

Eph 3:1-4 Mystery of the Church

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of you Gentiles--

For this reason

Paul has explained that Jewish and Gentile believers have together been made into new creations in Christ, and as a result, this new work of God, the Church has been formed, so that brothers and sisters in Christ can minister to each other in love.

I, Paul

Paul explains that he, as the author of this letter (1:1), is personally suffering in their behalf.

the prisoner of Christ Jesus.

His message to believing Gentiles regarding fellow citizenship with Jewish believers had caused his imprisonment by the hand of some Jews in Jerusalem.

“in behalf of you Gentiles—

Paul says that his imprisonment was on behalf of the Gentiles. It was this statement at the Temple in Jerusalem in Acts 22:1-23 that caused him to be arrested. They listened to him carefully all the way through his testimony about Jesus saving him, and how he had been persecuting the church, even as he included in Acts 22:20 **20 And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing nearby and approving, and watching over the cloaks of those who were killing him.’ 21 And He said to me, ‘Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”**

Paul had just revealed that the “new person” had been created, composed of believing Jews and Gentiles in which God’s Spirit dwells. He is going to pray for strengthened love toward one another as the outworking of this new union. However, before he offers this prayer he abruptly stops.

surely you have heard.

He’s saying “At any rate if you have heard ... as I know you have.

of the administration of the grace of God that was given to me for you

Paul lets them know that he had been chosen by God as an administrator of God’s grace, a steward of the grace of God that He’d been shown. Paul is an instrument to show others this same grace. We’re all like Paul. What were you doing to run away from God and live life your own way when you were called? What has God saved you from? How did God guide you? Then show that same grace to others that you have been shown. Paul’s ministry was to make known the mystery of the Church, one Body of both Jewish and Gentile believers. Paul was the one to whom God graciously gave the ministry of illuminating this mystery and this was in connection with his specific role as an apostle to Gentiles.

that by revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I wrote briefly.

“by revelation,” has the meaning of unveiling or disclosing something known to God that had been previously hidden from humans. The communication to humankind of God’s secret or hidden plan was through the prophets who were caught up in visions and would see and hear from God. God chooses when, to whom and in what circumstances to reveal His mysteries. In the Gospels (Matt 13:11 = Mark 4:1 = Luke 8:10) it is used by Jesus to explain that he spoke in parables so that the disciples could learn the mysteries of the kingdom of God which would remain hidden from the unbelieving.

In 1 Cor 2:7 the mystery, equated with the wisdom of God, is revealed as the crucified Christ who is the power of God for salvation. Because God has revealed it through the Spirit (2:10), all believers (not only the few) are able to understand it (1:21). In Col 1:26–27 the mystery which had been hidden and is now manifest to the saints is that Christ is among or in them, the hope of glory. Here there is no reference to the future, just the present reality for the believer. In 2:2–3 Paul reveals his desire that believers have full understanding and thus comprehend God’s mystery, namely, Christ in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid. Again in Col 4:3 the mystery of Christ refers to the proclamation of Christ’s salvation. All of these Colossian passages where Paul specifically mentions mystery always refer to the present reality of Christ’s salvation, with no reference to future implications.

The term “mystery” occurs six times in Ephesians, more than in any other NT book. The NT concept of the mystery is most fully developed in Ephesians, which is why we’re looking at it closely. While in Paul’s other epistles the mystery focuses on Christ’s redemption that includes Gentiles, in Ephesians the mystery is that believing Jews and Gentiles are now one in the body of Christ.

The mystery mentioned in Ephesians was hidden in God in ages past (3:9). It was something that could not be understood by human ingenuity or study. God revealed it to the apostles and prophets by the Spirit (3:4). Now that it is revealed, it is open to everyone and it is simple to understand

as I wrote before briefly

So, Paul wrote previously about the mystery of the church to the Ephesians, and he’s either referring to another letter, which we don’t have, or he’s reminding them of what he just said. Either way, he’s recapping here, so we don’t need to worry about missing anything!

whereby when reading it you are able to perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,

Paul wants the Ephesians to read the previous section of the letter, which we’ve been studying over the past few weeks, so that they can understand the mystery of the Church, that both Jew and Gentile Believers are together in one Body the Church, united, and serving God in reverence and trust, and serving each other in love and humility.

Col 1:25-27 25 I was made a minister of this church according to the commission from God granted to me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, 26 that is, the mystery which had been hidden from the past ages and generations, but now has been revealed to His saints, 27 to whom God willed to make known what the wealth of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles is, the mystery that is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Jesus is abiding with us, lives in us through the power of the Holy Spirit.