

The Mystery Of The Church

By Pastor Art Watkins

In Ephesians 3:1-9 Paul wrote about a mystery pertaining to the church.
***For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,
If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is
given me to you-ward:***

***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)***

***Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it
is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;***

***That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and
partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:***

***Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of
God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.***

***Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given,
that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of
Christ;***

***And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which
from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all
things by Jesus Christ:***

Paul uses the word mystery twice in these verses. The church itself is not the mystery. There has always been a church throughout the Bible called the church of God that both Old and New Testament saints are members of. The mystery of the church concerns the gentile members of the church. When writing about the mystery in Ephesians 3 he mentions the word "gentiles" in verses 1, 6, and 8 for the mystery pertains to them.

The gentiles Paul writes about are those saved under his ministry and in chapter 2 he shows us what kind of gentiles they were. There is more than one kind of gentile in the Bible and when you see what kind these gentiles were, it will help you to understand the mystery of the church.

In Ephesians 2:11-12 he wrote:

***Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh,
who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the
Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;***

That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

The mystery of the church pertains to uncircumcised gentiles who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. Being aliens of Israel they were without Christ, strangers from the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world.

The gentiles Paul wrote to in Ephesians were not circumcised Jewish proselytes. This is why they were without hope in time past, for the only gentiles who had hope at that time were gentiles who became circumcised Jewish proselytes to Judaism and kept the law as a Jew.

What is the mystery concerning these uncircumcised gentiles who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel?

Ephesians 3:6 says: ***That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:***

1. That the gentiles should be fellow heirs

Fellow heirs are fellows who have the same inheritance. My two brothers and I are fellow heirs to the inheritance of our father. We have an equal share to his inheritance. The mystery is that gentiles are now fellow heirs with someone, but who? Paul shows us who they are in Ephesians 2:14-17.

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

In these verses, God has reconciled two groups of people together to make one body in Christ. In time past, they were divided by a wall, but now that wall has been abolished and they are now one body in Christ. Who are they? In the context, the two groups are Jews called the circumcision and gentiles called the uncircumcision in verse 11.

Therefore, when Paul says gentiles are fellow heirs, he means we are fellow heirs with the Jews. If fellow heirs are fellows who have the same inheritance then what is the inheritance? The inheritance we now share with the Jews is theirs. God promised the Jews in the commonwealth of

Israel an inheritance and now uncircumcised gentiles share in their inheritance. What is it? The only inheritance in the Bible; The Kingdom of God. In the same book where Paul says gentiles share in the Jews inheritance he shows us what the inheritance is in Ephesians 5:5 which says: ***For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.***

2. That the gentiles are members of the same body

The body is the church. The mystery is we are members of the same church with someone, but who? The same people we are fellow heirs with, the Jews. In time past, we were cut off and divided from them by a middle wall of partition. But now, the wall has been abolished and today we are members of the same body or church with them.

3. That the gentiles are partakers of his promise

The mystery is that gentiles are now partakers of someone's promise. What is the promise and who does it belong to? Interpreting the promise from the context, the promise is like the inheritance; it's the promise and promises God originally made to the Jews we are one body with. In time past, according to Ephesians 2:12 we were strangers from the covenants of promise God made with the commonwealth of Israel, but now we partake of their promises and promises. In the book of Ephesians there are three promises gentiles now partake of that were once promised to the commonwealth of Israel only.

In Ephesians 1:13, the Holy Spirit of promise.

In Ephesians 2:12, the covenants of promise and especially the New Covenant of promise.

And Ephesians 5:5, the promise of the kingdom of God.

All of these promises and many more once belonged to Israel only, but now we gentiles are partakers of them. (Romans 15:27)

But, how did uncircumcised gentiles become fellow heirs with the Jews to their inheritance in the kingdom of God? How did uncircumcised gentiles become members of the same body or church with the Jews that we were divided from in time past? How did gentiles who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel become partakers of their promise and promises? Once you see how, you will see the mystery of the church.

It says: **IN CHRIST BY THE GOSPEL**

Those five words reveal the mystery of the church. The mystery is this; Uncircumcised gentiles, who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, are now fellow heirs with the Jews to their inheritance in the kingdom of God; they are now members of the same body or church with them and they partake of their promises; ***in Christ by the gospel***; that is, by faith alone in the gospel without becoming Jewish proselytes, without circumcision or without keeping the law or works of any kind.

The mystery of the church is how uncircumcised gentiles got in the church and our relationship with the Jews who were in it before us. Beginning with Cornelius in Acts 10 and especially during Paul's first missionary trip in Acts 13-14, God began to save uncircumcised gentiles and made them members of the same body with the Jews and gave them an equal inheritance in the kingdom of God with the Jews and made them partakers of all the spiritual promises he made to the Jews without requiring them to become circumcised Jewish proselytes or keeping the law or works of any kind.

In time past, it was not a mystery that gentiles would share in Israel's inheritance and promises and become members of the same church with them, IF they became circumcised Jewish proselytes and kept the law like a Jew. All of the prophets knew this perfectly; But what the Old Testament Prophets did not fully see, as is now revealed to the New Testament Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit, is that God would save uncircumcised gentiles by faith alone in the gospel without circumcision or works and give them an equal inheritance in the kingdom of God with the Jews and place them in the same body of Christ with the Jews and make them partakers of all the spiritual promises he originally made with the commonwealth of Israel and declare them equal in every way with the Jews in the church which is his body.