**What is the Mystery?**

my notes from a teaching by Tracy Plessinger

Ephesians 3:1-6 KJV For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, (2) If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: (3) How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, (4) Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) (5) 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; (6) That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

What is the Mystery? It is important to define it properly. It was something that was made known unto Paul and was not made known in other ages.

# 1. Scripture says the mystery is just that, a mystery, and it defines it as something that was kept secret. The Lord Jesus Christ made known unto the Apostle Paul a secret, some information that was kept secret in other ages.

Romans 16:25-26 KJV Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, (26) But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

There are three things that will establish one in the faith:

1. the gospel that Paul preached
2. preaching of Jesus Christ according to revelation of the mystery
3. scriptures of the prophets

These verses are not saying that the mystery is made known by the scriptures of the prophets. The mystery was kept secret since the world began, hidden in God, known by Him and not made known unto the sons of men.

Acts 3:19-21 KJV Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; (20) And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: (21) Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Peter is talking about things God had spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began. Can you see the contrast of what Peter was speaking and what Paul was speaking? Peter spoke of things spoken since the world began and Paul spoke of things kept secret since the world began. These things were kept secret until they were revealed to and through the Apostle Paul.

#2. The mystery was revealed to and through Paul by revelation. It was kept secret until it was revealed. It is important to understand when it was revealed and to whom it was revealed because that becomes an issue about this mystery also: who knew what and when.

Peter, on the day of Pentecost, said that he was speaking of things spoken by the prophets since the world began as opposed to being kept secret since the world began. Was Jesus Christ speaking of the secret stuff in His earthly ministry and was Peter talking about it? (*I need to add here that Jesus Christ did speak of the mysteries of the kingdom – that he would go away and come again to establish His kingdom on the earth.*) It seems evident that he was not because he said he was talking about things spoken by the mouth of the all the holy prophets since the world began and Paul said he was talking about some stuff that was kept secret.

We need to have some verses that indicate exactly when this information began to be revealed.

Ephesians 3:3-4 KJV How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, (4) Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

Scripture says that by revelation Jesus Christ made known unto the Apostle Paul they mystery. So, Paul tells us that he got this information by revelation, that is, he got it directly from the Lord.

Ephesians 3:2 KJV If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

The mystery was revealed to and through the Apostle Paul, (given to me to you-ward). It was given to Paul and then through Paul it would be known to others.

Galatians 1:11-12 KJV But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. (12) For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The gospel Paul preached was not learned from Peter, James and John. If you are going to learn truth that is brand new, never made known before, you cannot go to the prophets and some other teachers before you learn it. The only way to get the new information is if it is revealed to you directly from God. Paul consistently says he received this information by revelation. It was new information, therefore Paul had to have received it by revelation.

2 Corinthians 12:1 KJV It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

How did Paul get this information if it was a mystery, hidden from the sons of men? Paul received it by revelation – it was revealed to him and then it was revealed through him to others.

# 3.The mystery involves Gentiles.

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

The mystery information has something to with the Gentiles. Back in Romans 11, Paul says of himself, “I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify my office.”

Galatians 2:7-8 KJV But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (8) (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)

The Gentiles are involved in this mystery. It was revealed to Paul and it has something to do with what God is doing out among the Gentiles.

**CONTENT OF THE MYSTERY**

What is *not* the content of the mystery is “Gentile salvation”. The mystery is *not*that God is going to save the Gentiles. The mystery is *not* that God is going to offer an inheritance to the Gentiles. The mystery is *not* that the gospel is going to be preached out there to the Gentiles.

We make a mistake if we say that what is going on among the Gentiles in the mystery is the Gentiles are getting an offer of salvation. The Gentiles getting saved and being blessed by God is something that all through the scripture had been God’s goal.

In fact, go back to Genesis 12.

Genesis 12:2-3 KJV And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: (3) And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

God tells Abraham that of him He will make a great nation and that God will use that great nation to bless all the families of the earth.

All families of the earth: we think of mother, father, sister, brothers and our descendents. But the term families in Genesis 12 is a reference to the nations of earth. We see that in Genesis 10 where we see the division of mankind on the earth is based on the grandsons of Noah. In the first generation of Noah, God begins to build nations.

Genesis 10:1 KJV Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth: and unto them were sons born after the flood.

Genesis 10:5 KJV By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.

Genesis 10:20 KJV These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations.

Genesis 10:31 KJV These are the sons of Shem, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations.

Genesis 10:32 KJV These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.

In Genesis 10, we see the grandsons of Noah each became a head of a family unit. In Genesis 11, as each of these family units unite at the tower of Babel, each begins to speak in their own language. In each of these families, a language is spoken that is distinct and different from that of his brother (family).

Notice the phrase “after their families, after their tongues, after their nations” because the nations on earth are based upon the family division of Noah’s grandsons. Each of these divisions contain land (a country), and a governmental structure (nation).

So, when God told Abraham “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed”, he was saying that in him all nations of the earth shall be blessed. In other words, God tells Abraham that He will make him a great nation and with that nation He will bless all nations.

The families of Noah became the nations (the Gentiles). Genesis 10:5 explains how the Gentile nations became to be: they were all descendents of Shem, Ham and Japheth. Each one of these sons became head of his own family, spoke its own tongue, had it own country and became a nation. God divided the isles of the Gentiles that way and then tells Abraham He would use him to go to them.: “in thee shall all families (nations) be blessed.”

Prior to Genesis 10 there was no such thing as a Gentile – it is just every one out there. God will use Abraham by making him a great nation and use that nation to go out and bless all the families (Gentiles).

Gentile salvation is not a mystery. Gentile salvation has existed ever since there have been Gentiles. In Genesis 10, 11, and 12, we are seeing the creation of the Gentiles and the Jews; from the very beginning God’s plan has been to save the Gentiles using the nation of Israel.

When you see that statement in Genesis, “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” understand that it not saying that everyone is going to get blessed by Abraham but rather, it is a specific promise about the nations being blessed through the nation of Israel. This is because we have read in Genesis 10 that the families became nations. ... Genesis 10 is where it all began. Isaiah 2 gives us some more information about all nations being blessed.

Isaiah 2:1-4 KJV The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. (2) And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. (3) And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (4) And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Here we see the mountain of the Lord’s house will be established above all the kingdoms of the world and all nations shall flow into it. So, you will have God establish a kingdom and the kingdoms of the world shall flow into it and many people shall say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.” The nations flow into the house of the Lord and God’s word shall flow out of the house of the Lord and Gentiles will receive His salvation, His blessing of the Law.

So, when you look at the prophets, it is no mystery, it is no secret, it is no surprise that Gentiles will get saved. However, when you get to Paul and if what you say is the Gentiles are going to be saved, people can use verses all day long to present to you that God’s plan and purpose had always been to save the Gentiles.

Matthew 25:31-34 KJV When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: (32) And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: (33) And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. (34) Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

God divides the nations, the sheep nations from the goat nations Obviously, if some of those sheep are sheep nations (Gentiles), that is Gentile salvation in the kingdom. How do they get in? It is based upon what they did.

Matthew 25:40-41 KJV And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. (41) Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

It will be based upon how they dealt with Israel. Jesus Christ said, “You gave me meat when I was hungry and drink when I was thirsty and visited him in prison.”They replied, “When did I see you hungry, thirsty and in prison? All we see of you is you coming through on a white horse cleaning everyone’s clock. Now you are telling us you were hungry and thirsty; when did all this happen?” He says, “Well, as much as you have done it among the least of my brethren, the nation of Israel, you have done it to me. If you have treated them well, you will get into the kingdom. But the fact is some of you will get in. In fact, Christ said many shall come from the east and the west sit down with Abraham and Jacob in the kingdom.

Gentile salvation is no big deal as far as being a mystery. Now, it is a big deal anytime God saves some one; but it is not a mystery – it is something that was spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets since the world began; He talked to Abraham about it, Isaiah talked about it, Christ talked about it in His earthly ministry. Gentile salvation is clearly not the issue in the mystery, but if you go back to Ephesians 3, Paul says some things in Ephesians 3 that are the issue.

In Ephesians 3 is the clearest definition as to what the mystery is because in Ephesians 3:5 Paul talks about the mystery, which in other ages was not made known.

Ephesians 3:3-6 KJV How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, (4) Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) (5) 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; (6) That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

Gentiles shall be fellowheirs, some of the new Bibles add “with Israel”; but those words are not found in any Greek manuscripts, they just added them in because they think that is what that verse means. But all it says is that Gentiles should be fellowheirs. So, if Gentile should be fellowheirs is the heart of the mystery, we should ask, “Fellowheirs with whom?” Who are the Gentiles fellowheirs with?

Galatians 4:4-7 KJV But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, (5) To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (6) And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (7) Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Who are you an heir of? Who are you inheriting something from? God. And who are you inheriting it with? Christ; that we may be fellowheirs with whom? With Christ; it is not with Israel.

The Gentile salvation in the Old Testament is that the Gentiles become fellowheirs with Israel. If Israel’s inheritance is that kingdom and we have seen that some of the Gentiles will get into that kingdom, then they are becoming a fellowheir with Israel, i.e. they will get into that kingdom.

However, Paul now says that we, as a Gentile, are a fellowheir with Christ. In fact, go to Romans 8, which nails it down conclusively who we are fellowheirs with.

Romans 8:14-17 KJV For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (15) For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (16) The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: (17) And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Verse 17 says that we are joint-heirs with Christ; what is His is ours. Look down to verse 32.

Romans 8:32 KJV He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

How shall God not with Him also freely give us all things? God is the one that we shall inherit from. Christ is the legitimate heir and we inherit it with Him.

The mystery is Gentiles in the dispensation of the grace of God become joint-heirs with Christ, fellowheirs with Him. Ephesians 3 says that we “should be fellowheirs, and of the same body”.

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

Ephesians 1:19-23 KJV And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, (20) Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, (21) Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: (22) And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, (23) Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Not only are we Gentiles fellowheirs with Christ but we are also of the same body with Christ. So, what this mystery is, what was kept secret, was not that the Gentiles will be saved but it is how the Gentiles will be saved. The mystery is not that Gentiles will be saved, not simply by coming to Israel, not simply by participating in Israel’s blessings, not simply be participating in Israel’s salvation, not simply by being a part of Israel’s program but the Gentiles will be saved by being directly united with Christ, by becoming joint-heirs with Him, by becoming of the same body with Him. That is the mystery; never before has it been revealed in all of scripture that God was going to do this with the Gentiles. In fact, it was never revealed that God was going to do that with anybody. Because in making us joint-heirs with Christ and of the same body with Christ; God has created something: he has made us the habitation of God.

Ephesians 2:21-22 KJV In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: (22) In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

In making us joint-heirs with Christ and of the same body with Christ; God has made us the habitation of God. Now, when God was dealing with Israel before the revelation of the mystery, where did God live? He lived in the temple. Hezekiah prays in the book of Kings, ‘Oh, God that dwellest between the cherubim.” Jehovah God dwelt between the cherubim of the mercy seat in the holy of holies in the temple, in Jerusalem, in the nation Israel. That is where God dwelt, so if you wanted to get to God, you had to get to Israel, get to Jerusalem, get to the temple, to the holy of Holies, get to the cherubim – and there He was. Only you were not allowed to go there because only the High Priest was allowed in the Holy of Holies. Also, if you were a Gentile, you had to stay in the outer court of the Gentiles and that was all the closer you could get.

But now, Gentiles are the habitation of God. Ephesians 2:12 tells us that before the dispensation of the grace of God the Gentiles were without God in the world.

Ephesians 2:12 KJV 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 Gentiles went from being without God in the world to being a habitation of God.

Ephesians 2:22 KJV In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

The Gentiles went from being on the wrong side of the middle wall of partition and able to approach God only through Israel, from being able to attain their salvation only by becoming a part of Israel’s salvation to being the habitation; not just receiving salvation but now being able to take salvation out to the world. Now it is not just receiving salvation but being the vehicle to take the blessing out to the world. It is not just receiving an inheritance but being the vehicle to take that inheritance out to the world. That is the mystery.

The mystery is not just that Gentiles are being saved but that the Gentiles are going to be saved in a brand new way by being made joint-heirs with Christ, and of the same body with Christ and then Gentiles will be able to take that message to other Gentiles. It is no longer that a Gentile will need to find a Jew to get saved because Gentiles are now the habitation of God : He dwells within us and as we go out, we take Him out and take His message out and take His blessing out.

So, what is the mystery? The mystery is that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the His promise in Christ. It is that we would receive all the promises of God by virtue of the fact that we are in Christ and a part of His body, which did not even exist in time past, this union between God and man, the body of Christ. That is the mystery.

The mystery is not just that the Gentiles would be saved. It is not mystery that Gentiles will be saved, but the mystery is that I get to be part of His body and a joint-heir with Him and I get to be the habitation of God on the planet earth. I go from being without God in the world to being the habitation of God in the world. And that is the mystery.