

# The Mystery of Christ

Ephesians 3:1—12 (v. 6)

## Introduction

I love a good mystery. Let me clarify. I don't like shows like History Channel's Unexplained Mysteries. They try to keep our attention for an hour, talking about a mystery and all the possible explanations for it, hinting that they will reveal the truth at the end of the show. In the end, we're always left with an unexplained mystery (hence, the title of the show) and I, for one, feel disappointed. I like books and shows about people like Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot. They lead you down a convoluted path that seems "elementary" to them and reveal the obvious truth and answer to the puzzle. That's what I like.

## Mystery Revealed

That illustrates the difference between "mystery" in English and "mysterion" in Greek. In English, we tend to think of a mystery as something that is hidden and remains hidden. Mystery religions have "truths" that are revealed only to higher level initiates. In the Greek usage, which, of course, Paul applies, a mystery is something that was hidden and has now been revealed.

## What Is the Mystery?

The mystery that Paul is talking about is this: *The Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel (Ephesians 3:6)*. Christ came to save everyone, Jew and Gentile alike. This is the mystery that has now been revealed through the apostles. But wait a minute. Hadn't that been revealed before?

## Was It Hidden in the Old Testament?

As early as the Garden of Eden, God promised the Seed of the woman who would defeat Satan (**Genesis 3:15**). He told Abraham that through him "*all the families of the earth will be blessed*" (**Genesis 12:3**). Through the prophet Isaiah, God said that *all nations would flow to Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2)*. But those prophecies kept Israel at the center. The radical mystery is that the Jewish nation under God's rule would be terminated and replaced by a new international community, the church. Gentiles wouldn't just come to worship the God of Israel. God came to the world and calls all people to come to Him on equal footing. Jew and Gentile are united in Christ. That is the radical mystery of the Gospel.

## How Is It Revealed?

How is this mystery revealed? Paul says that it has been revealed to him and the other apostles *by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 3:5)*. He preaches this mystery to the church, so that she can *pass it on to rulers and authorities in heavenly places (v. 10)*. We know it today through the Word of God, which is the writings of the prophets and apostles. These writings were inspired by the Holy Spirit and are opened to us by the same Spirit. As we read the Word, He guides us into understanding it and reveals this mystery to us.

## Is It Still a Mystery Today?

Since it has been revealed, is it still proper to call it a mystery today? Erasmus Sarcerius, 16<sup>th</sup> Century German Lutheran ecclesial leader, educator, and pastor said; *The term “mystery” also applies to the fact that there are few who understand the Gospel (**Annotations on Ephesians**)*. Have you ever said something like, “How can they not get it? Can’t they see that it’s obvious that there is a God?” As Holmes would say to Watson, “It’s elementary.” Watson doesn’t get it because the mystery has not been revealed to him yet. Once it is revealed, it seems obvious to him, as well. The person who has never had their eyes opened by the Holy Spirit is blind to the truth and it remains a mystery to them.

## Revealed in the Sacraments

To us, the mystery is revealed in Word and Sacraments. When we eat the bread and drink the wine of Holy Communion, the body and blood of Christ are revealed to us in them. The mystery of the Gospel of Christ is revealed afresh and anew. This is the glorious mystery now revealed to us through the apostles, the **MYSTERY OF CHRIST**.

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*And the peace of God  
Which surpasses all understanding,  
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

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