



## Mystery Hidden in God

***To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable 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; so 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 3:8-10](#)***

Last week we examined Paul's humility and understanding of his depravity as being foundational to his fruitful preaching of gospel to the Gentiles. As he continued his letter, he again reminded the Ephesians of his stewardship (or *administration*) of the ***mystery hidden in God***. Paul used this word *mystery* (Greek: [mustērion](#)) five times in this epistle alone, and each in reference to things previously not understood about God's redemptive plan.

Jesus also spoke of this mystery when he told His disciples, ***"To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted,"*** ([Matt 13:11](#)), and it is used many times throughout scripture in a similar fashion. God's great plan of salvation was not made clearly known until an appointed time in history (in was in fact ***hidden for ages***), and it was given to humble, obedient apostles of Christ to deliver it to the world. Paul explained this in much more detail in the preceding verses here in Ephesians, and mentions it in again in [1 Corinthians 2:7](#) and [Colossians 1:16](#).

Why did God choose to keep His plan a mystery? Scripture gives us a clue: ***"that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places."***

The word translated ***manifold*** here is the Greek [polupoikilos](#) and is only used once in the New Testament. It means "extremely; of many colors". You might think of this as exceedingly vast, deep, or all-encompassing. God's wisdom is far beyond our wildest imagination, and He kept His plans a mystery so that we can now better appreciate the depth of His prominence. But there's even more to it.

In verse 10 we also see a fascinating and, if you will, mysterious truth hiding in a few small words. Paul says that the wisdom of God might ***now*** be made known ***through*** the church ***to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places***.

Humans tend to think the universe revolves around us, but here we see that the mystery of God's gospel plan was hidden for ages even from those in the spiritual world. The word for ***ages*** is the Greek [aiōn](#), which can also be rendered "forever and ever", "beginning of time", or



“eternity”. And the kicker is that God also chose to use the gospel revelation to show His infinite wisdom to those beings who rule in the spiritual realm.

The natural question is, “who are these spiritual rulers and authorities?” It appears from Paul’s other writings that they are angels, most likely fallen angels, who have some dominion over activities on earth. We can derive this from how Paul used these same Greek words for *rulers* ([archē](#)) and *authority/power* ([exousia](#)) throughout Ephesians:

***He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. [Eph 1:20-21](#)***

***And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. [Eph 2:1-2](#)***

***For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. [Eph 6:12](#)***

If there was ever a reminder that there is a spiritual war raging right now, here we see it. Demonic forces, which have been granted some level of authority and rule on earth, are seeking to destroy God’s redemptive plan, but in the end it is futile; the ending has already been declared – Christ wins! Even so, the war rages on, and we are instructed to fight and struggle against these powers by holding fast to our faith in prayer and obedience to Christ (cf: [2 Cor 10:3-6](#))

What an amazing thing to ponder as we look at the gospel from this side of history. For since the creation of the world, and perhaps even before that, God’s plan of redemption for sinful mankind was hidden *in Himself*. Even the angels were kept from the fullness of this incredible plan, though they ***longed to look into*** these things ([1 Peter 1:12](#)).

We indeed are blessed beyond imagination to have been given the full revelation of God’s gospel, the good news of salvation for those who repent and believe in His Son Jesus Christ, and the duty and honor to share it with the world. And we are told that God’s plan is much bigger than us. There is a universe beyond our view filled with God’s creatures, both obedient and fallen, and they too are subject to His divine timetable, providence, and sovereignty. There really is so much to look forward to as we consider our future residence in the Kingdom of God, living in the Light of Christ, and serving our majestic and exceedingly wise heavenly Father for all ages to come.