

DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

SEPT 2024 | EPHESIANS 2:19-3:20

To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things...

Ephesians 3:8-9

THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED

The simple gospel is not so simple to some. In fact, the content of the Bible is confusing to most because it tells a story that can only be understood fully when interpreted by the Author. There are various themes that can be traced through Scripture that explain the Story. One of those themes is the Temple. Evidence suggests that the Genesis account is written depicting creation as a temple. The description of creation that Moses employs parallels later descriptions of the Temple of God. God has always wanted to live with His people on earth. The Genesis account depicts Eden as a perfect home for God and man to commune together. Later in the book when Israel marched into the Promised Land,

they were instructed to build a mobile temple called the tabernacle for God and man to commune. When Solomon built a permanent temple, it became a source of pride and security for the Jews. As long as the temple was standing, they felt important and safe. Even after the glory of God left the temple, they still revered it as their glory. Because they refused to live as covenant people with God, they lost the temple to the hordes of Babylon, and they went into exile. For 70 years they languished in despair for their loss. God caused Cyrus of Persia to grant them liberty to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. It stood for 400 years, though it never came even close to the grandeur of Solomon's temple.

Then, around the first century, Herod began to restore it in a political move to gain favor with the Jews. By the time of Jesus' earthly life, the temple was grand again. The disciples pointed out to Jesus how fabulous it was one day, and He confounded them by saying that within that generation, not one stone would be left standing. Sure enough, that temple was destroyed totally in 70 AD. It was the end of the era of types and shadows. Jesus had come as the Living Temple. After His resurrection and ascension, He sent the Spirit to indwell believers as His last temple.

Because of the promises God makes to the people of Israel regarding their faithfulness to uphold temple law in the Old Testament, the question has always been: *How does God restore the temple where qualified humans worship God continually as they subdue the creation?* The Old Testament story is long, and at times it looks like there will never be what God intended when He began. The evil one seemed to have the upper hand throughout the accounts of the failures and follies of Israel. Fallen humans continued to pollute the temples, turning each one into an idol to the god of human efforts. Would the God of Creation ever have a temple garden where the enemy's head was crushed and God's people worshipped in purity?

The apostle Paul addresses this in his letter to the Ephesians. He tells them that God has chosen the Jewish people to be the household that He uses to bring about the solution to the problem of sin. He reminds them that it was all about grace. When the world became so wicked that it should be destroyed, God chose Noah by grace to save a remnant of humans so He could eventually have a human to use to crush the head of Satan. God chose Abraham by grace so that his family would be the specific household that would produce the Seed that crushed the head of evil. He chose Moses to lead the chosen people out of Egyptian bondage so they could produce this Seed. He established Israel as His covenant people and promised that a totally obedient Israelite would receive all the blessings God had for humans. For centuries, no Israelite could do it. The whole nation ended up in Babylon without merit and without a temple. By grace, God caused Cyrus to send a remnant back home to build the temple and get ready for the finale. After 400 years, John the Baptist came forth to announce the coming day of the Lord when the climax of the story would happen and a new temple would be established. John introduced Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He would be the final sacrifice ever offered. There would now be no need for a temple building and sacrifices. The mystery

was that Jesus Himself was the human Israelite who was qualified to end all sacrifices and receive all the blessings of being obedient to the covenant. He was a new Adam and a perfect Israelite. He represented the human race and the Jewish remnant. He fulfilled the promise of the human who struck the head of evil and defeated it. When He lived a perfect life, He gained all the covenant blessings. When He died, He fulfilled the law and stopped the curse. Rising from the dead as the one victorious over all things, He ascended to the right hand of the Father from whence He sent the Spirit to indwell believers and make them the living temple of God. These believers are sent into all the world as God's mobile temple. No one will ever have to travel to Jerusalem to worship. God's temple comes to them by grace.

The stories in Luke's account of the early church reveal a household of redeemed people made of racial Jews and Gentiles, connected in heart by the love of God shown in Jesus Christ. They began to push back the darkness that evil had produced. Love began to confront fear, and grace began to capture the hearts of rebels. There is finally a temple on earth where God's humans are worshipping Him by applying His redemptive grace to every sphere of authority. That temple is also known as the Church. It is made up of people from every family and tribe

called into a community of light-bearers. They are not afraid of the one whose head was crushed. They are busy pushing back the darkness and reclaiming the property the thief stole. The mystery has been revealed: it is the gospel of the New Testament.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy

apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according

to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever Amen.

Ephesians 2:19-3:20, ESV

**KERYGMA VENTURES**

P.O. Box 2022
Colleyville, TX 76034
(817)267-9224
Email: Contact@kerygmaventures.com
www.KerygmaVentures.com