

NOON BIBLE STUDY: EPHESIANS 3

EPHESIANS 3:1-12

V. 1 - "FOR THIS REASON..." CP. V. 14 - "FOR THIS REASON..." (RELATING TO EPH 2:19-22 - BECAUSE THESE THINGS ARE TRUE...I AM PRAYING THE FOLLOWING PRAYER, RECORDED IN V. 14-21. BUT FIRST PAUL WILL PAUSE AND RECOUNT A FEW THINGS.

1 - PAUL IS A PRISONER, OF JESUS CHRIST, FOR THE SAKE OF THE GENTILES.

- WHAT DOES HE MEAN BY THIS? PAUL IS IN PRISON, FOR HIS PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL. BUT HE DOES NOT LOOK AT HIS IMPRISONMENT AS RELATING TO THE ROMAN LAW, JEWISH OPPONENTS, ETC. BUT HE LOOKS AT HIMSELF AS A PRISONER OF JESUS CHRIST, FOR THE SAKE OF THE GENTILES.

2 - GOD GAVE PAUL SOMETHING TO STEWARD (SOMETHING TO TAKE CARE OF OR BE RESPONSIBLE FOR). WHAT WAS IT? IT WAS AN UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S GRACE TOWARDS THE GENTILES, GIVEN TO HIM BY "REVELATION"

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR PAUL TO BE GIVEN SOMETHING BY "REVELATION?"
- WHEN DO YOU THINK GOD GAVE THIS REVELATION TO HIM? (ROAD TO DAMASCUS (ACTS 9), LATER IN JERUSALEM (ACTS 22:17-21), THROUGHOUT PROCESS OF BECOMING MISSIONARY (GALATIANS 1:13-2:10))

3 - THIS PLAN, FOR GOD TO EXTEND HIS GRACE TO THE GENTILES, IS WHAT PAUL CALLS "THE MYSTERY"

- "MYSTERY" DEFINED (V. 5) - IN OTHER GENERATIONS "NOT MADE KNOWN" AS IT HAS NOW BEEN "REVEALED"
- "THE MYSTERY" DEFINED (V. 6) - "TO BE SPECIFIC", "THE GENTILES ARE FELLOW HEIRS, FELLOW MEMBERS OF THE BODY, FELLOW PARTAKERS OF THE PROMISE IN JESUS CHRIST" THROUGH (HEARING AND BELIEVING) THE GOSPEL.

ESV STUDY BIBLE (V. 5) - WHILE MOSES AND THE PROPHETS HAD WRITTEN OF CHRIST AND HIS SALVATION TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH (JOHN 5:46; 1 PET. 1:10—12), AND WHILE GOD HAD EVEN PROMISED TO ABRAHAM THAT ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH WOULD BE BLESSED THROUGH HIM (GEN. 12:3), THE FULL REALIZATION OF WHO CHRIST WAS AND THE EXTENT OF THE SALVATION THAT WOULD COME TO THE GENTILES WAS NOT CLEAR UNTIL AFTER THE GIVING OF THE SPIRIT

PAUL'S OTHER THOUGHTS ON THE MYSTERY: COLOSSIANS 1:25-27, 1 CORINTHIANS 2:7-10

SEEING THE MYSTERY UNFOLDED: ROMANS 15:4-12, JERUSALEM COUNCIL - ACTS 15:12-19

THE VERSES IN THE OT WHICH WE CAN LOOK BACK ON NOW AND UNDERSTAND AS THE CLUES TO "SOLVE THE MYSTERY" WERE NOT UNKNOWN, UNSEEN OR NOT COMPREHENDIBLE TO THE READERS BEFORE THE WORK OF CHRIST. HOWEVER, THEY WERE NOT UNDERSTOOD IN

THE MAGNITUDE OF WHAT IS UNDERSTOOD NOW. GENTILES WERE ALWAYS "WELCOME" (RAHAB, RUTH, ETC) TO A CERTAIN EXTENT AND THERE WAS ALWAYS THE FUTURE EXPECTATION OF THE "NATIONS" BEING BROUGHT INTO THE RULE AND WAYS OF YAHWEH (CP. ISAIAH 2:1-4, ETC). BUT WHAT THE GOSPEL TELL US IS THAT JEW AND GENTILES ARE EXACTLY THE SAME IN TERMS OF STATUS, ACCESS, INHERITANCE, ETC. THIS IS WHAT WAS NOT UNDERSTOOD UNTIL NOW. RE-READING THESE OT VERSES NOW, THIS ADDITIONAL LAYER MAKES SENSE.

- WHAT DO YOU THINK IT WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKE TO BE THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN LIGHT OF THE REVEALING OF THE MYSTERY?
- WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF "THE MYSTERY" UPON YOUR LIFE?
- WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF "THE MYSTERY" UPON THE ENTIRE WORLD?

EPHESIANS 3:8-10 - PAUL'S JOB DESCRIPTION

1 - PREACH TO THE GENTILES THE UNFATHOMABLE RICHES OF CHRIST (V. 8)

2 - BRING TO LIGHT FOR EVERYONE THIS PLAN WHICH WAS FORMERLY HIDDEN (V. 9, ESV - AND TO BRING TO LIGHT FOR EVERYONE WHAT IS THE PLAN OF THE MYSTERY HIDDEN FOR AGES IN GOD WHO CREATED ALL THINGS)

3 - HELP TO MAKE KNOWN, THROUGH THE CHURCH, THE GREAT WISDOM OF GOD TO THE "RULERS AND AUTHORITIES IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES" (V. 10)

"AS THE GOSPEL SPREADS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, THIS NEW AND VARIEGATED CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPS. IT IS AS IF A GREAT DRAMA IS BEING ENACTED. HISTORY IS THE THEATRE, THE WORLD IS THE STAGE, AND THE CHURCH MEMBERS IN EVERY LAND ARE ACTORS. GOD HIMSELF HAS WRITTEN THE PLAY, AND HE DIRECTS AND PRODUCES IT. ACT BY ACT, SCENE BY SCENE, THE STORY CONTINUES TO UNFOLD. BUT WHO ARE THE AUDIENCE? THEY ARE THE COSMIC INTELLIGENCES, THE PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS IN HEAVENLY PLACES." JOHN STOTT, "THE MESSAGE OF EPHESIANS" P. 123-124

EPHESIANS 3:13 - "DON'T LOSE HEART BECAUSE OF MY TRIALS"

(NLT) - PLEASE DON'T LOSE HEART BECAUSE OF MY TRIALS HERE. I AM SUFFERING FOR YOU, SO YOU SHOULD FEEL HONORED.

- WHY IS THIS SOMETHING PAUL SAYS IN THIS CONTEXT?
- IT WOULD BE A REASONABLE RESPONSE FOR THE CHURCH TO BE WORRIED, SAD, WEARIED BY THE FACT THAT THEIR BELOVED PAUL IS IN PRISON & EXPERIENCING TRIBULATION. BUT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GREAT THINGS HE HAS JUST SHARED, HE WANTS THEM TO TAKE A DIFFERENT ATTITUDE. PAUL'S PERSPECTIVE IS THAT IT IS A PRIVILEGE TO SERVE GOD.

EPHESIANS 3:13-21 - PRAYER #2 -

THIS PRAYER IS PRAYED, IN RESPONSE TO THE GRACE THAT GOD HAS GIVEN TO THE GENTILES (EPHESIANS 2:19-22). HE PRAYS THIS PRAYER FOR THEM.

- PRAYING TO THE FATHER (V. 14-15)
- THAT HE WOULD GIVE YOU (ACCORDING TO HIS GREAT AND GLORIOUS SUPPLY) POWER THROUGH HIS SPIRIT, WORKING ON THE INSIDE OF YOU (V. 17)
- THAT CHRIST WOULD DWELL IN YOUR HEART AS WE HAVE FAITH (V. 17)
- THAT WE WOULD BE ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE (V. 17)
- THAT WE WOULD UNDERSTAND (ALONG WITH ALL OF THE SAINTS) WHAT IS THE FULL PICTURE OF GOD'S PLAN/PURPOSE/POWER (V. 18)
- THAT WE WOULD KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST, SOMETHING THAT IS A QUALITY BEYOND NATURAL ABILITY KNOW (V. 19)
- THAT WE WOULD BE FILLED UP TO ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD (V. 19)
- **CONTEXT OF SUCH A BOLD PRAYER** - GLORY & PRAISE TO GOD, THE ONE WHO IS ABLE TO DO FAR MORE ABUNDANTLY BEYOND ALL WE CAN ASK OR THINK. (V. 20-21)

TO CONSIDER:

- WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE TO BE STRENGTHENED WITH GOD'S POWER INSIDE OF US?
- WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE IF CHRIST DWELT IN OUR HEART?
- WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE IF WE WERE ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE?
- WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE IF WE REALLY ALL UNDERSTOOD GOD'S PURPOSE AND PLAN?
- WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE IF WE REALLY KNEW THE LOVE OF CHRIST?
- WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE IF WE WERE FILLED UP TO ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD?

EPHESIANS 3:14-21 (NLT)

14 WHEN I THINK OF ALL THIS, I FALL TO MY KNEES AND PRAY TO THE FATHER,

15 THE CREATOR OF EVERYTHING IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH.

16 I PRAY THAT FROM HIS GLORIOUS, UNLIMITED RESOURCES HE WILL EMPOWER YOU WITH INNER STRENGTH THROUGH HIS SPIRIT.

17 THEN CHRIST WILL MAKE HIS HOME IN YOUR HEARTS AS YOU TRUST IN HIM. YOUR ROOTS WILL GROW DOWN INTO GOD'S LOVE AND KEEP YOU STRONG.

18 AND MAY YOU HAVE THE POWER TO UNDERSTAND, AS ALL GOD'S PEOPLE SHOULD, HOW WIDE, HOW LONG, HOW HIGH, AND HOW DEEP HIS LOVE IS.

19 MAY YOU EXPERIENCE THE LOVE OF CHRIST, THOUGH IT IS TOO GREAT TO UNDERSTAND FULLY. THEN YOU WILL BE MADE COMPLETE WITH ALL THE FULLNESS OF LIFE AND POWER THAT COMES FROM GOD.

20 NOW ALL GLORY TO GOD, WHO IS ABLE, THROUGH HIS MIGHTY POWER AT WORK WITHIN US, TO ACCOMPLISH INFINITELY MORE THAN WE MIGHT ASK OR THINK.

21 GLORY TO HIM IN THE CHURCH AND IN CHRIST JESUS THROUGH ALL GENERATIONS FOREVER AND EVER! AMEN.