

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

C0441 -- October 20, 2004 – Ephesians 3: 1-6 – Revelation of the Mystery

Last week, we looked at the consequences of the Jew/Gentile union into one new man, the Church. Paul described the Church as a Holy Temple that God is currently building to be a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

In verse 19 we discover that we are no longer traveling foreigners or resident strangers but we are fellow citizens with all the saints. We have become a part of the entire company of redeemed people through all the ages. But we also have a unique status as becoming a part of God's household. We have become a part of the family of God unlike saints of other ages. The basis of this new household is a foundation composed of apostles and prophets. These refer to NT apostles and prophets. These NT apostles held the office of apostle (either category 1 or category 2). The thing both groups had in common was that they received direct revelation from God. They therefore form the foundation of the new entity, the Church. The cornerstone of this foundation is Jesus Christ Himself. The cornerstone is the most important part of the foundation. In some cultures, it was even more important than the foundation itself. It is the stone by which all the other stones in the foundation and superstructure were measured, aligned, and set. Jesus Christ Himself is that cornerstone. The building will therefore conform to His perfection and standards of righteousness so that it will be a fit habitation of God. The building of this structure takes place in Christ. It is fitted together, stone by stone in Him. The individual Jew and Gentile believers are like individual stones that Christ is cutting and smoothing in order to fit us together perfectly. This building is growing throughout the Church age as each member of the body of Christ is added to the whole. What are we being built into? Paul describes this building as a holy temple. The word for temple here is the word that is consistently used of the Holy of Holies in the Jewish Temple (*naos*). It is not the general word for temple used of the entire temple compound (*ieron*). For what purpose is this holy temple being built? To be a dwelling place of God the Holy Spirit. The building is to function as a dwelling place for God. God no longer dwells in temples made with hands as he did in the OT (Acts 17:24) but rather dwells in the corporate body, the Church. The word for dwelling means a "resting place", a place

where God is going to settle down and retire. This is a radically different view of God and where He dwells. God is not confined to temples built by human hands. In fact, men don't even make dwelling places for God. Christ Himself is constructing this holy temple. It will be the dwelling place of the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. God the Spirit now dwells in individuals of the Church, which make up this holy temple, and in the Church corporately. The completed holy temple will be made up of all glorified saints from the day of Pentecost until the Rapture.

F. PARENTHETICAL EXPANSION OF THE MYSTERY (3:1-13)

With Paul's explanation of the union of believing Jews and Gentiles in one new man in Eph. 2:11-22 he begins to offer a prayer in 3:1. This is not unusual for Paul. Remember Paul's progression in chapter 1. Paul gave an extensive Praise to God for all the spiritual blessings in Eph. 1:3-14 and then he went directly into a Prayer in Eph. 1:15-23. Chapter 2 has been loaded with doctrine and this moves Paul toward prayer once more in 3:1. So, it's typical for Paul to move from doctrine to prayer. But notice at the end of 3:1 the little dashed line? That's an indication that he cuts off his prayer just as he got started. He decides to digress and give a fuller explanation of the mystery of Christ in vv. 2-13. This explanation has three elements; *his responsibility to make the mystery known, when and to whom this new revelation came, and the content of the mystery*. Then Paul picks up and continues his prayer in v. 14. So, we're moving into a parenthetical section. Apparently, as Paul began to pray, he was reminded of certain doctrinal points that needed to be crystallized in the Ephesian's minds. Once again this is a single sentence in the Greek and is composed of 189 words. This is the fourth longest sentence in Ephesians. Each of these long sentences is full of a complex of ideas that can't be separated in Paul's thinking.

1. The Introduction (3:1)

This verse introduces the prayer which he abruptly digresses from and picks up again in v. 14. Ephesians 3:1, 14-21 is therefore a complete sentence.

Greek Text 3:1 Touto charin ego Paulos ho desmios tou Christou [Iesou] huper humon ton ethnon

Translation 3:1 For this reason, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ [Jesus], for the sake of you Gentiles—

Touto charin, "For this reason" is Paul's way of introducing a prayer (cf. **1:15** and **3:14**). The **reason** Paul begins praying for the Ephesians is because of what he's just written in

2:11-22. Therefore, this prayer that he resumes in 3:14-21 is a picture of what Paul desired for us to do with the truths in 2:11-21. In light of the new man in Christ Jesus, composed of Jews and Gentiles, Paul prays that we would comprehend this new union more deeply and that strengthened love toward one another would result.

ego Paulos ho desmios tou Christou [Iesou], “I Paul, the prisoner of Christ [Jesus], Here Paul designates himself as the author of the letter once again (cf. 1:1). This is not a pseudepigraphal letter but a genuine letter written by Paul or dictated by Paul to Tychicus (cf. 6:21). Paul says that he was **the prisoner of Christ Jesus**. This is a little odd because we know that when Paul wrote, in 62AD, he was a prisoner of Herod. Ephesians is one of four Prison Epistles along with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. But Paul doesn't mention being a prisoner of Herod. Instead, he says he's a **prisoner of Christ Jesus**. Why is this? There are two things about Paul's life that we have to understand to be able to understand this.

First of all, Paul's calling in life. Paul never separated his physical circumstances from the calling of God for his life. Paul is not trying to get the Ephesian Gentiles to feel sorry for him. The Ephesians knew Paul's was a prisoner of Herod. So, what he's doing is demonstrating an important principle of the Christian life. Lots of Christians would think that imprisonment by Herod would hinder Paul's ministry. “Oh Paul, why did you have to make such a ruckus, why did you have to be so public in your ministry and cause problems with the Jews? Now you're all locked away and you can't minister effectively.” But Paul realized something very few Christians realize. First, he realized that when Christians lay low and always try to keep the peace nothing happens. The Christian Church never flourished under peacemakers (the blood of the martyrs is the seed bed of the Church). The Christian Church never flourished under pacifist Christians. It has always flourished under Christian activists; truth seekers. People who could care less about what everyone else thinks. People who stand up for what's right regardless of what secular group they might offend. Second thing Paul realized was that ministry can happen anywhere. His ministry wasn't hindered by being in prison. His imprisonment by Herod wasn't by chance and it wasn't something to get all depressed about. It was part and parcel of the plan of God. And Paul wasn't going to waste his time pining away in prison, pouting about his situation and worrying about what's going to happen to him. Paul was going to make something happen. This is because Paul understood that this was God's plan for his life. And Paul had a very strong sense of calling in life. Paul recognized his calling so clearly that he wasn't going to let anything get in the way of fulfilling God's calling for his life. Turn to **Acts 20:24** because I want to show you how strongly the call of God on Paul's life was. Incidentally, this is my favorite verse in the NT. *“But I do not consider my life of any account as dear*

to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.” Paul could care less about his physical life. We had another guy in the NT who was a lot like Paul in this respect. Remember Stephen in Acts 7 when he was getting stoned. Why didn't he just avoid giving that message to the Jews? He had to know it would offend them. He could have just left it alone and avoided being stoned. But what did he do? He stood his ground. He was a hard as nails Christian who could care less about his own life. All he cared about was fulfilling the plan of God. And that was Paul's perspective too. Forget about my life, what about the course and the ministry God has given me? That was Paul's concern. And going to prison wasn't going to hinder Paul a bit. No matter Paul's circumstances, no matter what, Paul was going to finish his course. This may be one reason Paul didn't get married. His calling was so great and required so much energy, travel, and hardship that there was no way Paul could finish his course with a wife and family. And so, God gave him the gift of celibacy. Now, don't go getting any grand ideas. You've either got that gift or you don't and very few, very few people have this gift. So, what did Paul do with his time in prison? He wrote Scripture. He capitalized on that time. When else would Paul have done it? In prison he had time to think and write and so he just continued right on fulfilling his ministry. So, first of all we have to understand Paul had a strong calling.

Secondly, we have to understand that Paul had a 'revelation' debt. Paul was a prisoner because of all the direct revelation he had received from God and this placed a heavy burden on Paul. Let's go through some verses in the NT to see this: Gal. 1:11, 12, 15-17; 2:2, 7; Rom. 1:14 Paul had a huge revelation debt. It weighed heavily on him and the only way to get out from under that weight was to make known all that God had revealed to him. And so, Paul is dispensing of some of that revelation here in the book of Ephesians. Now maybe you can understand why Paul considers himself a **prisoner of Jesus Christ** rather than a prisoner of Herod. Because with the enormous amount of revelation given to him and his strong calling in life Paul had become a **prisoner of Jesus Christ** (also cf. Eph. 4:1; 2 Tim. 1:8; Philemon 1:1). Paul didn't consider himself free to involve himself in any kind of ministry he wanted. Paul was interested in fulfilling the plan of God for his life and part of that was getting rid of this revelation (Eph. 3:8). This is why in Philippians, Paul said it was better to go and be with the Lord; but for their sakes, it was better that he stick around (Phil. 1:21-24). Because if he didn't then the revelation Paul had would die with him. And then no one would benefit from what he, by the grace of God, knew.

huper humon ton ethnon, “for the sake of you Gentiles—“ expresses why Paul was imprisoned. Paul was imprisoned because of his Gentile ministry. It was decided by God that Paul would minister to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Later on, in Galatia it was decided

that Paul would be the apostle exclusively to the Gentiles and Peter would be the apostle to the Jews (Gal. 2:7-9). Paul's ministry to the Gentiles caused the Jews in Jerusalem to turn against him which resulted in his imprisonment in Jerusalem (Acts 21:20-36). From there he was taken to Caesarea where he was tried and he appealed to Caesar (Acts 24:23-25:12). Then he was taken to Rome and imprisoned there for two years while he waited for his accusers (Acts 27-28). While he was imprisoned in Rome, he wrote this letter to the Ephesians. So, ultimately, because of his ministry to the Gentiles he was in prison.

2. The Mystery (3:2-6)

Paul breaks off his prayer to explain the mystery and his responsibility to make known the mystery to the Gentiles. Paul is digressing to explain in more detail 2:11-22.

a. The Administration of God's Grace (3:2)

Greek Text 3:2 ei ge ekousate ten oikonomian tes chariots tou theou tes dotheises moi eis humas.

Translation 3:2 surely you have heard of the administration of the grace of God that was given me to you,

ei ge, "surely". The NASB translates this **if indeed** but they **surely** had heard. Thus, a better translation of the beginning of verse 2 is **surely you have heard**. Paul had been with the Ephesians for 2-¼ years and had taught them for 4-6 hours a day in the school of Tyrannus. **Surely**, they had been taught about the **administration of God's grace** that Paul had been given. The enclitic particle *ge* in the Greek text indicates this is Paul's intention...to remind them of his previous teaching. It had been 5-6 years since he had been with them. But **surely**, they remembered Paul's teaching about the mystery and the **administration of God's grace** revealed to him by God to dispense to them.

ekousate ten oikonomian tes chariots tou theou, "you have heard of the administration of the grace of God". The word here "administration" is the Greek word *oikonomia* which Paul used in 1:10 and 3:9. In 1:10 it referred to the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times which is the Messianic Kingdom. Here it clearly refers to the mystery Dispensation of the Church. Some dispensationalists might try to construe this to mean that during the Dispensation of the Mosaic Law there was no **grace** but God's **grace** was revealed in the OT. The fact that God gave the law was gracious. The **grace** that Paul has in mind here is the 'special' **grace** of God in revealing the mystery of the Church. So, it is better to call the present dispensation the Dispensation of the Church rather than the

Dispensation of Grace to avoid this confusion. Before the cross Gentiles had to become Jews in order to enjoy the privileges of Israel, but now God's 'special' **grace** has made it so that Gentiles do not have to become Jews nor do Jews have to become Gentiles but rather both become a part of one "new man", the Church. So, this is the revelation of the Dispensation of the Church to Paul. However, Paul was not the only one to receive revelation about the mystery Church as 3:5 tells us. It was also revealed to Peter and the other early apostles (Acts 10-11). But Paul was the one to whom God graciously gave the calling to impart this new revelation to the Gentiles.

tes dotheises moi eis humas, "that was given me to you,". What exactly was given to Paul? Was it the Dispensation of the Church or was it **Grace** that was given to Paul? It was a 'special' **grace that was given to Paul**. That 'special' **grace** consisted of God's revealing the mystery of the Church to Paul which he was to impart to the Gentiles.

b. The Revelation of the Mystery (3:3-5)

Now that Paul has reminded the Ephesians of his teaching about the dispensation of the Church, he goes on to describe how he found out about the mystery dispensation (v. 3), how we can come to understand the mystery dispensation (v. 4), and to whom and when the mystery dispensation was first revealed (v. 5).

(1) The Manner of the Mystery's Disclosure (3:3)

First, how did Paul come to find out about the mystery dispensation? Here Paul wants to get rid of the notion that he developed this idea on his own or through study.

Greek Text 3:3 [hoti] kata apokalupsin egnoristhe moi to musterion, kathos proegrapsa en oligo,

Translation 3:3 [that] by revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I wrote before in brief,

[hoti] kata apokalupsin egnoristhe moi to musterion, "[that] by revelation the mystery was made known to me,". Paul does three important things here that totally destroy the idea that Paul figured the mystery out on his own by some human method of investigation. *First* of all, he uses the word **revelation** (Greek *apokolupsis*). The word means "to unveil" or "disclose" something that was previously hidden. In the NT it means something which was hidden in God and unknown to humans. *Second*, he uses the Greek verb **made known** (Greek *gnorizo*). The word means "to reveal" something previously unrevealed. It is an

orist passive verb. The aorist means it was revealed at a past point in time and the passive means that Paul received the revelation and did not discover it on his own. *Third*, Paul uses the word **mystery** (Greek *musterion*) to describe the nature of the revelation. The word means something “hidden in God”, something that cannot be unraveled by human intelligence or research. It is not something that is mysterious *per se*, but something that is to be comprehended by all believers (3:5, 9, 18). This mystery was revealed to Paul, not so Paul could be some kind of elite scholar who knew things others didn’t know, but so that Paul would dispense the mystery to all people (3:9) and to all rulers and authorities in the heavenlies (3:10).

When did Paul receive this revelation? It was either while he was on the Damascus road (Acts 9) or it was while he was in Arabia for three years or it was while he was absent for another 14 years before returning to Jerusalem (Acts 22:21). The revelation probably came in parts during all three stages. We know from Acts 9 that if Paul reflected on what the Lord said to him, he would grasp something radically new about what God was doing. “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” Saul must have wondered “how am I persecuting you Lord? I thought I was persecuting Gentile believers? Upon further reflection he might realize that there was some connection between these Gentile believers and the Lord, and by persecuting these Gentiles believers he was therefore persecuting the Lord Himself. He could have seen early on that there was an organic union between the Lord Jesus and Gentile believers. But, with further revelation his understanding probably increased. It is fully developed here in Ephesians 3 but it took many years for the apostles and prophets, including Paul to understand this. In fact, it was still being debated in 49AD in Jerusalem (Acts 15), sixteen years after the beginning of the Church on the day of Pentecost!

kathos proegrapsa en oligo], “as I wrote before in brief,”. The problem with these words is what did Paul write **before in brief** about the mystery? Some say Romans 16:25. Others say Col. 1:22-25. This would be highly unlikely. Others say Paul wrote two letters to the Ephesians and he’s referring to the other letter, but there is no manuscript evidence for such an assertion. Two views are viable. First, some say he is referring to Ephesians 1:10 because there he mentions the **mystery** briefly. But there the **mystery** has to do with the will of God concerning the Messianic Kingdom and all things being united under Christ during that dispensation. Second, some say Paul has in mind the **mystery** of Jew and Gentile believers being in one body (3:6) which he already discussed in chapter 2:11-22 (maybe he’s referring specifically to 2:14-16 since Paul says that he wrote about it **in brief**).

(2) The Ability to Understand the Mystery (3:4)

Now that we know that Paul found out about the mystery dispensation by revelation we come to a second question. How are we to come to understand the mystery dispensation?

Greek Text 3:4 pros ho dunasthe anaginoskontes noesai ten sunesin mou en to musterio tou Christou,

Translation 3:4 whereby when reading it you are able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,

pros ho dunasthe anaginoskontes noesai, “whereby when reading it you are able to understand”. The transition words **by referring to this** basically mean “in light of what was just stated”. The words, **when reading**, are a present participle, meaning that while one is reading the previous context or when this text was read to the Ephesians, they would understand Paul’s insight into the mystery of Christ. The aorist infinitive “**to understand**” refers to the ‘mind’. We now have the ‘mind’ of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16) and are able to understand in our ‘mind’ Paul’s insight as we read or hear his former context. He obviously has received some radically new revelation from God.

ten sunesin mou en to musterio tou Christou/, “my insight into the mystery of Christ,”. Paul is not bragging by saying **my insight**. He makes it clear in v. 3 that it was revealed to him, in v. 5 that this revelation came by the Holy Spirit, and in v. 8 that he is the “least of the saints.” He is not bragging; he simply wants to share the insight which he has been given and which he now possesses with the Ephesians. He’s getting rid of some of the revelation debt we talked about earlier. The word **insight** is *sunesis* and was often used in association with receiving revelation. Its basic meaning is two rivers running together. In Paul’s mind it was as if two streams of revelation had come together and the result is what he wants to share with us. When Jesus was 12 years old and in the Temple with the Doctors of the Law for three days, listening to them and asking them questions they were amazed at his *sunesis*. His understanding was so advanced and this was because Jesus was taught directly by His Father in accordance with Isa. 49:2-3. Jesus, in His humanity, was a great student of the word of God and He constantly operated under the filling of the Holy Spirit. Paul also had **insight** by revelation from the Holy Spirit and this **insight** was **into the mystery of Christ**. The question here is “what exactly is the mystery”? This is probably an objective genitive meaning that the **mystery** is about **Christ** or concerning **Christ** because verse 6 outlines exactly what the **mystery** is. Our discussion of **mystery** will be under verse 6 since the content of the **mystery** is found there.

(3) The Time of the Mystery’s Disclosure (3:5)

Verse 5 answers the issue of who was the mystery dispensation first revealed to and when was it first revealed?

Greek Text 3:5 *ho heterais geneais ouk egnoristhe tois huiois ton anthropon hos nun apekalupsthe tois hagiois apostolois autoi kai prophetais en pneumati,*
Translation 3:5 *which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit,*

ho heterais geneais ouk egnoristhe tois huiois ton anthropon, “**which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men**”. Here Paul asserts that the **mystery** was not revealed **in other generations**. This refers to all generations up until Paul’s day. Up until Paul’s generation this revelation was wholly hidden in God, inscrutable to humans. The aorist passive **was...made known** indicates that it was inscrutable to previous generations. They could not have studied the Scriptures more and discovered it. It was totally unrevealed. The “**sons of men**” does not refer solely to some special group of people like the OT prophets. Instead, it refers to all men in general. No man had access to this **mystery** hidden in God. Now it is being made known not only to humans but also to the rulers and authorities in the heavenlies (3:10).

hos nun apekalupsthe, “**as it has now been revealed**” is a highly debated phrase. It is typically taken two ways.

1) comparison of degree or 2) comparison of kind

The first view has two options. Covenant Theologians say that the **mystery** was partially revealed in the OT but not full revealed until the NT. Progressive Dispensationalists say it was revealed in the OT but not recognized until the NT. The second view, held by Classic Dispensationalists, says that the **mystery** was totally unrevealed in the OT. This second view is the best view for several reasons. *First*, the context argues that this **mystery** was totally unrevealed. In v. 9 Paul says the **mystery** was hidden in God. It doesn’t say it was partially hidden in God and partially revealed in the OT. Nor does it say it was hidden in the OT and just not recognized. Instead, it says it was hidden in God. And God is inscrutable unless He reveals Himself or His thoughts to us. *Second*, the verbs *apokalupto* and *gnorizo* in the prior context refer to something being unveiled and made known. If something were hidden in God then the only way it could be unveiled and made known is if God reveals it. *Third*, the adverb *nun* (now) argues that Paul is contrasting the past with the present and this is consistent with Paul’s usage in Romans 16:25-26 and Col. 1:26.

Further, if the heavenly hosts did not know of the mystery in the OT then it is highly unlikely that anyone on earth knew about the mystery. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that it was not known because not revealed. In fact, we find out in v. 10 that the heavenly hosts learn about the mystery from the Church which began after Pentecost. So, a mystery is something that is totally unrevealed in the OT and is now made known. To whom was the mystery first made known?

tois hagiois apostolois autoi kai prophetais en pneumati, “to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit,”. We already know from 2:20 who the **holy apostles and prophets** are. They refer to those men in the NT who held the office of apostle or were prophets. These two groups were the only men in the NT to receive direct revelation from God. This fits perfectly with the **mystery** concept as well as the ‘unveiling’ and ‘being made known’ and ‘hidden in God’ concepts in the context. It is important to note that the revelation of the mystery was not solely given to Paul. Those who are Pauline Dispensationalists often try to assert that Paul was the only one given this revelation or that he was the first to have received the revelation. The plurals of **apostle and prophet** show that this is not a correct conclusion. Other **apostles and prophets** did receive revelation of the **mystery** although it may have taken some time to think over and understand. Because Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, he had a great desire to make known this insight to the Gentiles. It is remarkable that Gentiles no longer have to become Jews but that by believing in Christ they become a part of one new body, neither Jew nor Gentile. This is truly important for Gentiles to understand. They don’t have to be circumcised and go through all the ritual of the OT to become fully accepted among Israel (this is the argument of Galatians). Finally, how was the mystery made known? Paul tells us he received the revelation of the **mystery...by the Spirit**. This shows conclusively that the **mystery** could not be known by human study or meditation on the Scriptures. It had to be revealed **by the Spirit**.

Finally, we come to the long-awaited content of the mystery. What exactly was totally unknown in the OT and is now made known in the NT era? This of course is highly debated so it will make things easier if we determine ahead of time what was revealed in the OT about Gentiles.

We know that Gentiles would be blessed (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). We know that there could be Gentile inclusion within Israel (Lev. 19:34; Deut. 10:18-19; 1 Kgs. 8:41-43). We know that Gentiles could be saved because the OT gives evidence of their salvation. We also know that Gentiles were prophesied to be blessed with Israel (Isa. 2:1-4; 11:10; 49:6; 60:1-3; 61:5-6; Jer. 3:17; Zech. 8:20-23; 14:16-19). But these prophecies

were referring to the future kingdom (cf. Acts 3:18-20). What we do not ever find in the OT is the concept of Jew and Gentile in the same body. This was an entirely new concept in the NT. Two distinct features of this body are found in 1 Cor. 12:13; (1) that entrance into this body for Jews and Gentiles is the same and (2) that entrance is by baptism of the Spirit. Since Spirit baptism began on the day of Pentecost then it follows that these truths were a total mystery in the OT, something unrevealed now revealed to the NT **apostles and prophets** for our benefit and that of the heavenly hosts (3:10).

c. The Content of the Mystery (3:6)

Greek Text 3:6 einai ta ethne sugkleronoma kai sussoma kai summetocha tes epaggelias en Christo Iesou dia tou euaggeliou,

Translation 3:6 that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body and fellow participants of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,

einai ta ethne sugkleronoma kai sussoma, “that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body”. The significant thing about this verse is Paul’s focus on the unity of Jewish and Gentile believers. To accomplish this emphasis Paul used three adjectives prefixed by *sun-*. You’ll notice how the NASB translators maintained this by using the word **fellow** each time Paul used one of these adjectives. We are **fellow heirs, fellow members, and fellow participants**. This emphasizes unity! Believing **Gentiles** are **fellow heirs** with believing Jews **and** believing **Gentiles** are **fellow members of the body**. The **body** here is, of course, the **body** of Christ, that is, the Church (Eph. 1:22-23). Each individual believer depends on the other members and the whole body depends on Christ for growth and direction. We are being grown into a holy temple (2:21) and being fitted together to be the place where God dwells in the Spirit (2:22). Additionally, we are...

kai summetocha tes epaggelias, “and fellow participants of the promise”. What exactly is **the promise** that Paul has in mind? Paul mentioned that we were **strangers to the covenants of promise** in 2:12. There he was referring to the unconditional covenants (Abrahamic, Land, Davidic, and New). We must then be related to the unconditional covenants of the OT in some respects. This promise, of course, includes the Messiah, salvation, and enablement of the Holy Spirit. We know from Galatians that Gentiles are Abraham’s offspring and we are heirs according to promise. We know from 2 Cor. 3 that believing Jews and Gentiles are both under the spiritual blessings of the new covenant.

We have to be very careful here not to make Gentile believers a part of Israel. There are very careful distinctions that one must make when trying to understand what applies strictly

to Israel and what applies to the Church. There are basically three different views. (1) Some take all the promises of the OT covenants allegorically and apply them to the Church in the present day (Roman Catholicism, Covenant Amillennial, and Covenant Postmillennial). (2) Some believe that the spiritual promises are to be taken literally and the physical promises are to be allegorized. On what basis can we allegorize some parts of a covenant and take other parts literally? All aspects of the unconditional covenants will be fulfilled literally. If they are not then God's character is at stake. (3) Some take all aspects of the covenants of promise literally. However, the only aspects of the covenants of promise that apply to the Church are those repeated in NT contexts related to the Church. All aspects that are not repeated to the Church are yet to be fulfilled to the nation of Israel at the Second Coming. This third understanding is the best and takes all of Scripture at face value which is a Dispensational distinction. There is simply no way we can allegorize Israel's land promises or the Davidic throne promises and apply them to the Church.

en Christo Iesou dia tou euaggeliou, "in Christ Jesus through the gospel". In Christ Jesus gives us the sphere in which Gentiles are **fellow heirs, fellow members, and fellow participants**. If it wasn't for Christ Jesus we would still be far off, strangers, aliens, excluded from the privileges of Israel; but now in Christ we who were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ to the spiritual aspects of the unconditional covenants. The means by which this was made possible is **through the gospel**. The **gospel** refers to the "good news" of Christ's substitutionary death, His burial, His resurrection and ascension. All of which have been mentioned in Ephesians (cf. 1:20-22). If you only believe in Christ then you will enjoy the privileged position of being in God's household, the Church.

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