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### God's Amazing Revelation Given to the Apostle Paul

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## GOD'S AMAZING REVELATION GIVEN TO THE APOSTLE PAUL

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS  
EPHESIANS 3:3-4  
NUMBER 25

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EPHESIANS 3:3-4 "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)"

Please notice that this chapter begins with the words "For this cause" and then Paul repeated these same words at the beginning of verse fourteen. The verses in between "For this cause" in verse one and verse fourteen constitute a parenthesis, and I call this parenthesis "The interrupted Prayer." The Apostle Paul started out and was about to pray for the believers in the province of Asia, then Paul realized that they needed to know some doctrine in order for the prayer to really mean much to them. You see, prayer doesn't make sense unless you know doctrine. Anyone can open his mouth and pray, but an eloquent prayer from an empty head is useless and meaningless. It is the content of the prayer that is important. Prayer is one of the great tests of one's orientation to the plan and purposes of God. The dynamics of prayer and the effectiveness of prayer depends on one's orientation to the plan of God. So Paul here interrupted his own prayer so he could stop and give them some very important doctrine.

The phrase "The prisoner of Jesus Christ" goes back to the 23rd chapter of Acts, verse 11. In that verse we read that Christ came to Paul and explained to him the significance of his coming ministry. In substance this is what Christ told Paul--"You will now go to Rome where you will have a real doctrinal ministry." Paul's life was doctrine and he lived that he might communicate doctrine.

As Paul was writing Ephesians from his Roman prison, he realized that he was not actually a prisoner of Nero, but rather a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul had just passed through four very difficult years of discipline from God, but God had spared his life through those two years of imprisonment in Caesarea, and through that dangerous sea voyage to Rome. All through that time of discipline Paul had come to see the meaning of the "Mystery" and the significance of God's plan for him and for the Church Age. The principle is this--Even though we often fail the Lord, his plan moves right straight on and it never changes. Paul was living by the principle of Romans 8:28, so he called himself "The prisoner of Jesus Christ," for you Gentiles. Paul knew he was in the plan and will of God and he was supremely happy in it. Even though Paul had a deep love for the Jews and was emotionally involved with them, he knew that his main task was with the Gentiles and his main work was to prepare the world for the coming Church Age. God's will for Paul was a Gentile ministry.

Now orientation to the will of God begins with rebound. So Paul had confessed his sins, had rebounded, after that awful experience with that Jerusalem mob and the two years in prison in Caesarea and the dangerous sea voyage to Rome, and he knew that his life had been spared for a real purpose. Paul was ready and willing to do the great work of the Lord and to prepare the world for the coming of the Church Age. This madman Nero was on the throne in Rome, but Paul wasn't really his prisoner, he was actually the prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the second verse of this chapter Paul introduced the great subject of God's domination of history and he calls it "The dispensation of the grace of God." In our last study we carefully outlined the meaning of the dispensation of the grace of God. So Paul in this passage before us outlines the great meaning of this new era which involved the intensification of the angelic conflict when every believer was to be indwelt with the Holy Spirit and every believer was to be a priest in full-time Christian service. Paul wanted all the Gentiles to know that they were living in a new dispensation. The old Jewish dispensation was over and the Church Age had dawned. This new dispensation would bring new freedoms, new powers, new responsibilities. They needed to know that everything they would do would be done as "unto the Lord." All this new information concerning the dawning Church Age had been given to Paul by revelation from God.

EPHESIANS 3:3 "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words," The word "by" is from "Kata" and means the norm or standard. Now the norm or standard by which this was given to Paul for the sake of the Gentiles is called "revelation." 1 Cor. 2:16 tells us that the Bible is the mind of Christ, so in this passage Paul was to reveal to them more of that mind. This new revelation had been given to Paul by the Lord, and he was now passing it on to them. Paul received some amazing revelation from the Lord, and he was happy to be able to pass it on to the world. He says that this information "was made known" to him by the Lord. This information had to come to him by a body of doctrine and it had to come in what Paul here called "The mystery." The Greek word is "mysterion." This idea came down from Greek social religious clubs, called fraternities. They usually were named for some Greek god, like "Bacchus," the god of wine. Each fraternity had its doctrine and its doctrinal secrets, only known by its members and not known by outsiders. These doctrines formed the basis for fellowship within these fraternities. Out from these fraternities came drama and songs. When a person was initiated into one of these fraternities, they called it "mueo" and that meant they were to learn the doctrine of that fraternity. One was only a "pledge" until he learned the doctrine of the fraternity.

Now the beautiful thing about the fraternity called Christianity is that you are brought in as a full-fledged member the moment you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your saviour. At that point you begin to learn doctrine until you become spiritually self-sustaining, and then you grow until you have a relaxed mental attitude and this is based on learning Bible doctrine. Some people are perpetual pledges and they never really make it into the fraternity. The reason they remain a pledge is that they never study doctrine and never grow spiritually and just remain in ignorance. There are certain basic doctrines that must be learned and in learning them we are all dependent upon a pastor-teacher who studies and makes these things known. Once you have learned this doctrine, then you depend upon your own priesthood because you have become a full-fledged member of the fraternity. The word "mystery" has another meaning. It means Bible doctrine that pertains only to the Church Age. In Old Testament times the people didn't know anything about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This occurred for the first time in the Church Age. Once Christ was seated at the right hand of God a new era began for every Christian. At that moment every Christian was entered into union



with Christ and was given the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. At that moment every Christian became a priest, an heir of God, an ambassador in full-time Christian service. When Christ ascended and sat down at God's right hand, at that moment, every Christian was given all the assets that Christ possessed when he was here on earth. Now this was never true in Old Testament times. The reason why Christians are given these assets is that we are living in the intensification of the angelic conflict. Every believer is a target of Satan.

So this is a mystery doctrine. For the first time in history every believer was indwelt by the Holy Spirit and this is a mystery doctrine. The supernatural power now available for every Christian was brand new, never before known in the history of the world. These are mystery doctrines. The mystery was something that was hidden in the past. This is something not found in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament they knew about the meaning of the death of Christ and how he was a propitiation for our sins. They also knew after his crucifixion that he would rise from the dead and be seated at the right hand of God. They knew from Psalm 110 what would be said to Christ when he arrived in heaven. "Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." They knew about the second coming of Christ, the Tribulation, the Millennium. But they didn't have one word of information about the church or the Church Age. It was a doctrine that was even unknown to Satan and fallen angels. Now that the Church Age had arrived it was necessary for Paul to explain this mystery to the people. You see, it is impossible to understand things of this kind until doctrine becomes first in your life. Just suppose that your pleasures are T.V. or sex or any of the other details of life? Now there is nothing wrong with that, provided they do not interfere with you learning Bible doctrine. But when friends or loved ones or T.V. or football or any other detail of life comes first in your life, and it keeps you from learning Bible doctrine, then you are in a miserable condition. Now if you wish to look at T.V. until your eyeballs drop out, that's between you and the Lord. Or if you wish to give your attention to other things at the expense of learning doctrine, then you can do it and no one here is going to try to force you into some other type program. You can do as you please and no one is going to try to force you to do differently. You are free because you are your own priest. But when you reject the learning of Bible doctrine, you can't grow. Bible doctrine has to be taught and you are dependent on someone else to teach you. Once you have learned the truth, then you can grow. You can't read the Bible on your own and gain this doctrinal knowledge. You have to learn categories of doctrine and, then once you have learned these things, then you can become spiritually self-sustaining. Once you have learned doctrine, then you will have the ability to begin to respond to God. This leads to a relaxed mental attitude and for the first time in your life you come to the place where you can enjoy the details of life. Everything in your life will begin to fall in line and you can live relaxed and be happy.

When you accepted Christ as your Saviour the doctrine concerning the Church Age was just as unknown to you as it was to Satan or to fallen angels and to the Old Testament saints. The first time anyone heard anything about "The Mystery" was just before Christ died, when he spoke the Upper Room Discourse. On that night before he went to the cross,

Jesus began to outline the doctrine of the mystery of the Church Age. Before Jesus gave this doctrine, one of those present had to leave the room and that person was Judas Iscariot who was indwelt by Satan himself, and that's why he is called "The son of perdition." So Jesus gave Judas one last chance to be saved. The highest honor one can give a guest, Jesus gave to Judas. He dipped the sop into the sauce at the table and handed it to Judas. It was a friendly gesture to say to Judas that he could still come back and repent if he would. But Judas refused to accept it and went out into the everlasting night of darkness and destruction. Judas took the sop but he didn't take the Saviour. When Judas left, Satan left, and Satan didn't hear that first pronouncement of the doctrine of the Church Age. Everything Jesus said in that upper room that night is a part of the doctrine of the mystery. So Paul says here, "As I wrote afore in a few words" and this refers to the words he had written in Romans concerning the Church Age. But here he is going to write more in detail about this mystery.

EPHESIANS 3:4 "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)" "Whereby" is from "Pros ho" and it means "face to face with which." You must come face to face with doctrine, learn it, believe it, and live it.

(Illustration--Suppose you have a room filled with empty bottles. And suppose you go in and fling a bucket of water over those empty bottles, some of the bottles will catch more water in them than others. Now that's the way it is with doctrine. Some take in little and some take in much. The extent of the doctrine you take into your mind is the extent of your happiness and contentment in the Christian life. If you are really earnest and if you really want to learn doctrine, then you have the opportunity.)

Paul goes on to say, "When you read" and the word is from "anagnosko" and it doesn't mean to read but it means to analyze, to exegete, to gather exact knowledge about something. You go over it and over it until you know it. "Ye may understand my knowledge" and this refers to the Corinthians learning Bible doctrine. That is the purpose of this study. The word "understand" comes from two words. It comes from "dunamai" which means to have the ability, and from "noeo" and this means to think. So this means to have the ability to think through to the proper conclusion. The word "knowledge" is from "sun eisis" and this refers to technical information.

So Paul is here telling the Corinthians that he wanted them to be able to think through this information and be able to understand the full implications of the doctrine concerning the Church Age. They will need this information very much if they are going to be able to understand how the Lord is going to deal with them in the future. And it is just as important for us to understand this today as it was for these Corinthians to understand this truth in their day.