



The Grand Theater in Ephesus
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The Mystery of the Gospel

Ephesians 3:1-13

The Mystery of the Gospel Introduction

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- Then, he showed us how those who are saved come together to form **God's New Humanity**.

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- Then, he showed us how those who are saved come together to form **God's New Humanity**.
- Now he will explain **his ministry**, which is to make plain the previously hidden **reality of the gospel**.

The Mystery of the Gospel Introduction

Four important topics in this letter:

1. What we need to know about Christ – our Savior and Redeemer.
2. What we need to know about our salvation – how we are made right with God, the forgiveness of our sins, etc.
3. What we need to know about spiritual warfare – an important topic in a city most famous for occult practices.
4. What we need to know about the Church – this new society that God is building in the midst of the world.

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The Sermon in a Soundbite

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The Mystery of the Gospel Outline

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- I. Fellow Heirs 3:1-6
- II. Unsearchable Riches 3:7-13

I. Fellow Heirs 3:1-6

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- 3:1 a prisoner of Jesus Christ
- As he writes this Paul is being held under house arrest, awaiting trial before Caesar in Rome.
- It has been years since his arrest in Jerusalem.
- He sees his situation as part of God's plan for him.

The Sermon in a Soundbite

1. Life is hard.

I. Fellow Heirs 3:1-6

- 3:1 on behalf of you Gentiles
- His ministry to the Gentiles was part of God's revealed plan.

I. Fellow Heirs 3:1-6

- After Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, the Lord sent a disciple named Ananias to meet him in the city.
- Ananias was afraid. Paul (Saul) had a bad reputation.
- Acts 9:15-16 (ESV)

¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”

I. Fellow Heirs 3:1-6

- 3:2 stewardship
- This Greek word refers to the management of a household.
- Paul's sees his responsibility as a commission, an assignment to make known the Gospel.

I. Fellow Heirs 3:1-6

- 3:2 God's grace that was given to me
- Paul was not discouraged by his relative inactivity.
- Anything that he could do was the result of grace – God's unmerited favor toward him.
- See identical wording in 3:7 and similar wording in 3:8.

I. Fellow Heirs 3:1-6

- 3:3 mystery Greek: *mysterion*
- This word often refers to “a misunderstood part of the OT that, with Christ's coming, is now unveiled.” (Mounce)
- In other settings it was a matter that required initiation in order to have access to revealed knowledge.
- Both the gospel and the church were hinted at in the OT, but were not totally clear until Christ.

I. Fellow Heirs 3:1-6

- 3:4-5 not made known ... now been revealed
- This is precisely how the word **mystery** was normally used in those days.
- This is how it is normally used in the New Testament.

I. Fellow Heirs 3:1-6

- 3:6 This mystery is ...
- The NASB says, “To be specific...”
- So what comes next is big news.
- It was not something that people would have automatically understood or expected.

I. Fellow Heirs 3:1-6

- 3:6 Greek is a very flexible language. These are three words that Paul kind of just makes up.
 1. “Fellow heirs”
 2. “Fellow members” (of the same body)
 3. “Fellow partakers” (of the promise in Christ)

I. Fellow Heirs 3:1-6

- 3:6 This was the reason Paul found himself in prison.
- After years of ministry and mission trips, when Paul appeared at the Temple in Jerusalem there was an uproar.
- He told his story to the people and then (See [Acts 22:17-24.](#))

II. Unsearchable Riches 3:7-13

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- 3:7 the gift of God's grace, which was given me
- This is the exact same wording as v.2 in the original.
- The wording is similar (not the same) again in v.8
- Paul must really want to emphasize this point.

II. Unsearchable Riches 3:7-13

- 3:8 Notice how much Paul thinks of Christ and how little he thinks of himself.

II. Unsearchable Riches 3:7-13

- 3:8 the very least of all the saints
- (Phillips, NIV, NKJV) less than the least ...
- Paul again kind of makes up a word here like “least-er” or “smallest-er.”
- This is not a false modesty.
- Paul consistently highlights his unworthiness while not shrinking back from his calling.

II. Unsearchable Riches 3:7-13

- 1 Corinthians 15:9 (ESV)

For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

- 1 Timothy 1:15 (ESV)

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

II. Unsearchable Riches 3:7-13

- 3:8 the very least of all the saints
- As far as Paul was concerned, he was nobody special.
- Who then are we?

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II. Unsearchable Riches 3:7-13

- 3:8 the unsearchable riches of Christ
- (Phillips) incalculable
- (NASB) unfathomable
- (AMP) incomprehensible
- (CEB) immeasurable
- (NIV) boundless
- (NLT) endless

II. Unsearchable Riches 3:7-13

- 3:8 the unsearchable riches of Christ
- (Dave K) inestimable, massive, vast, endless, immense, limitless, colossal, humongous and/or ginormous

Two Awesome Examples

Two Awesome Examples



1. Henry Martyn

- Began his studies at Cambridge in 1795 at age 14 and was on track for a remarkable career.
- Ordained in the Church of England in 1803.
- Moved to India and later Persia.
- Translated the New Testament into Urdu and then Persian.
- He died of a fever in 1812 at age 31.

Two Awesome Examples

2. Toyohiko Kagawa

- Baptized at 15 and disowned by his family.
- At age 21, he moved into a slum.
- Mainly an evangelist, he devoted his life to humanitarian work and social reform.
- He was arrested several times.
- Prior to WWII, the emperor gave him a half-hour private audience asking him to explain the meaning of the cross.



II. Unsearchable Riches 3:7-13

- 3:9 to bring to light ... the mystery, hidden for ages in God who created all things
- Again, the original idea of a mystery is a revealed secret.

II. Unsearchable Riches 3:7-13

- 3:10 so that
- (Phillips) The purpose is that ...
- (NIV) His intent was that ...
- (NKJV) To the intent that ...

II. Unsearchable Riches 3:7-13

- 3:10 through the church
- This is one of the many purposes of the church.

II. Unsearchable Riches 3:7-13

- 3:10 the manifold wisdom of God
- multi-sided, exceedingly various, multiform (Mounce)
- Paul is in awe of the complex variety of God's wisdom

II. Unsearchable Riches 3:7-13

- 3:10 to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places
- God is using the church to reveal his wonderful wisdom to angelic beings in the spiritual realms.
- This is probably true for the good angels.
- It is definitely true for the fallen angels – the demons.
- See 6:12 where “rulers and authorities” also appear.

II. Unsearchable Riches 3:7-13

- 3:11-12 the eternal purpose that he has realized
- Think back to 1:4 about God choosing us “before the foundation of the world.”
- Think also of 2:10 and the “works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

II. Unsearchable Riches 3:7-13

- **3:13** Paul does not want his suffering to distract the Ephesian believers from their own mission.
- He is (in **v.1**) “a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles.”
- His suffering for them is **their glory**.
- It is completely for their benefit.

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The Mystery of the Gospel Conclusions

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2. Without the New Testament it is hard to understand Christ, the cross, the resurrection and all its results.
3. That mystery has now been revealed.
4. The gospel begins with our need for Jesus.
5. It has not made life easier, but it has shown us why a difficult life is so easily worth the trouble.

The Mystery of the Gospel Conclusions

- **1 Corinthians 1:26-29** (ESV)

²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

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