

8.11.19 ~ (Ephesians 3:1-12)
God's Greatest Mystery, Christ in Us...

The Body of Christ is made up of every genuine believer and follower of Jesus, no matter what ancestry, culture, or social status (cf. **Galatians 3:26-29**).

All true Christians are also part of God's holy temple on earth (cf. **Ephesians 2:19-22**)— designed, built and inhabited by God-- and all this for God's glory, that His Grace might be expressed in the lives of those who belong to Him, by faith in Christ.

Read Ephesians 3:1... Paul begins a prayer, but then (**Ephesians 3:2-12**) he reemphasizes the truths he has already talked about in chapters 1-2; then he transitions back to his prayer, that doesn't end until **verse 21**..

As Paul begins this prayer, he desires that these believers fully understand what he is praying on their behalf, so he reminds them of what he already covered in chapters 1-2, about the Mystery of Christ in them.

Paul was an apostle of the Lord, he had been chosen and set apart by God to bring God's message specifically to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews (cf Romans 1:16).

Read Ephesians 3:2-7... Paul reminds the Gentile converts that this revelation concerning 'the mystery' was given to him by God, and that he has already written briefly concerning this (**Ephesians 1:9**).

Paul wants these believers, as he states in **Ephesians 3:4-5**, to understand about this mystery which was not made known until now; and now only because of the revealing work of God's Holy Spirit Who first made it known to God's apostles and prophets.

Ephesians 3:6 says this mystery is about Jews and Gentiles forming one spiritual body in Christ, both being recipients of God's promise through the Gospel.

Ephesians 3:7 declares how Paul has become a servant [or minister] of the Gospel of Christ. More clearly, the Greek says, "through the gospel of which [I was made] a servant minister."

Paul emphasizes that his calling, the message he is proclaiming, and the authority and power he has been given, are all of God's doing, by which Paul was made God's servant. The word *minister* [or servant] used in **Ephesians 3:7**, is the Greek word [*diakonos*], it means "*one who waits on tables.*" And so, Paul was made a spiritual *table waiter* by God.

What does a waiter/server in a restaurant do? Clear off, clean, prepare the table, serve the food and beverages, and check to see if the guests have what they need.. In the same sense, Paul was called to be an apostle by Christ Himself, to

serve spiritual food and drink and to care for the believers; he did not consider himself anymore than a servant (for the Only One worthy of honor is Christ).

Read Ephesians 3:8-9... Paul was called to preach Christ to Gentiles.

Romans 10:13-14, "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?"

Galatians 1:15-16, "But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles..."

Read Ephesians 3:10-11... God's purpose through this mystery (*the church*), was to reveal and to make known His sovereign wisdom and plan to all the "rulers and the authorities in the heavenly *places*," i.e., to all the spiritual beings (both holy and unholy angels -- those who serve God and those who serve the devil).

God's eternal purpose was accomplished in Christ, everything being fulfilled in and through Him. He is God's plan and provision; He is the head of God's spiritual body, the church, in which God Himself lives, moves, and works (**Colossians 1:15-20**).

Read Ephesians 3:12. The fulfillment of God's plan, the full expression of God's mystery, is found in Christ. And because of who He is, what He has done, and where He is now-- we, who trust in Him, can approach God with freedom and confidence (see **Hebrews 1:1-3; Ephesians 2:1-7**).

In Judaism only the High Priest can approach God, and this could only be done at the Temple, in a special room called the Holy of Holies; it was there that God's presence could be visited, but only once a year, on the Day of Atonement.

If anyone else attempted to enter into God's presence, that person would be instantly dead; in fact, it is said that priests had a rope tied around them --just in case they did something unholy or defiled themselves, while in God's presence-- that way their body could be drug out of the Holy of Holies, because it was clear that no one was going to go in after them.

God gave exact details to be followed concerning the what, where, why, and how, of entering His presence (cf. **Leviticus 16:1-34**).

Before Christ, the people of Israel didn't have access to God, only the appointed Priest, at the appointed place, in the appointed way, on the appointed Day: the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the holiest of Jewish holidays.

Paul says (**Ephesians 3:12**), every believer and follower of Christ may enter into God's presence in prayer at any time, and we can do this with confidence, knowing that God fully welcomes us, as His children, He hears our prayers, and we can speak with God about anything.

Hebrews 4:15-16, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

This is indeed a great mystery. We have been granted privileged access to God, because He has become our Father through our faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

God came to earth and put on flesh, in order to provide forgiveness for our sins and eternal life for our souls; this was accomplished through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of God's One and Only Son, our Savior and lord, Jesus Christ

By His own mercy and grace God determined, before time began, that He would gather all those who confess and believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; and as fellow citizens in God's kingdom, and members of God's own family-- all Christians, together, in one body (the church), under one head (Christ)-- might serve God on earth, with honor and glory and praise, as we wait to be joined with Him in heaven for eternity.

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. **2** And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, **4** and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

Revelation 22:18 18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; **19** and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book. **20** He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. **21** The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Pastor Mike
>'(((><