



Empowering People to Change the World

The Cosmic Mystery

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Road Declaration

Born for War Graphic

“The Cosmic Mystery”

Ephesians 3:1

- Twenty years before, Paul would have never dreamed that he would be in prison!
- He had been a rising star in the ranks of the Sanhedrin, the leadership structure of Jerusalem.
- He was a kind of senator in the Jewish governmental structure.
- He was a “Pharisee of Pharisees,” to use his own words. He was one that everyone sought for advice on the Law.
- He hated Christians, this sect that was destroying Judaism!
- And yet everything changed. He met the One he was persecuting and was born again!
- Now, he is a prisoner for his faith...
 - God has called him to reach out not to the Jews, but to the Gentiles. He has been imprisoned for preaching and teaching.
 - For this cause! For the Church!
 - For the planting of the Church!
 - Many men find “causes” worth living for...but very few have causes worth dying for! The Church is worth dying for!

- Some of the great thinkers of our time have found their greatest revelations and insights in prison:
 - God can really use prison to settle a man down and give him time to think...
 - John Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, arguably one of the best Christian books ever written.
 - Dietrich Bonhoeffer...
 - Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the Russian dissident who stood up for his faith in midst of great tyranny.
- It appears with the Apostle that it might have been during this time that God gave him a revelation into the mystery of the Church.
 - It is unclear when he received this revelation, but this is the first time that he speaks of a new understanding of God's cosmic plan for the local and catholic church.
 - It is often in our deepest time of trials that we get our deepest insights into God...
 - It really doesn't matter what storm you are in if you know Who is in the boat! You are where you are because of reason of God! You are a plant; you are in a CIA - Christian Intelligence Agency. Paul was not a prisoner of Rome, but of Christ! You and I are prisoners of Christ!
 - You wish you were here or there in your life, but you are a "prisoner of Christ!"

Verses 2-5

- “Dispensation of the grace of God” means “one who runs a household.” Paul realizes that he has been given a stewardship.
- God has given Paul a new understanding of the plan of God for the Church.
- Revelation...apocalyptic, “unveiling.” It was hidden before this! God is opening up something...
 - We don’t know what the delivery system might have been to the Apostle: dream, vision, Torah...but the result is a new understanding of how great is God’s plan for the local church.
- Ex. I was serving in Okinawa, Japan, with a para-church group. I was loving the ministry there. But God began to give me a new “revelation” of His love for the local church...
- God is revealing this new revelation not only to Paul but to His “apostles and prophets.”
 - This is a tying together of the old and new. We have little mention of prophets in the New Testament, briefly in the book of Acts; and they are not leaders of the Church.
 - But much of the leadership in the Old Testament are prophetic gifted individuals. Paul is giving us a glimpse into how he has been guided into this new revelation.
 - He has been shown by the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the new dispensation.
 - **1 Peter 1:10-12**
Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to

you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things which angels desire to look into.

- We are so blessed to have the whole Bible today! I think Paul is literally blown away that he has been given the apocalypse of this mystery!
- What is the mystery Paul is speaking of?

Three Great Cosmic Mysteries

Verses 6-7

1) The mystery that the Gentiles are fellow heirs in the Church!

- This was a mega-revelation for a Jew of Jews.
- Remember Paul hated the Gentiles...hated the Church.
- The filthy, unclean, flesh-eating Gentiles are now fellow members of the Church! Praise God for the revelation, or we wouldn't be here today!
- This is a world-wide gospel touching the nations today!
- Ex. God is giving us an open door in Afghanistan and Iraq! Just watch...God is going to use this war to open up opportunity for the gospel...
- The Church is for the world! For everyone in Colorado Springs!

Verses 8-11

The second great mystery...

2) The mystery that the manifold wisdom of God will be made known through the Church!

- God could have sent angels to preach the gospel, but He doesn't! He is using us to proclaim the "manifold wisdom of God" even to the angels in heaven.
- Ex. Remember the story of Cornelius? An angel came to him and told him to send for Peter...the angel did not preach the gospel. Peter was used by God to share the gospel. (**Acts 10**)
- The angels long to understand this mystery...God is using these sinful beings! Yet created in the "image of God." Angels don't get it...I don't get it either, but God did it.
- Paul is deeply humbled that God is using him to reveal this grace...unsearchable riches of Christ...This is what the letter is all about.
- "Unsearchable riches" never end. You never exhaust God's riches...
- Study "grace." It will take a lifetime.
- Study "forgiveness."
- Study "love."
- Study "faith."
- Verse 9 is huge!
- **Genesis 1:1** "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

This is arguably one of the most important verses in the whole Bible! This verse alone has stumped scientists, paleontologists, and biologists for years...but this is really changing! Through a theory called "Intelligent Design," many scientists are finding major loopholes in Darwinism...

Colossians 1:15-18

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Verse 9, "Fellowship of the Mystery"

- This is a mystery to most intellectuals! This is still a mystery to most of academia! They just don't get it because it is seen as "foolishness."
- I mean if you don't get this, your foundation is already shaken.
- The mystery of Israel - that will become a stumbling block to the world...it is happening!
- The mystery of the Church - the Bride of Christ; the church is being raised up to change the world...by us!
 - This is the drama of the ages.
 - The theatre is history; the actors are the Church.
 - The Producer is God.
 - The audience is the cosmic beings!

- The graduate school for angels is church history.
- John Stott, “It is through the old creation of the universe that God reveals His glory to humans; it is through the new creation of the Church that He reveals His wisdom to angels.”
- “The angels long to look.”
- But how do they see the unveiling of God's plans through the Church?

Verses 12-13

How is it that the wisdom of God is made known in the spiritual world? A third great mystery:

3) The mystery of bold and confident prayer.

- I don't get it! I don't understand it well; but there it is!
- It is through this confidence in Christ via prayer that God moves in our lives. Do you and I have such confidence?
- See how powerful prayer is? God moves when the saints pray.
- Ex. I think everything that happens in the world today is because someone prays! Everything that happens in this church...your family.
 - Prayer has built this church...every one of you have been prayed in.
 - Prayer heals bodies.
 - Prayer gets jobs.
 - Prayer built this building.
 - Prayer saves families!

- “Boldness” has the meaning in Greek of “pouring forth everything, all, thoroughly.”
 - We can take everything to God in prayer!
 - Every issue, every struggle...take it to the Lord in prayer!
 - “What a Friend we have in Jesus...what a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer...oh what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.”
- Paul is not bummed out about being a prisoner! He has made the Romans prisoners to him! They are chained to him!
- Now he is going to show us how to pray! Next week!
- If you would like to make a fresh commitment to “the cause,” come up this morning:
 1. The cause of the Church
 2. The cause of making Christ known
 3. The ministry of prayer!