

Palmetto Baptist Church: May 24, 2020

God's Plan for Unity among His People: Ephesians 3:4-7

**I. The Messenger of the Gospel (The Apostle Paul) (1-3)**

- A. Paul was colorful in his communication.
- B. Paul dependent upon divine intervention.
- C. Paul was clear about his mission.

**II. The Mystery of Christ (Unity among all nations) (3-6)**

- A. The mystery was difficult to see. (3-5)
- B. The mystery was hard to accept. (6)

**II. The Mystery of Christ (Unity among all nations) (3-6)**

- A. The mystery was difficult to see. (3-5)

**Explaining the mystery:<sup>1</sup>**

**1a:** something not understood or beyond understanding

: ENIGMA The *mystery* of his disappearance has never been solved.

**Illustration:** Duane, Celeste, Phoebe and Hannah Story

**2:** profound, inexplicable, or secretive quality or character

the *mystery* of her smile

the *mysteries* and beauties of nature

**Illustration:** Picture of Silas

**3a:** a religious truth that one can know only by revelation and cannot fully understand

the *mystery* of the Trinity,

**Illustration:** Picture of the Trinity

Prophecy, Nativity, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, Return...the mystery of election (1:4), adoption (1:5), redemption and forgiveness (1:6), **His plan for unity** (1:9-10)... AS SEEN IN THE CHURCH

**Illustration:** PBC in D1 and at 620 Powdersville Main

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mystery>

## A. The mystery was difficult to see. (3-5)

1. **It required revelation from God (3)** – Direct revelation to Paul on the road to Damascus. (resulting in Paul’s conversion and call to ministry)

2. **It demanded insight from the Holy Spirit (4)**

- perceive my *insight* (discernment; a running together; flowing together; intelligence of mind) into the mystery of Christ. Paul was referring to what he wrote about the Jews and Gentiles becoming one in Ephesians 2:11-21.

**Application:** He illuminates Scriptures for believers. (Eph. 1:18; John 16:13-16)

3. **It included messengers from God about Christ (5)**

- the OT prophets... the NT prophets... the NT Apostles; Ephesians 4:11-12

**Illustration:** The work of the Holy Spirit revealing the mystery of Christ to the Church (5)

- The mystery of Christ was previously concealed in the message of the prophets.

[ESV Study Bible] **Not made known:** while Moses and the prophets had written of Christ and his salvation to the ends of the earth (John 5:46; I Pet. 1:10-12).

**Moses wrote about Jesus:**

**John 5:46**

<sup>46</sup>For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.

**Numbers 21:9**

<sup>9</sup>So Moses made a bronze<sup>[a]</sup> serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

**Deuteronomy 18:15**

<sup>15</sup>“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—

**Luke 24:27**

<sup>27</sup>And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

**The prophets wrote about Jesus:**

## **I Peter 1:10-12**

<sup>10</sup>Concerning this salvation, **the prophets who prophesied** about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, <sup>11</sup>**inquiring what person or time<sup>[a]</sup> the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating** when he predicted **the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories**. <sup>12</sup>It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

- **The Prophets who prophesied**

## **John 12:41**

<sup>41</sup>Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.

## **Daniel 8:15**

<sup>15</sup>When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it. And behold, there stood before me one having the appearance of a man.

## **Matthew 13:17**

<sup>17</sup>For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

## **Luke 10:24**

<sup>24</sup>For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

- **Inquiring what person Jesus is or what time Jesus would return**

## **Daniel 9:24-26**

<sup>24</sup>"Seventy weeks<sup>[a]</sup> are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>25</sup>Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again<sup>[c]</sup> with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. <sup>26</sup>And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its<sup>[d]</sup> end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.

- **The Spirit of Christ in them was indicating**

## **Romans 8:9**

<sup>9</sup>You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

- About the sufferings of Christ and his subsequent glories

**Isaiah 52:13-53:12**

<sup>13</sup>Behold, my servant shall act wisely;<sup>[a]</sup>  
he shall be high and lifted up,  
and shall be exalted.

<sup>14</sup>As many were astonished at you—  
his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance,  
and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—

<sup>15</sup>so shall he sprinkle<sup>[b]</sup> many nations.  
Kings shall shut their mouths because of him,  
for that which has not been told them they see,  
and that which they have not heard they understand.

**53** Who has believed what he has heard from us?<sup>[c]</sup>

And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

<sup>2</sup>For he grew up before him like a young plant,  
and like a root out of dry ground;  
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,  
and no beauty that we should desire him.

<sup>3</sup>He was despised and rejected<sup>[d]</sup> by men,  
a man of sorrows<sup>[e]</sup> and acquainted with<sup>[f]</sup> grief;<sup>[g]</sup>  
and as one from whom men hide their faces<sup>[h]</sup>  
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

<sup>4</sup>Surely he has borne our griefs  
and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed him stricken,  
smitten by God, and afflicted.

<sup>5</sup>But he was pierced for our transgressions;  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,  
and with his wounds we are healed.

<sup>6</sup>All we like sheep have gone astray;  
we have turned—every one—to his own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.

<sup>7</sup>He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,  
yet he opened not his mouth;  
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,  
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,  
so he opened not his mouth.

<sup>8</sup>By oppression and judgment he was taken away;  
and as for his generation, who considered  
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,  
stricken for the transgression of my people?

<sup>9</sup>And they made his grave with the wicked  
and with a rich man in his death,  
although he had done no violence,  
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

<sup>10</sup>Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;  
 he has put him to grief;<sup>[a]</sup>  
 when his soul makes<sup>[b]</sup> an offering for guilt,  
 he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;  
 the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.  
<sup>11</sup>Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see<sup>[c]</sup> and be satisfied;  
 by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,  
 make many to be accounted righteous,  
 and he shall bear their iniquities.  
<sup>12</sup>Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,<sup>[d]</sup>  
 and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,<sup>[e]</sup>  
 because he poured out his soul to death  
 and was numbered with the transgressors;  
 yet he bore the sin of many,  
 and makes intercession for the transgressors.

- **They were serving not themselves but you**

### **Hebrews 11:39-40**

<sup>39</sup>And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, <sup>40</sup>since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

- **The mystery was revealed by the Holy Spirit through the NT apostles and prophets.**

[ESV Study Bible] The full realization of who Christ was and the extent of the salvation that would come to the Gentiles was not clear until after the giving of **the Spirit** (I Cor. 2:8-10), **apostles and prophets**. See notes on Eph. 2:20

### **The Gift of the Holy Spirit**

#### **I Corinthians 2:8-10**

<sup>8</sup>None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. <sup>9</sup>But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,  
 nor the heart of man imagined,  
 what God has prepared for those who love him”—

<sup>10</sup>these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

### **The Gift of the Apostles**

#### **Ephesians 2:20**

<sup>20</sup>built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

[ESV Study Bible] **2:20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.** There are several views about the apostles and prophets referred to here: (1) Some think that they were “foundational” because they proclaimed the very words of God, and some of their words became the books of the NT. Since a “foundation” is laid only once (i.e., at the beginning of the church) there are no more apostles or prophets today, but their function of speaking the words of God has been replaced by the written Bible, which is the foundation today. (2) Others argue that these “prophets” are very closely tied to the apostles in the phrase “the apostles and prophets,” and that these prophets do not represent all who had a gift of prophecy in the early church (see note on I Cor. 12:10); they were a small group closely associated with the apostles (or else identical to the apostles) to whom God had revealed the mystery of the Gentile inclusion in the church (see Eph. 3:5, where the same phrase, “the apostles and prophets,” occurs). In this case ordinary Christians who had the gift of prophecy in Ephesus (4:11) and other churches (cf. Acts 11:27; 19:6; 21:9-10; Rom. 12:6; I Cor. 12:10; I Thess. 5:19-21; I Tim. 1:18; 4:14) were not part of the “foundation” but were part of the rest of the building that was being built (that is, the church) and would continue so throughout the church age. (3) Finally, some think the “prophets” here could be the OT prophets, through the same words in Eph. 3:5 point to prophets of the NT era.

## *II. The Mystery of Christ (Unity among all nations) (3-6)*

### *A. The mystery was difficult to see. (3-5)*

### **B. The mystery was hard to accept.**

#### **Explain the reason for disunity between the Jews and Gentiles...**

- Abraham received the promise and became the father of the Jewish nation. (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:17-21; 17:1-8)
  - The Promise of Land (12:1)
  - The Promise of Seed (12:2)
  - The Promise of Universal Blessing (12:3)
  
- The nation of Israel was enslaved by the Egyptians (Exodus).
- The nation of Israel exterminated the Canaanites (Joshua).
- The nation of Israel fought with the Gentiles (Judges-2 Kings).
- The nation of Israel/Judah were taken into exile by the Assyrians and Babylonians (Prophetic Books; Poetical Books).
- The nation of Israel was subjected to a Gentile nations since exile (Persians, Greece, Rome...)
- The nation of Israel was waiting for the Messiah to come and set them free! (Acts 1:6)

#### **Acts 1:6**

“So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

## Ephesians 3:6

<sup>6</sup>This mystery is<sup>[a]</sup> that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

### 1. Gentiles are written into the will. – *the Gentiles are fellow heirs*

- of spiritual blessings in heaven [*and from heaven (4:11-12)*] (1:11, 14) / (2:1-10)
- of spiritual blessings on earth (1:18... as seen through the church vs. 22) / (2:11-22)

### Illustration: “Knives Out”

**Gentiles:** ethnē

**Fellow heirs:** refers to recipients of the riches of Christ seen in the heavenly places

A direct reference to Ephesians 2:11-13

- Both Gentiles and Jews have rights to enjoy the riches of heaven...

**John MacArthur Study Bible:** Consider what it meant to the Gentiles to be both physically (Eph. 2:11) and spiritually alienated (Eph. 2:12-13). The Gentiles as people were cut off from God in 5 different ways:

1. They were “without Christ,” the Messiah, having no Savior and Deliverer and without divine purpose or destiny.
2. They were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.” God’s chosen people, the Jews, were a nation whose supreme King and Lord was God Himself, and from whose unique blessing and protection they benefitted.
3. Gentiles were “strangers from the covenants of promise,” not able to partake of God’s divine covenants in which He promised to give His people a land, a priesthood, a people, a nation, a kingdom, and a King – and to those who believe in Him, eternal life and heaven.
4. They had “no hope” because they had been given no divine promise.
5. They were “without God in the world.” While Gentiles had many gods, they did not recognize the true God because they did not want Him (*see Rom. 1:18-26*).

**Embracing Gentiles as fellow heirs to the riches they thought belonged to Jews alone produced a fight with JEALOUSLY AND COVETOUSNESS.**

### Romans 11:11-12

<sup>11</sup>So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. <sup>12</sup>Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion<sup>[a]</sup> mean!

## 2. Gentiles are adopted into the family. – *members of the same body*

**Same body:** referring back to Ephesian 2:14-18 (particularly verse 15: one new man [or body] created out of two... verse 16: both, verse 18: both)

**John MacArthur Study Bible:** “Though God had promised universal blessing through Abraham (Gen. 12:3), the full meaning of that promise became clear when Paul wrote Gal. 3:28. Isaiah 49:6 predicted salvation to all races, but it was Paul who wrote of the fulfillment of that pledge (Acts 14:46, 47). Paul disclosed a truth that not even the greatest prophets understood – that within the church, composed of all the saved since Pentecost in one united body, there would be no racial, social, or spiritual distinctions.”

**Embracing Gentiles as members of the same body produced a struggle with perceived injustice (Matthew 20:1-16: Parable of the workers in the field who all showed up at different times in the day and ended up receiving the exact same wage.) [Free Bible Illustrations Story?]**

## 3. Gentiles are partakers of the same Messiah. – *the gospel of Jesus Christ*

**Partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel:** referring back to Ephesian 2:19-22 (a beautiful picture of what the church in Ephesus should look like: a common citizenship, a common kinship, a common worship).

**Embracing Gentiles as partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel could produce confusion. Does this text teach the obliteration of distinction between Israel and the church? I don't believe so. Note. The text doesn't say ALL OF THE PROMISES but partakers of THE PROMISE. I believe this is a reference to Genesis 12:3c:**

<sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.<sup>[a]</sup>

### **Galatians 3:29**

<sup>29</sup> And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. John MacArthur Study Bible: **Abraham's seed.** Not all physical children of Abraham are the “Israel of God” (cf. 6:16), that is, true spiritual children of Abraham (Rom. 9:6-8). Gentile believers who are not physical children of Abraham are, however, his spiritual children in the sense that they followed the pattern of his faith. **Heirs according to the promise.** All believers are heirs of the spiritual blessings that accompanied the Abrahamic Covenant – justification by faith (Gen. 15:6; cf. Rom. 4:3-11).

Children's Story of the owner who hired servants to work in his vineyard:

<sup>1</sup> Jesus told this parable, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He offered to pay them the usual rate for a days work – a denarius.



2 'They agreed and the landowner set them to work in his vineyard.

3 'Later, at around nine in the morning the landowner went out and saw others standing in the market-place doing nothing. He told them, "I can offer you work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right."

4 'They went off to join the others already working in the vineyard.

5 'At noon, the landowner went down to the market place and saw more men looking for work.

6 'He offered them work too and they joined the others working in the vineyard. The sun was overhead and the work made them sweat.

7 'Three hours later the landowner offered work to more men looking for a job.

8 'These too joined those who had been working for many hours.

9 'About five in the afternoon the landowner went out and found more men standing around. He asked them, "Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?" "No-one one has hired us," they replied. 'He said to them, "You can go and work in my vineyard. "

10 When evening came an hour later, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, "Call the workers so they get their wages.

11 The workers were lined up with the last workers to be hired at the front of the line and the workers hired early that morning at the end.

12 'To their surprise, the workers who were hired late in the afternoon and had only worked for an hour were given a full pay - a denarius.

13 The same amount was given to those who had worked much longer.

14 When those who had worked all day were given the same as those who had worked fewer hours they started grumbling. "These who were hired last worked only one hour," they complained, "and you have paid them as much as us who have worked long hours in the heat of the day."

15 'The landowner replied, "I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius?"

16 "'Take your pay and go. I decided to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?"

17 "'So the last will be first, and the first will be last.'"

## **Application:**

### ***The Mystery of Christ (Unity among all nations) (3-6)***

#### **SEEK THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH**

- Multi-ethnic
- Multi-linguistic
- Multi-generational
- Multi-service
- Multi-campus

- Multi-opinioned 😊

### **ASK FOR HELP WHEN THE WAY IS HARD TO SEE**

- Study God's Word. (Ezra 7:10; Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15)
  - God the Father revealed truth to through His inspired Word (2 Peter 1:19-21).
- Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in your understanding of God's Word.
  - The Holy Spirit illuminates (shines light upon) the Word. (Eph. 1:18; John 16:13-16)
- Listen to pastors and teachers explain God's Word. (Eph. 4:11-12)
  - Pastors at PBC
  - Listen to Podcasts

### **ACCEPT HELP WHEN THE ANSWER IS HARD TO EMBRACE**

- *Submit to God's Word as authoritative. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*
- *Trust the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. (John 14:26; I Cor. 9:21; Rom. 14:23)*
- *When in doubt (after using discernment as to what the Word of God teaches), heed the guidance provided by your pastor. (Hebrews 13:17)*