gentiles in the church, those of a non-Jewish background. And here Paul is making sure that they are listening. Listen, you Gentiles.

I, Paul, am a prisoner. I'm in prison on behalf of Jesus Christ on behalf of you. I'm suffering because of you. This is all for you.

So please listen closely to what I'm saying to you on behalf of God. He's focusing down his role here and talking to the Gentiles.

Those who are not Jewish, this was to them here and to us here today in Cardaway. I don't know if I have one story but I assume there's no one here of Jewish heritage.

As far as I've learned in the last six weeks, we're all pretty far ahead and the whole Gentiles had the things. So this letter, this chapter is important for us.

[9 : 30] Paul's saying all this truth, all this wonder, it's not just for the Jewish people. It's for you and for me. It's important for us here today.

So verses one and verse six, we see the clarity. Verses two and three and four. Paul, he's not just assuming, he's not saying in verse two, there's two assuming that you've heard of a stewards of so on.

He's not saying just in case you haven't heard, he's being provocative we could say. He's saying you have heard. You have heard.

Assuming you've heard, they have heard because we've seen that in chapter one and chapter two. So you have heard. You have heard that that God has given stewardship to Paul of his words.

You know, find well that I am here. Paul was saying with the words of God that God has given me trust over the words of his grace.

[10 : 37] That God has told me what to say to you. Quite literally in verse two, he's saying, seeing that doubtless you've heard or something along those lines.

One of the underlying themes and Ephesians, and we saw this over the weeks, the underlying theme and Ephesians is just how Paul is an apostle, how he is a messenger from God and what that means for him.

But he is speaking here the very words of God. But he is a steward, quite literally a caretaker of the words of God.

Paul's not saying these are my words. Paul's not saying, listen to my theology, I've learned all these years and now I'm making sense of this for you. Paul was saying, I'm a steward.

I'm a caretaker. God has given me this and now I give it to you. That's important for us to understand that. When we read the scripture, we also remember that it's not the words of a writer.

[11 : 46] It's in the style of a writer, God uses his people. The words in scripture are the pure, perfect words of God.

So in verse two, he goes on down to verse three, tells us then in verse three, what has he been given stewardship over? What has God given him? The words he's been told of verse three, the mystery.

The mystery was made known to him by revelation. Again, he's not saying I've worked this out myself with my 30 odd years of training and theology, saying this is from God, the mystery that God has given me.

And then we'll see in verse four. Why is he saying all this? Because when you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ.

So important that we understand that Paul's not saying this is my thinking on this matter, but it's saying this is what God is saying, that God has revealed to you in Ephesus and to us in car away through Paul, God has used Paul, but it's not Paul's words.

[13 : 03] It's not Paul's great thinking. God is speaking to us. Just as God was speaking to us in Ephesus, he speaks to us in car away this day.

What's so incredible about this mystery? To verse four, in verse three, we see he's talking about the mystery made known to him. This mystery.

And in verse five, we see that this mystery, the mystery of Christ, the mystery of Jesus as we prayed already, the mystery of Jesus is the one who is coming to save his people.

But this mystery, it wasn't made known to the sons of men never generations. If we think of any prophet, any big name in the Old Testament, from Abraham up to Isaiah and all of Medhwinan afterwards, that these great men who we know so much about, that they did not have the clarity that we have today, that they knew in part, they knew in shadow, but we here in car away have a blessing of knowing and that much greater sense of wonder of a mystery of God.

The mystery of how was God going to save a people for himself? How was God going to do it? Abraham had promises from God that one would come from his people, from his seed.

[14 : 39] David had promises. We sing the promises of David, that one would come after him and he would be a king forever. But even then, they're still just thinly veiled, darkened.

And Paul's saying, but now, now in the coming of Jesus, we know the full mystery of who he is, that the mystery has been revealed.

The mystery is that Jesus is the one who has come to save his people. But Jesus is the one who God has sent to bring a people to himself.

But Jesus is the one who will rescue his people. The New Testament church has an incredible privilege. And it's a crazy thing to think for a second.

But no matter how small we feel as Christians here today, how poor and if we're honest, how useless we may feel as Christians here this morning, how far away from God we feel, how young we feel, how small we feel in our walk, but right now as a Christian, if you're a Christian here this morning, that you have been given a greater revelation, greater knowledge than even the prophets of old have ever had.

[16 : 06] Verse 5 is an incredible encouragement, but also it should blow us away. That we know more of God's plan than the greatest of prophets.

Now this is not a course because of our great insight. Trust me, there's no ever a place up here when you realise just how little you know about anything. It's not saying because we're so smart today we know it.

It's not saying because God in His glory has revealed to us. From the coming of Jesus we see the plan of God in flesh.

1 Peter even makes it even more incredible for us than 1 Peter in chapter 1. It tells us that even the angels are desiring to know more about it.

The angels don't quite fully understand the wonder of what God has done for His people. We today know more about Jesus, about the plan of God than the prophets ever did.

[17 : 16] But what the prophets sought after all the angels and the heaven desired to fully understand we know and we have it in the person of Jesus.

The mystery is, you see in verse 6, the mystery is the Gentiles are fellow-heirs. That God had a plan. God had a plan to save His people and who are His people.

His people are all across the world. Not just from one tribe, not just from one nation, but people of God are also to be found amongst the Gentiles.

But we are fellow-heirs, members of the same body, partakers of the same promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. But we stand this morning as recipients of His promise.

But right now if we know Jesus we can say that He is ours. We can say that we are fellow-heirs, that we are striving towards that prize, knowing that one day we will be in glory together.

[18 : 26] We are members of the same body, saw that last week, that God is building together a house and we are all being placed as precious, important stones in that house.

But we are all partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. But because of the good news coming to us, that we can say that we know Jesus.

When I was planning to do Micah in the evenings and Ephesians in the mornings, I knew there would be some overlap, but I didn't realise just how wonderful it would be if we remember, if we were present two weeks ago in the evening, we were looking at Micah chapter 4.

In Micah 4 we see the vision of the end, where all people and all nations are going to worship God. And we said that the reality for those reading that would be so beyond them.

What do you mean all people? All nations. Gentiles can't worship our God. Gentiles can't come near God. He is our God.

[19 : 39] And then we see in Ephesians the reality is that Jesus has people in Jewish nations, but also in Gentile nations.

That's why we are here today in this church. Thousands of years later, thousands of miles away, worshipping our Lord. All that Jesus embodies, all that Jesus brings to fulfilment for the Jewish people, He also does for us with them.

If you look with me please to verse 6, we see that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, they are members, they are partakers. The words being used here, they are active, they are continuing.

It's verbs being used under continuing verbs. We are still heirs, we are still members, we are still partakers. Now this is for now and forever.

There's no point that the promises in verse 6 ever cease to apply to us. Jesus who knows us now will always know us. That we who now are part of the family of God will always be part of the family of God.

[20 : 52] We who now trust in the promises of Jesus will always have the same promises being given to us. Clarity. The mystery has been revealed.

The mystery that generations of prophets knew a small amount about. The mystery that even the angels don't quite fully understand has been revealed to us.

That Jesus has a people. That people includes Gentiles. That people stretches even all the way out to car away.

If the Christians hear that, that is an incredible promise. That we can know that our Saviour knows us and that the provision has been made for us.

For those here this day who as of yet are not Christians, this is good news for you too. For all this is not just for some far away people, this is for you.

[22 : 01] For the Jesus who is so precious to those nephers, so precious to the Christians, that he can be precious to you too. The work he has done to save his people.

The work he has done on the cross. All he has done to purchase a people for himself. The work of Jesus is more than enough to cover you too.

And the question is why are you so hard hearted? Why are you so stubborn? I know that is a very forward thing to ask, but it's a reality. I said this last week, we say this every week. This is real.

This is serious. We are not just discussing some vague field. We are saying here that the promise of Jesus can be yours today if only you would come and trust in him.

That Jesus doesn't have to be a mystery for you. But you can be in verse 6. You can join the family, become a fellow where, become a fellow member, and have the same promise of Jesus.

[23 : 14] And you will be with him forever. The current promise that he is with you. Every Christian here knows that he is with us. Never leaving us, never forsaking us.

He is our Lord. And that promise can be yours too if only you would come to him. Come and believe.

So the clarity is there in verse 1 to verse 6, we see that who is it for? What is the mystery? The mystery has been revealed that Jesus has come. That Jesus has come to gather people for himself.

And that people is nation. That people is of Jewish heritage and of gentha heritage. That's made even more clear in verses 7 down to 11 where we see community.

So verses 1 to 6, clarity, what is the mystery? It's like Jesus has come to save a people for himself. That people is both Jewish and gentha.

[24 : 19] Now in verses 7 to 11 we see community. Who has the mystery been revealed for?

It's been revealed for all. In verse 7 Paul reminds us again. He reminds us that all he is saying is being given to him, is being said through him.

It's all passive. I was made a minister given by me. Paul is saying, God is doing this for me and doing this through me. I'm just telling you the words of God.

In verse 8 he is saying, even though I am the very least of all the sins, I don't deserve to be what I am, but yet this grace was given to preach to who, to the Gentiles, the insurchable riches of Christ.

Paul was given this job to share the great news, to share the wonderful news that in Jesus, that our insurchable riches, have because God used Paul and others like him to share the good news of the Gentiles, that we have the gospel here on our island and our nation.

[25 : 45] What were we before the gospel came? We saw this when we were looking at Micah. The evidence is down the road and the Kalinastone is the best evidence. What were we? We were pagans, absolute pagans, a centre of worship for the rest of Scotland, some historians think, that people would flock from Scotland to come to our island to worship whatever the gods it was they worshipped.

We were an island of darkness lost and yet the gospel came to us. Who's it for? Who is the good news for?

Who is it for, everything for Jews and Gentiles? Who's it for? Verse 9 is for everyone. All types of people.

I can't be a Christian because ... whatever excuse you've come up with over the years, it means nothing to these verses.

The mystery revealed in Jesus is for you. The hope revealed in Jesus, it's for you. If you don't come and place your trust in Him.

[27 : 04] Then in verse 10 we see it's not just Paul doing the work, who else has been given a job? It's for church. Verse 10, so that through the church, that through the Christians, the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known.

So, God has given us as Christians here today, a job. Whose job is it to share the gospel? It's not just the ministers, whoever is standing here.

It's not just the elders. It's the job of every member of the church. Every part of the church of Christ, it is our job and our duty to share the good news.

And here's where it gets even more incredible. The end words of verse 10. Verse 10 doesn't go perhaps the way we think it might go. So that we're known to the rulers and authorities, where?

In the heavenly places. But the church, we're told to share the gospel, so that our fellow citizens, our fellow people would hear the gospel, so that our neighbors and the families would hear the gospel.

[28 : 21] If the church is told to share the gospel and to share the good news of Jesus, also, in verse 10. So the wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

Paul's just touching here in something which is so beyond us in so many ways, that Paul is not talking in verse 10 exclusively about the here and now, he's talking about things beyond us.

Rulers and authorities in heavenly places. Although that doesn't really give a way to us. In the Greek, it's quite a negative sense here. Quite a negative.

These rulers and authorities, it's negative. It's dark. The sense is almost of darkness. The idea is that, I would say, it's heavenly places. It just means outside the physical realm.

Again, there's no time here and we're delving into things so beyond us here. But Paul is clear that when we share the gospel, when we as a church engage together in the gospel, we are proclaiming that gospel, that good news, even to the spirits beyond our view.

[29 : 36] That to the things in the heavenly places, things we don't understand and can't understand, but even they are influenced when the gospel is proclaimed. Church, we have a big job.

Even in car away and our own homes, we have a big job to share the gospel. We saw a few weeks ago, that we're either serving Jesus under his rule, under his authority, or we're serving Satan under his rule, his authority.

And Paul is clear on that in Ephesians 2. The reality is, every time the gospel is proclaimed and preached, every time we share the good news to friends and family, every time we worship God, what everybody has done for us, we are fighting back against things and dimensions we have no idea about.

The job is big, but our God is greater than that. We see that in verse 11. That all this was according to eternal purpose, that he realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It's not just with respect that one day all this plan took place in the mind of God, but this plan is eternal. From before creation, before time in reality, before we ever existed, that all this was part of God's perfect plan, that one day a savior would come, but one day we even here in car away today would know him as our savior, but we would have him as our Lord.

[31 : 30] That's no small thing. Just think that right now, if you're here this morning worshiping Jesus as your Lord, then that was part of the perfect eternal, changeless plan of God.

And we covered that before previously in Ephesians. God's perfect plan included you and me. Why is it important?

See that in verse 12. In verse 12, we see confidence. Confidence. So verse 11 and verse 12, we take them together.

Verse 11, this is according to eternal purpose, that he realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

Boldness and access with confidence. If you're here this morning, the phleunas as a Christian, no matter how small or weak or useless you may feel, verse 11 and verse 12 are true for you.

[32 : 55] For right now, you have access. And you should have that with boldness. Come in boldness, not because of who you are, not because of your efforts.

Come in boldness because Jesus has made the way for us. In whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

That's why when we feel so far away from God, we can come of confidence and cry out to him knowing that he still hears us. For we've had that week where we've sinned and sinned and sinned again, that week we've just, everything's gone wrong and we've done everything wrong.

Verse 11 is still through, verse 12 is still through. And just like we saw before that the Gentiles are stillier.

That's a constant, ongoing thing. The same type of word is used in verse 12. We have access. We have boldness.

[34 : 05] This is continual. Paul's saying you have this now and you will always have this. A word being used here implies something without end. God won't one day turn around and go, well, that's that you've had your chance, you had a good few years of it, but you're just so much of a useless Christian.

Access is now gone. It'll never happen. That will never happen. You have access now and you'll always have access. We can always come before God in our prayers, worshiping him, praising him, bowing ourselves before him, knowing that he sees us, he hears us, and he knows him.

Why? Because it's all through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, so you have him verse 11. Because it's all part of the eternal purpose, eternal plan of God.

The mystery is for you. The mystery is that God from eternity has a people for himself.

That God from eternity has had a perfect plan to provide a perfect Savior to save these people, to save you and to save me.

[35 : 24] He trust in Jesus this morning. If you hear today, I'm so aware of how short time is as next Sunday is my last Sunday.

I would praise God that there is men coming after me who will call for a minister, who will share the same gospel. This is the gospel we have. This is it. You won't hear anything else because there's nothing else we have to offer you.

This is a gospel. The mystery has been revealed in Jesus, that Jesus has his people. We're not just Jews, we're from across the nations, across the world, even stretching as far west as here.

But this morning, for every Christian here, we are here in the strength of Jesus. And we are here with boldness.

We have full access to him. I should be here this morning with confidence, with confidence not in our own abilities, but confidence in the truth that Jesus has made a way for us.

[36 : 32] As I close with this final plea, don't remain with Jesus as a mystery to you.

Don't remain with Jesus as a mystery to you. God has made a way for you. God has made a way for you to come and to know him and to worship him.

There's no song and dance required. There's no incense to be burned, no praying to any saints, no special handshake, no fancy apron. Come and believe in Jesus.

The mystery who has been revealed, the mystery going back thousands of years, that a Savior would come, that one would come, that God would somehow save his people.

There is no more mystery today. That mystery has been revealed in Jesus. And he can be your Savior also this morning if only you would come to him.

[37 : 40] How many times have you heard the same message? How many times have you heard the same gospel through? If and yet you have not come? Our prayer, our heartfelt loving prayer is you would come.

But Jesus would no longer be a mystery to you, but instead you would see him as your Lord. Like the Christians here today, you would come to him with boldness, with confidence, trusting in all that he is and all that he has said.

Let's bear our heads in that, a word of prayer. Lord, we come to you this morning. We give you praise and give you thanks. Lord, thank you for your word. Thank you Lord for the words you gave even to your apostle Paul.

You allowed him to speak your word and that through him you revealed the wonderful mystery that you have your people. You have your people across the world.

You have your people even in this small island. We come before you today and we humble ourselves. We do pray for any here who as of yet don't understand these things.

[38 : 50] Any here who as of yet still have their eyes shut to all you've done for them. Lord, you would open their eyes. Open their eyes, they come to know you and come to love you and come to serve you.

Lord, you forgive me for anything I said that was incorrect. We give you praise that the power is in your word and not in anyone, any poor sinner, who stands in this place to preach it.

Lord, you would truly make that word alive to every one of us even today. For those here who do know you, Lord, you would help us to grow in our love and grow in understanding and to grow in our fellowship with you.

Again, for those here who as of yet don't know you, Lord, they would know you. That they would know the wonderful mystery revealed in Jesus, that he is the only one.

He is the only way of access, that he alone is the way to you. That he alone is the Savior, that he alone deserves all the glory and all the praise.

[39 : 54] These things in mind help us to sing our final item of praise of hearts full of joy and hearts full of worship for you. Understanding of the great wonder of what we have received in and through our Savior.

As in and through His name, we have confidence that you hear our prayers, that He is constantly interceding for His people, that He is at your right hand, never to leave.

He is our reigning, living, eternal, King and Savior. Bring all these things to you, Lord, calling on His precious name and for His sake. Amen.