

The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XLIII : DIGRESSION #2 - PAUL AS MINISTER OF THE MYSTERY TO THE GENTILES (3:1-13)

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: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. (Eph 3:1-13 KJV)

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles — Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory. (Eph 3:1-13 NIV)

For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you the nations, if, indeed, ye did hear of the dispensation of the grace of God that was given to me in regard to you, that by revelation He made known to me the secret, according as I wrote before in few [words] — in regard to which ye are able, reading [it], to understand my knowledge in the secret of the Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it was now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit — that the nations be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in the Christ, through the good news, of which I became a ministrant, according to the gift of the grace of God that was given to me, according to the working of His power; to me — the less than the least of all the saints — was given this grace, among the nations to proclaim good news — the untraceable riches of the Christ, and to cause all to see what [is] the fellowship of the secret that hath been hid from the ages in God, who the all things did create by Jesus Christ, that there might be made known now to the principalities and the authorities in the heavenly [places], through the assembly, the manifold wisdom of God, according to a purpose of the ages, which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have the freedom and the access in confidence through the faith of him, wherefore, I ask [you] not to faint in my tribulations for you, which is your glory. (Eph 3:1-13 Young's Literal Translation)

The essence of what Paul is saying is as follows:

For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you, the Gentiles —

*if, indeed, ye did hear of **the responsibility of managing the GRACE of God which was given to me, namely, that He made known the mystery that the Gentiles should be***

joint – heirs

and joint – body

and joint – partakers

of His promise in Jesus the Messiah through the gospel;

this **GRACE** was given to me

- **to preach** the unsearchable riches of the Christ among the Gentiles
- **and to enlighten** all as to what is the plan of the mystery

in order that [hina] the untraceable wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and to the authorities in the heavenlies through the ecclesia.

Therefore I ask you not to lose heart in my tribulations on behalf of you which is your glory.

V 3 — the mystery, this mystery, the secret — τὸ μυστήριον [to mystērion] as we mentioned when we studied 1:9, ‘mystery’ refers to *something in the ages past, hidden in God and unable to be unraveled or understood by human ingenuity or study. It is revealed by the Holy Spirit to His prophets and apostles (3:4-5) who in turn manifests it to everyone.* “In the LXX μυστήριον [mystērion, ‘mystery’] occurs eighteen times and in the canonical books it appears eight times, all of them in Daniel (2:18, 19, 27, 28, 29, 30, 47 *bis* [‘bis’ means it is used twice in that verse]) always translating the Aramaic [rāz, ‘secret’], referring both to the contents and to the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. **The important thing to notice in this incident is that nobody except God could reveal the contents and the interpretation of the dream.... In the NT the word μυστήριον [mystērion, ‘mystery’] is used twenty-seven times, twenty times by Paul, ... The term ‘mystery’ occurs six times in Ephesians, more than in any other NT book (1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19) In conclusion, the mystery mentioned in Ephesians was hidden in God in ages past (3:9). It was something that could not be understood by human ingenuity or study. God revealed it to the apostles and prophets by the Spirit (3:4). Now that it is revealed, it is open to everyone and it is simple to understand and thus not relegated to an intellectual minority.**” [Hoehner, 429ff]

THE ANCIENT PAGAN RELIGIONS HAD THEIR ‘MYSTERIES’ — “Certainly here the imagery is of Paul as administrator of the mystery which has been revealed to him. This mystery is in contrast to and superior to the popular Lydian-Phrygian mysteries. The mysteries of the mystery religions were secrets known only to initiates, whereas the mystery in the present context is made known not only to Paul but also to the apostles and prophets (v. 5), to all people (v. 9), and to all rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places (v. 10).... **In its cultic use among the Greeks the mystery was shared only among the initiates of the cult, and they vowed not to disclose the mystery to the noninitiates. This is not the nature of the mystery discussed in Ephesians, for it was for all, and in fact, the church was the vehicle for the revelation of the mystery to the world and angelic powers, both good and bad (Eph 3:9-10).**” [Hoehner, 427, 429] RE: the Lydian-Phrygian mysteries: these were pagan ritualistic religions popular among the Ephesian area, especially Artemis (AKA Diana among the Romans) whose temple located in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Also, compare these pagan mystery religions with our modern **FreeMasons**.

THE ‘MYSTERY’ IS MORE THAN GOD BLESSING GENTILES — Paul’s ‘mystery’ in this passage is more than the Gentiles being blessed or the gospel being preached to the Gentiles. It is even more than the Gentiles not having to submit to the Mosaic law (cp. Acts 15). Here are some OT verses concerning the Gentiles:

GENTILES WERE TO BE BLESSED

“I will bless those who bless you [Abram], And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Gen 12:3)

“In your [Abraham’s] seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” (Gen 22:18)

“And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your [Isaac’s] seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.” (Gen 26:4,5)

“Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your [Jacob’s] seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Gen 28:14)

GENTILES WERE TO BE ACCEPTED WITHIN ISRAEL

“And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” (Lev 19:33,34)

“He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Deut 10:18,19)

“Moreover, concerning a foreigner, who is not of Your people Israel, but has come from a far country for Your name’s sake (for they will hear of Your great name and Your strong hand and Your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this temple, hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as do Your people Israel, and that they may know that this temple which I have built is called by Your name.” (1 Kings 8:41-43)

GENTILES IN THE FUTURE KINGDOM WITH ISRAEL

“The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the Lord’s house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.” (Isa 2:1-4)

“And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious.” (Isa 11:10)

“Indeed He says, It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.” (Isa 49:6)

“Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the Lord will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.” (Isa 60:1-3)

“Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, And the sons of the foreigner Shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But you shall be named the priests of the Lord, They shall call you the servants of our God. You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, And in their glory you shall boast.” (Isa 61:5,6)

“At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts.” (Jer 3:17)

“Thus says the Lord of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, Inhabitants of many cities; The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us continue to go and pray before the Lord, And seek the Lord of hosts. I myself will go also. Yes, many peoples and strong nations Shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, And to pray before the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts: In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.” (Zech 8:20-23)

“And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.” (Zech 14:16-19)

PAUL USES THE OT TO JUSTIFY HIS MINISTRY TO THE GENTILES

“... even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As He says also in Hosea: I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, You are not My people, There they shall be called sons of the living God. Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved. For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, Because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth. And as Isaiah said before: Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, And we would have been made like Gomorrah. What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” (Rom 9:24-33)

PAUL’S MYSTERY’ IN EPHESIANS GOES BEYOND WHAT COULD BE TAUGHT FROM THE OT — “Accepting this view does not exclude the fact that there were no references to Gentile blessings (Gen 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14) or Gentile inclusion within Israel (Lev 19:34; Deut 10:18-19; 1 Kgs 8:41-43). **However, in all these passages there was never the suggestion that Jews and Gentiles were one body. On the contrary, a Gentile had to become a Jew to be fully accepted within Israel.** There are many passages which allude to Gentiles being blessed along with Israel (Isa 2:1-4; 11:10; 49:6; 60:1-3; 61:5-6; Jer 3:17; Zech 8:20-23; 14:16-19), but they do not refer to the past but rather to the future kingdom (cf. Acts 3:18-20). **Again, there is no portrayal of one body; rather Israel and the Gentiles remain distinct, though both will enjoy God’s blessing. The body of believers is an entirely new concept in the NT.**” [Hoehner, 440] “While in Paul’s other epistles the mystery focuses on Christ’s redemption that includes Gentiles, in Ephesians the mystery is that believing Jews and Gentiles are now one in the body of Christ.... **Ephesians views God’s sacred secret as believing Jews and Gentiles united into one body. In the OT Gentiles could be a part of the company of God, but they had to become Jews in order to belong to it. In the NT Gentiles do not become Jews nor do Jews become Gentiles. Rather, both believing Jews and Gentiles become one new entity, Christians (Eph 2:15-16). That is the mystery.**” [Hoehner, 433f] “Here it is the particular *μυστήριον* [mystērion, ‘mystery’] or ‘secret’ of the admission

of the Gentiles on equal terms with the chosen people — a disclosure of the Divine purpose which so often calls forth Paul's adoring wonder." [Salmond, Expositor's GK Testament, 303] Here is Paul's declaration of the mystery:

if, indeed, ye did hear of the responsibility of managing the GRACE of God which was given to me, namely, that He made known the mystery that the Gentiles should be

joint – heirs

and joint – body

and joint – partakers

of His promise in Jesus the Messiah through the gospel;

as I have briefly written already, — καθὼς προέγραψα ἐν ὀλίγῳ [kathōs proegrapha en oligōi] The verb is used 4x in the NT (Rom 15:4; Gal 3:1; Eph 3:3; Jude 4) and means 'to write before(hand).' The rest of the phrase is literally 'in little, in few' and is used to refer to 'a few people' (Matt 7:14) or 'a few things' (Rev 2:14). It could refer to time as it is used when Paul stood before Agrippa:

"And Agrippa said to Paul, 'In a short time [ἐν ὀλίγῳ, en oligōi] would you persuade me to be a Christian?' And Paul said, 'Whether short [ἐν ὀλίγῳ, en oligōi] or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am – except for these chains.'" (Act 26:28, 29 ESV) Verse 29, literally, 'in little, few' or 'in much, many.'

Most commentators argue against Ephesians 3:4 referring to time; e.g., **"This is wrongly taken by some as 'a short time before.'" [Salmond, Expositor's GK Testament, 303] The commentators say it could be translated 'in a few words' if it were plural but since it is singular the sense is 'in brief, briefly.' Hence it has the idea of brevity.** "What the grammarians call an epistolary aorist (cf. 1 Pet. v. 12) is better translated as in the NEB, **'I have already written a brief account of this.'**" [Foulkes, 92]

TO WHAT WAS PAUL REFERRING? — If Paul 'already had written briefly,' the question that is discussed is when and to what was Paul referring?

A LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS NOW LOST — **This is unlikely for two reasons: (1) there is no manuscript evidence of the existence of another letter, not that it would be impossible but without evidence this is pure conjecture; and (2) there is nothing within Ephesians itself which would suggest there was a previous letter.** One advocate of this however is John Calvin:

"As I wrote a little before. – This refers either to a rapid glance at the same subject in the second chapter, or – which appears to be the general opinion – to another Epistle. If the former exposition be adopted, it will be proper to translate, 'as I wrote before in few words;' for the subject had received nothing more than a passing notice; but the latter being, as I have said, the prevailing opinion, I prefer translating, 'as I wrote a little before.' The phrase, (ἐν ὀλίγῳ) [en oligōi] which Erasmus has translated in a few words, appears rather to refer to time. [ed. note – this is contradicted by modern commentators; see above] On this supposition there would be an implied comparison between the present and the former writings. But nothing would be more unlike the fact, than to contrast them on the score of brevity; for a more concise mode of expression than this passing glance can hardly be imagined. The phrase, a little before, seems purposely to be used as an appeal to their remembrance of a recent occurrence, though I do not insist on this point. There is more difficulty in the next verse.... If we adopt the view which is almost universally approved, that the apostle had formerly written to the Ephesians, this is not the only Epistle which we have lost. And yet there is no room for the sneers of the ungodly, as if the Scriptures had been mutilated, or in any part had become imperfect. If we duly consider Paul's earnestness, – his watchfulness and care, – his zeal and fervor, – his kindness and readiness in assisting brethren, – we shall be led to regard it as highly probable that he would write many epistles, both of a public and private nature, to various places. Those which the Lord judged to be necessary for his church have been selected by his providence for everlasting remembrance. Let us rest assured, that what is left is enough for us, and that the smallness of the remaining number is not the result of accident; but that the body of Scripture, which is in our possession, has been adjusted by the wonderful counsel of God." [Calvin, 248f]

One of the arguments for a lost epistle is Paul's words immediately following: 'by which, when you read, ...'. Calvin argues this is better understood to mean, 'to which when ye attend, ye may understand.' [Calvin, 248] I make mention of this here but we will discuss this further below.

ROMANS 16:25-27 — **"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith — to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen."** (Rom 16:25-27) **But it is unlikely the Ephesians would have a copy of Paul's letter to the Romans. The commentators I have been using may mention this as an option but none believe this to be probable.**

GALATIANS 1 — "Some who equate AE with Paul believe that he refers here to his earlier letters. This would imply

the availability in all the communities to which Ephesians was sent of at least one of these letters, probably Galatians or Colossians. **But could Paul have been sure that every community would know the content of at least one or other of these letters?** If Galatians is supposed to have been known could it be described as ‘brief’? If Colossians, then its readers were told to get hold of the letter to Laodicea but the readers of Ephesians are not told to get hold of that to Colossae; Colossians moreover was not a circular letter; the very instruction of Col 4.16 to exchange letters with Laodicea indicates that letters were not automatically circulated. **It is then best to assume that, whether Paul was the author or not, v. 3 refers to the earlier parts of the present letter.**” [Best, 302] “Some have speculated about another now unknown manifesto explaining his position. Others have asked whether Galatians 1 is in mind. But it is much more likely that the apostle is directing his readers to what he has written to them, for example in Ephesians 2:11-22 or even 1:9, 10.” [Wood, *Ephesians on CD*] As I read Galatians chapter 1, I am not sure why some would suggest that as a possibility.

COLOSSIANS 1:25-27 — “... of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col 1:25-27) B. H. Carroll believes ‘as I wrote before in a few words’ does refer to Col 1:25 [B H Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews*; 126f]. John Muddiman also accepts this view:

“If the most natural reading of the text is that one specific letter, written earlier than this but not yet available to the correspondents, is meant, then that letter must surely be Colossians, which is indeed a brief letter and alludes frequently to the secret of God’s eternal plan.” [Muddiman, 152]

F. F. Bruce believes it possible since the Ephesians could have had access to the letter to Colossae:

“Where did Paul ‘write before in brief’ about the revelation of the mystery? Presumably in some document to which the present readers had access, whether this letter or another. In this letter one might think of the mention of the mystery of the divine purpose in Eph. 1:9-10, or of the creation in Christ of ‘one new man’ described in Eph. 2:14-16. Or, on the view that Ephesians was addressed to the Christians of the Lycus valley, one might think of Col. 1:25-27, where Paul’s stewardship involves the unfolding to the Gentiles of the contents of that rich mystery ‘concealed for ages and generations.’ The statement of Col. 1:25-27 is indeed ‘in brief’ compared with the more ample statement of Eph. 3:2-13. **Certainty is unattainable, and no single interpretation of the words ‘I wrote before in brief’ is free from difficulties.**” [Bruce, 312]

While my personal opinion pales in comparison with those of whom I read, **I would argue against this referring to Colossians since the subject of the ‘mystery’ is different in the two passages.** The ‘mystery’ in Colossians is ‘Christ in you, the hope of glory’ while in Ephesians the ‘mystery’ is the Gentiles being ‘joint-heirs, joint-body, joint-partakers’ with the Jews. Remember, a scriptural ‘mystery’ was something hid until revealed by the Lord and thus there would be many ‘mysteries’ within the New Testament era.

A REFERENCE TO EARLIER IN THE LETTER, POSSIBLY ALL HE HAS WRITTEN, POSSIBLY 1:9 BUT MORE PROBABLY 2:11-22 — Most of the commentators I have studied agrees with this last suggestion. **“So, as the majority of commentators propose, the clause is best taken as a reference back to the earlier chapters of the present letter and, more specifically, 1:9,10 and 2:11-22 with their discussion of the disclosure of the mystery and the inclusion of the Gentiles.”** [Lincoln, 175] “The content of this divine revelation, Paul says next, is not something new to the readers. He has written about it briefly before. The phrase ἐν ὀλίγῳ (en oligō) is a common expression for ‘in brief’ or ‘within a small compass’, but the term προγράψω (prographō, ‘to write beforehand’) is more ambiguous. It can refer to something written a long time ‘beforehand,’ such as the Scriptures (Rom. 15:4; Jude 4), or to something that was written ‘above’ in the same document. Down through the years some interpreters have thought that the reference was to some other communication of Paul, perhaps a ten-letter collection of his letters to which our Ephesians formed a pseudepigraphic introduction, perhaps to Colossians, or perhaps to a specific passage in a Pauline letter, such as Gal. 1:15, 16. Others believe it refers to the mention of the mystery in 1:9. However, **Paul is probably describing what he has just written about the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ in 2:11-22.**” [Thielman, 195] “Uncertainty exists about the intention of ‘as I have already written briefly.’

pseudepigraphic – adj: certain writings (other than the canonical books and the Apocrypha) professing to be Biblical in character

Reference could be to something written earlier in the same document or to an earlier document. (cf. the use of the word in Romans 15:4) If we assume the readers had access to Colossians or Romans, we could argue that the reference is to an earlier document. However, in light of the difficulty with the address in 1:1-2, one can assume nothing about the recipients. Most commentators accept that Paul is referring to 1:9-10 or to 2:11-22, and this is the safest understanding, even though it makes 3:4 seem unusual. If so, then verse 4 means, in effect, ‘If you have read 2:11-22, you see the insight I have into the significance of God’s revelation in Christ.’” [Snodgrass, 160] Here are some of the other commentators’ suggestions:

- **THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS GENERALLY** – “The reference is to the present Epistle, not to an earlier one. Paul is probably referring to the whole preceding exposition about the Gentiles.” [Abbott, 79f] “‘As I wrote afore in a few words’: in the two first chapters of this epistle, which are a compendium of the

mystery of the Gospel.” [Gill, 79] “The clause, ‘as I wrote before in a few words’ is tantamount to ‘as I briefly indicated above.’” [Hendriksen, 153]

● **EPHESIANS 1:9ff OR 2:11-22** – “The present passage expands what [Paul] had earlier sketched more briefly (προγραφή [prographō, ‘write before’] can refer to something previously touched on in the same writing) about ‘mystery’ and the admission of Gentiles (1.9f; 2.11ff). In the earlier passages he had written of their admission but not of Paul’s role in it.” [Best, 302] “But when and where? Epistolary aorist for this Epistle? That is possible. A previous and lost Epistle as in 1 Corinthians 5:9? That also is abstractly possible. To the preceding discussion of the Gentiles? Possible and also probable.” [Robertson, *Word Pictures*, vol 4, 530] Hoehner thinks it is more probable that Paul is referring to this same epistle, possibly 1:9 but there the mystery is very general while here it is specifically the Gentiles and Jews being incorporated into one body. The most likely conclusion according to Hoehner is 2:11-22. [Hoehner, 428] H. C. G. Moule agrees [Moule, 89]. Dean Alford believes it to be 1:9ff [Alford, 103] while Kenneth Wuest agrees with 2:11-22 [Wuest, 81]

v 4 — **by which, when you read** — πρὸς ὃ ... ἀναγινώσκοντες [pros ho ... anaginōskontes] “*Basically, it directs one’s attention back to what was just stated. The translation ‘whereby’ seems to catch the essence of this.... [I]n other words, while one is reading (or hearing read) the passage in the previous context, he or she will understand it.*” [Hoehner, 434] “*The readers are expected to recognize the writer’s special insight from what he has already written earlier in the letter.* πρὸς [pros, preposition, ‘to, towards, with’] with the accusative can indicate a simple connection (‘with regard to,’ ‘with reference to’), but it can also more specifically suggest a standard of evaluation or judgment (‘in accordance with’), and the latter appears to be the case here. *The recipients of the letter are to make their judgment when they read, and in all probability it is the situation of the public reading of the letter in the assembly which is in view. What the writer expects to become clear from such a reading is his insight, his grasp of the significance of the secret which God has disclosed in Christ.*” [Lincoln, 175f] “The addition which he makes, ‘whereby, when ye read,’ etc., seems rather to imply that he refers to what he had just written.” [Barnes, *Ephesians on CD*]

PUBLIC READING OF THE WORD OF GOD — “If [Paul’s] readers peruse carefully what he has written (v. 5 excludes any idea that [Paul] has in mind the reading of the OT) they will know the content of the mystery, if not how it was revealed to Paul. [Anaginōskontes, ‘to read’] *simply means ‘read’ and not ‘read again’, as if implying that they should go back and read again the first part of the letter. The reading would be aloud, as was normal in the ancient world, and would probably have been in the course of worship* (Col 4.16; 1 Th 5.27; Rev 1.3), and this may have occasioned the choice of a present participle.” [Best, 303] “*When ye read. This Epistle will be read in public.*” [Robertson, *Word Pictures*, vol 4, 530] “The participle ἀναγινώσκοντες [anaginōskontes] probably means ‘reading it’ (or hearing it read) aloud in meetings of the church.” [Bruce, 312]

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORD OF GOD — “*“When ye read,’ implies that, deep as are the mysteries of this Epistle, the way for all to understand them is to read it (2Ti 3:15, 16). By perceiving his understanding of the mysteries, they, too, will be enabled to understand.*” [JFB, Commentary on Whole Bible]