

Understanding the Mystery

Ephesians 3:3-6

Introduction: Paul describes in these verses how he obtained his knowledge of an important feature of the gospel. He also tells us how we receive it. Central to all of this is the basic understandability of the gospel. Unless that is prominent the gospel will be unable to do what it is supposed to do—save souls.

I. Three Important Words.

- A.** Mystery (**musterion**) – *“In the NT it denotes, not the mysterious (as with the Eng. word), but that which, being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known only by Divine revelation, and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those only who are illumined by His Spirit”* (Vine, p. 779).
- B.** Revelation (**apokalupsis**) – *“an uncovering”* (Vine, p. 974).
- C.** Understand (**noeo**) – *“to perceive with the mind, as distinct from perception by feeling”* (Vine, p. 1191).
- D.** Comments:
 - 1.** Mystery and revelation are often found in common relation to each other in the New Testament. A mystery is hidden until revealed, then it is no more a mystery.
 - 2.** The word used for “understand” is not the word generally used. This word refers to reaching mental conclusions.

II. What Mystery Has Been Revealed?

- A.** Explanation is in ***Ephesians 3:6, “that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.”***
 - 1.** Actually in promise in ***Genesis 12:3 (Gen. 22:18)***.
 - 2.** Mentioned in ***Galatians 3:26-29***.
- B.** ***“...for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28b)***.
 - 1.** ***“Fellow heirs.”*** Joint participants of an inheritance from God (***Rom. 8:17***).
 - 2.** ***“Of the same body.”*** Church is composed of one people—Christians. No hyphenated Christians or “junior” or “associate” members here.
 - 3.** ***“Partakers of his promise.”*** Promises from God shared equally.
- C.** All things said of Gentiles here fall into the category of salvation. One gospel for one people with one salvation through one Savior by one God.
- D.** Paul, as a Pharisee of Pharisees, would never have found this out without God revealing it to him.

III. Full Salvation Only Possible Through Full Revelation.

- A.** A change in content now.
 - 1.** Partial revelation through Old Testament Prophecy (**1 Peter 1:10-11**).
 - 2.** Full revelation today has taken place (**1 Peter 1:12**).
- B.** If there is only partial revelation, as some claim, how can there be full salvation.
 - 1.** I would like to know if those who expect more revelations have any real use for the Bible.
 - 2.** How could they if it is incomplete, with more yet to come? Especially since these latter revelations allegedly “trump” what the Bible contains.

IV. What God Revealed To Paul Is Revealed To Us.

- A.** “*...when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ*” (v. 4).
 - 1.** Men say you can’t understand the Bible. Paul’s words are quite the contrast as he says you can.
 - 2.** Paul has not even hinted that something has been withheld.
- B.** The way we can participate in this revelation from God is by reading what is written.
 - 1.** We are told we can “**know the truth**” (**Jn. 8:32**). Some effort—reading and studying—is required on our part.
 - 2.** “*Our knowledge of God comes to us through his word when we read what inspired men have written. Let us never be guilty of claiming to know more than the apostles or to know anything they did not write for us. They wrote all that was revealed to them and this is the whole of God’s will for us in this age. Is it any wonder we speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent?*” (Miller, p. 72).

Conclusion: Here is the revelation—read it for yourself:

“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk. 16:16)

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28)

Do you understand it? Then, ***“why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”***