

Eph. 3:1-13- Mysteries Now Made Known

Sometimes we hear news that really excites us but we don't have all the details. "Free Steak Dinner" -- well when and where? "Cash rebate if you fill out this form" what form? Or sometimes it is more significant. "There is a cure for your Cancer" What and How do I do it?

At many points the OT (旧约) saints (圣徒) felt like this. They knew God was going to do something marvelous, but they were not sure exactly what and how. Jeremiah the prophet, would cry out: (23:5) "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land." Again Jeremiah Cried: (30:8) "And it shall come to pass in that day, declares the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and I will burst your bonds, and foreigners shall no more make a servant of him."

Ok, bring these things this is what the people desperately wanted.

But then Ezekiel Proclaims: 36:26-27 "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."

Ok, what does that mean? What kind of heart surgery is this?

In theological (神学的) terms, all of this is part of the History of Redemption. In Scripture, God tells us what he has been doing to Redeem the world. But sometimes it was really unclear exactly what God was going to do. Here in Ephesians 3, Paul clarifies a central aspect of the Great News. What was long hidden is now revealed.

Mystery Revealed Mystery Proclaimed Gospel Driven

1) Mystery Revealed

V.1- 'Because of 'This': Paul begins by building upon all of Ch 2. The Gospel message in a Whole Package, and we need to be clear about what the Gospel is:

So let's review chapter 2: a) you are a sinner from the womb and hostile to God, b) but by God's great mercy he Saves us by Grace; c) Grace through faith alone.

Then he 'repairs' us a) By the Blood of Christ the FAR and the NEAR are brought together in Peace, d) Christ tears down (拆毁) the separation and makes us One Covenant (盟约, 圣约) Community. We are *reconciled* (使和好) Vertically—between us and God—and we are *reconciled* Horizontally—between us and neighbors.

2-3: So Paul draws all this back into our minds and then ... *Oh wait a second ... He changes directions* --- Have you ever started to tell a story and then you have to back up and give more details in order for everything to make sense. Paul wants to highlight something else before moving on

In this really funny way Paul draws our attention to something marvelous: it's not a mistake, it's not an error, its Paul highlighting something that we might otherwise miss.

By the time of writing Ephesians, people are familiar with Paul and his ministry. But here he highlights this fundamental aspect;

V3: "how the mystery was made known"

- We need to recognize that this is not something Paul made up. Nor was it something that he merely figured out by reading the Scriptures. There were plenty of people who studied the Word closely and they could not see these things.

God broke in and Revealed something to Paul that was long hidden. But why did God have to teach it through Revelation (启示)? In John 5:39 Jesus is accusing the Pharisees (法利赛人) of not realizing who he was. He says, "You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness about me."

It is easy to study and study, but not understand. We need God to teach us. And this major point here was something entirely new,

V4: there is now a great benefit to studying the Word though. Paul writes to us so clearly, he explains that if we study the Word we will be taught these great things.

5: Something Long Hidden:

We need to be clear that the OT saints did know something was coming. As with the prophecies I read to begin with, they knew something but it was unclear and shadowy.

SO CLARIFICATION: Paul is not saying that the Mystery is Christ's coming--- there were many who had prophesied about this in past generations.

Moses had said - Deut 18:15 that God would raise up a Great Prophet (先知) to teach them And Christ points out in Luke 24:44 that the Law of Moses, Prophets, and Psalms are about me.

But Paul has been revealed something that no one saw coming: not Abraham, not David, not Isaiah, not even Enoch could have ever guessed this one—it was a secret deeply hidden. 5- the Prophets did not know everything:

V6: THE GLORY NOW REVEALED

That the Gentiles (外邦人) are also made fellow heirs, the Gentiles become part of the same Body, and that all people share in the Sweet Promises of Christ through the Glorious Gospel!

There is no longer: Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, rich or poor, young or old, wise or foolish, --- All are United in the ONE BODY OF CHRIST!

Now many of you are probably yawning at that statement; you have heard it a thousand times ... truly I hope that you have heard it a thousand times. But remember in Paul's day this caused riots (骚乱). It caused violence and Paul's body bore the stigmata (圣痕, 圣伤) for how powerful of a statement this was.

You see for over a thousand years, the covenant people of God lived as a single race. They lived as a distinct people, separated from all other nations. They were a holy people to God. But you know what this exclusivism (独特性) led to them? Well, look back at 2:11 'called circumcision (割礼) made with hands.' When the people of God were a distinct Race, they were led to pride and arrogance. When they were left to be a single family, they Pridefully cherished themselves more than God. They were led into Exile (放逐, 流亡) and slaughtered for their sins.

So notice something Important: Think about what v6—does not say:
- it does not say Gentiles become Jews ...

It does not say that Greeks, Jews, and Ethiopians- are all changed into one Race.

The Gentiles Stay Gentiles - A leopard does not change its spots, nor are People required to change their ethnicity (种族, 民族) in order to be a Christian.

John 4:21 "Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father." As Christ now explains that people neither worship on this mountain or that one, but we all worship in Spirit and Truth.

People do not become a single Race.

So you who are prone to think of yourself better because of your genetic (遗传的, 基因的) family tree ... You are set free by this Revelation from such sinful arrogance.

And you who come from a far off family who has no Christians in your history ... You too are set free by this Revelation from God to enjoy the Benefits of Christ.

So the most important thing is no longer where you are from, what you like to eat, and what type of things you do on your family holidays. The most important thing and the Greatest benefit ... Your inheritance in the Lord. You are Co-Heirs (共同的后嗣, 共同继承人) and you are now Partakers of the Promises of Christ through the Gospel by Faith.

2) Mystery Proclaimed

Notice that this Revelation and this privilege of Preaching did not make Paul haughty (傲慢的), it humbled him. The man with such a solid background: a Hebrew of Hebrews, from the Tribe of Benjamin, circumcised on the 8th day, named about the first King in Israel - "Saul" ... all of that grounds for Pride he counts as rubbish (垃圾, 废物).

V8: I am the least of Christians when I think of the "Fathomless riches of Christ" (基督那测不透的丰富) :- Paul is struggling to capture the magnitude of Christ here.

Look closely at V9: READ

- first we need to see that Christ was never 'Plan-B'. The Cross was the purpose of God before the world began. 'from eternity'

- Also notice who the Audience of Paul's preaching is: "to bring to light for everyone"

- No sinner, no pagan (异教徒), no one, is beyond the bounds of who should hear the gospel.

Notice also: what is it that Paul Preached?

- He did not go about preaching what itching ears wanted. Nor did he fabricate comfortable man-made religion. And this cost him health and life to preach the Truth

Paul Preached the Plan of God to save sinners through the Blood of Christ through Faith Alone

Many tried to turn Christianity into the old ways of the Jewish system. People were angry that Paul was preaching freedom and Grace by faith apart from any formulaic (公式化的) and ritualistic (仪式化的) works.

People did not want Paul to say that Gentiles are co-heirs with Christ.

People didn't want anyone to be different, they

wanted everyone to conform and be the same

- v10: is a long sentence that leads to many potential misunderstandings.

READ: here Paul is telling the PURPOSE and MISSION of the church

- Namely "To make known" we are to be making something known

What is the church to make known to the entire cosmos?

- not how to cook soup and buns - not 100 ways to be a nice person

- not how to be a law abiding citizen

THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD: this is our charge from God.

But this does not mean we idly chit-chat (闲聊) about how big God is. And he is big, in fact infinite.

We are not to simply chit-chat about how nice God is. Although his kindness is beyond compare. every church body needs to constantly ask --- What are we peddling? What is it that we are offering to the people that come into our doors? Is it abundantly clear that there is something here that cannot be found outside the church? Is something being Proclaimed and Enjoyed in this Church, that cannot be bought at Wal-Mart or Canadian Tire?

Is the Gospel so radically and purely proclaimed and lived out in our words and actions that it draws people into the Freedom of Christ?

The church is to be consumed with Proclaiming Salvation in Christ: and it shall be felt reverberating (回响的) through the entire cosmos.

3) Gospel Driven

How are we going to do this? How are we going to make the world know about Christ? Well, for starters we have to realize that the task is not simply up to us, it is a divine work, and we get to be a part of what God is doing.

- We need to put away our personal agendas, and crucify our Personal cultural Preferences (偏好) and Propaganda (政治宣传) and be consumed with a love the Free offer of Christ.

Paul had to put down his personal background. He had to stop persecuting the church and instead listen to God.

Practically how does the church do this: for starters we learn not to put man-made barriers. We are not going to make coming to Christ harder than receiving the Cross by faith

- We are not going to say: you can be a Christian if you Trust Jesus Christ to be your savior and do this, that, and the other thing.

- if you wear a Yarmulke (犹太男子在祷告学习吃饭时戴的) 圆顶小帽 and a Phylactery (经文护符匣), and have a Fish bumper sticker (保险杠贴纸) then you can be a Christian ... but we will check the parking lot for the bumper sticker.

But Paul spends 2 Chapters here saying NO—the Gentiles in all their diversity come to be part of the *diverse household* of God!

- all of us in this room would fail. No we do not put up barriers like who can eat with who. We do not put up barriers like circumcision and certain dress codes.

But let us be clear about something: I am not saying that the church peddles(兜售) around a message of 'easy believeism.'

- the Standard is Faith in Christ. This God has never swayed from.

This is the question people are going to ask, and we should even ask ourselves:

- How do I know I am acceptable to God? How can I have this confident access to the Throne Room of the Almighty God?

a) God has used the lives of Prophets, Apostles, Preachers, and Teachers, down through the millennium to get the Gospel to you. Realize the gospel message did not fall out of the sky and land on your doorstep like the newspaper. God has used people like Paul to record and perpetuate (使永存) the message so that it would come to us today.

Beloved of the Lord, you want to know how beautiful you STILL are in Christ's Eyes: Even after Christ went to the Cross for you ... God continues to raise up preachers and teachers for you. They are not perfect people, but God uses their lives to continue to feed the sheep.

- For 2k years the saints have bled and died so that we Could have this Bible; so we could have the Word of God.

b) Since we have been given such a great gift, let us look closely at what God says in His Word about how we are acceptable. How Do I Know I am Beautiful in God's Sight?

V12: "IN HIM" we have access

- we are received into God's presence because of our Relationship with Christ.

We do not look at ourselves to determine if we are worthy to come to Christ.

We do not compare ourselves with others in trying to come to Christ.

We stop navel gazing in haughty ways, and instead we look to Christ. Look at the One who has made you Worthy to now Enter into the Throne Room.

Meditate on v12: Paul is piling up the language: boldness, confidence, access

Where do you go when you are hurting and sad? You go to the beach, the cottage, or do you simply hide under your pillows at home? Where do you go for comfort and solace?

The Throne Room of God is open to all of those who are IN-CHRIST

The God of the universe is waiting with the door open to receive you and love you. The One at his right hand beckons you to come and be healed. A friend might encourage you, and a counselor might offer some guidance ... but everything, everyone, and everyplace, fail in comparison to the Comfort God offers to those who receive Christ.

The Privilege of announcing this message is why Paul said don't worry about me, I count it a joy to offer the Sick Balm (香膏) For Their Souls. Which is the same Balm we continue to receive and offer to others today.