

**Text: Eph 3.4-7**

I mentioned on Sunday dissatisfaction with my title. As you can see I have “fixed” my problem by lengthening it.

This week:

Stewardship of Grace (2): The Mystery Revealed to Paul

Last week is also changed:

Stewardship of Grace (1): The Mission Placed upon Paul

I guess this isn’t too important! But it helps me think about the text.

Let’s start by reading the first section of Ephesians 3:

Eph 3.1-13

This time we will focus on vv. 4-7. We will add v. 3 on the screen to tie in with an early point.

1. What is the meaning of “this”? (4)

It points back to “as I wrote,” along with “when you read” refers to what Paul has already written about the church (and possibly refers to parallel thoughts in Colossians)

2. What is the nature of “insight”? (4)

“His ‘insight’ was not his own discovery; it was revealed by God.”<sup>1</sup>  
Also, it is “into the mystery of Christ”

3. What does the phrase “the mystery of Christ” mean? [Grammar alert!] (4)

- The mystery which is Christ (apposition)
- The mystery about Christ (and his Gentile mission) — not likely given the prophecies of Isaiah
- The mystery from Christ (source) — I prefer this one

4. What does Paul tell us about the mystery in v. 5? (two things)

- In other generations unknown
- Now revealed

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<sup>1</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, “Ephesians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 628.

## 5. Who are the “other generations”? (5)

Word “generation” refers to the span from a man’s birth to the birth of his son [various numbers]. “Generations” refers to multiple spans like this. The word “other” (along with “now”) indicates that we are contrasting all generations prior to Paul’s generation and Paul’s “now” generation. (Everyone since is in the “now” generation!)

## 6. What does the revelation to “holy apostles and prophets” prove? (5)

The new revelation (the mystery) is revealed to many men specially set apart (not just Paul). This is contrary to “ultra-dispensationalists” who insist the church couldn’t start until Paul taught about it.

## 7. What three aspects of this mystery union are revealed as achieved by the gospel? (6)

- Fellow heirs: inheriting the blessings that come from the gospel together
- Fellow members: lit. ‘with body’ – joined together in the same body
- Fellow partakers: a kind of partnership, joined together as equal partners in the church

“The mystery is not that Gentiles would be saved, for the Old Testament gave evidence of that, but rather that believing Jews and Gentiles are joined **together**. That was a revolutionary concept for Jews and Gentiles alike!”<sup>2</sup>

“The Old Testament people understood the basic contours of God’s plans for the Gentiles but never quite accepted or acted upon those plans. They never realized God’s full purposes regarding the union of Jew and Gentile, nor did they fully understand the coming and work of the Messiah that would bring all this to pass. In fact, even the early church failed to realize the significance of the Great Commission for world evangelism. They believed they were to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the Gentiles to come to them (the ‘procession of the nations to Zion’ in Isaiah 60:11; 62:10). The Spirit had to take over and lead them to the nations.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Hoehner, 629.

<sup>3</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Ephesians: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 82–83.

## 8. What power achieves this union? (6)

The power is in the gospel:

Rm 1.16-17 ¶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “but the righteous man shall live by faith.”

## 9. What is Paul’s relationship to the gospel? (7)

Paul is a “minister” of the gospel. This is the “household servant,” the word from which we get “deacon.” The word focuses on the subservient task, rather than the subservient position.

“The word minister (Gr. diakonos, deacon) emphasizes service, not servitude (cf. Gr. doulos, slave).”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Eph 3.7.