

EPHESIANS
CHAPTER THREE

1. How did Paul identify himself?

He called himself *“I, Paul, the prisoner”* (Ephesians 3:1). He is certainly writing from a jail cell (Ephesians 4:1; 6:20), having been arrested in Jerusalem under false charges (Acts 21:26-36).

2. Whose prisoner was he?

He was *“the prisoner of Christ Jesus”* (Ephesians 3:1). Although he was in Roman custody, he considered himself bound under the Lord (Romans 6:15-23).

3. Whom was he imprisoned for?

His imprisonment was *“for you Gentiles”* (Ephesians 3:1). Specifically, he was seized by the Romans because the Jews falsely accused him of bringing Trophimus the Ephesian into the temple (Acts 21:29). Generally, he regarded his incarceration as having a purpose that benefited the gentiles (Acts 22:21; Romans 11:13; Galatians 2:9).

4. What had been given to Paul for the Ephesians?

“The dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you” (Ephesians 3:2). Paul was appointed by the Lord to dispense God’s grace – simple as that.

5. What became of the mystery of Christ?

“By revelation He made known to me the mystery” (Ephesians 3:3) and *“the mystery of Christ... has now been revealed”* (Ephesians 3:4, 5). It is a major theme of the New Testament that what was once hidden and mysterious has now been revealed and made known (Romans 16:25-27; 1st Peter 1:10-12). The content of the mystery is the gospel (1st Timothy 3:16).

6. Who revealed it?

“He made known to me the mystery” (Ephesians 3:3) refers to *“God”* (Ephesians 3:2). *“It has now been revealed by the Spirit”* (Ephesians 3:5). Thus, the Holy Spirit of God is the revelator (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-14).

7. To whom was it revealed?

“By revelation He made known to me the mystery” (Ephesians 3:3) and *“it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets”* (Ephesians 3:5). The apostles had direct revelation from the Spirit (Luke 12:11-12), but the rest of us do not (Colossians 4:6; 1st Peter 3:15). The Holy Spirit in the apostles is their power from on high (Acts 1:8; Luke 24:49), which is why they are first in the church with the prophets being second (1st Corinthians 12:28).

8. How may others understand the mystery?

“When you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ” (Ephesians 3:4). Scripture is essential to spiritual awareness (Luke 16:29-31; John 20:30-31; 2nd Timothy 3:14-17).

9. What is different now than *“in other ages?”*

“The mystery of Christ... in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed” (Ephesians 3:5) and *“the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God”* (Ephesians 3:9). The Old Testament was under a veil, but with the Lord Jesus that veil is removed (2nd Corinthians 3:7-18).

10. What fact has been revealed?

“That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel” (Ephesians 3:6). The inclusion of the Gentiles under God’s blessings had been asserted in the promises to the patriarchs (Genesis 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14) and foretold by the prophets (Isaiah 11:10; 49:6; 60:1-3). What was less clear in the past is that the Gentiles would be equal with the Jews, spiritual sons of Abraham, sharing the inheritance of Christ (Galatians 3:26-29).

11. How did Paul regard himself?

“Me, who am less than the least of all the saints” (Ephesians 3:8). Given his past, Paul remained ever humble (2nd Corinthians 12:11; 1st Timothy 1:12-15).

12. What was God’s grace to Paul, specifically?

“I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power” (Ephesians 3:7) and *“this grace was given, that I should preach”* (Ephesians 3:8). He considered preaching a grace he received from God. It was a duty, but also a blessing to him (Galatians 1:15-16).

13. Who was Paul’s target demographic?

“I should preach among the Gentiles” (Ephesians 3:8). As has been thoroughly documented, Paul’s work was primarily directed toward the Gentiles. He was always willing to go to the Jews first (Romans 1:16), such as always visiting synagogues whenever he arrived in a new city (Acts 17:1-3; cf. 9:20; 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:10, 16-17; 18:1-4, 19; 19:1-8), but he would invariably preach to the gentiles and have greater success among them (Romans 15:16).

14. Where had the mystery been hidden?

It was *“hidden in God who created all things”* (Ephesians 3:9). God was the one who possessed this secret that mankind did not yet grasp.

15. Whose duty is it to broadcast *“the manifold wisdom of God?”*

“Now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church” (Ephesians 3:10). The church is tasked by God with propagating truth (1st Timothy 3:15). In the first place, this means the church should be very busy in this activity, and not getting distracted by worldly pursuits. In the second place, no manmade organization needs to take on this task. Simply allow the church, no competing entity, do what the Lord assigned it to do, nothing more or less. If we keep busy at this work through the means supplied by God, we won’t have time to even contemplate other ideas.

16. Who is the church making God’s wisdom known to?

“The manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 3:10). Angels and the like have long been curious about God’s scheme for man’s redemption (1st Peter 1:12). With the church, they get to see that great plan in action (Luke 15:7, 10).

Now, if angels get to see the manifold wisdom by the church, then how can those here on earth not see it?

17. When did God decide to use the church in this way?

It is *“according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Ephesians 3:11). Nothing about the scheme of redemption was spontaneous or an afterthought, including the church; God had it all planned out long before the universe existed (2nd Timothy 1:9; 1st Peter 1:20).

18. Why was the apostle concerned the Ephesians might *“lose heart”* and how did he expect them to become confident?

“In whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory” (Ephesians 3:12-13).

He thought they might get discouraged by the persecutions he was suffering, and they were concerned (6:21-22), but persecutions and such cannot separate a Christian from the love of the Lord (Romans 8:35-39).

He wanted them to increase their confidence through faith (1st John 5:4).

19. Whom was Paul kneeling to?

“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:14). Prayer must always be to the Father in the name of the Son (Colossians 3:17; John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23, 26).

20. Where is God's family?

"The whole family [is] in heaven and earth" (Ephesians 3:15). We have a Father in heaven (Matthew 5:48) and our firstborn brother is Jesus (Romans 8:29; Hebrews 2:9-11, 17) who has gone into heaven (1st Peter 3:21-22). We are blessed with fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters in Christ here on earth (Matthew 12:48-50; 1st Timothy 5:1-2).

21. What did Paul pray for the Ephesians?

"That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory:

- 1) *"To be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16).*
- 2) *"That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Ephesians 3:17).*
- 3) *"That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge" (Ephesians 3:17-19)*
- 4) *"That you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19)*

22. Where is God glorified?

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Since it is in the church that God is glorified by Christ, then the church's importance cannot be rightly dismissed. It is God's intent to receive glory here. Don't fool yourself or others into thinking "organized religion" is wrong. This body serves a real and serious purpose.